

Time Capsules

What is a time capsule?

A time capsule is a way of saving things from a moment in history. The items are put in a sealed box or container to be opened in the future. Time capsules can be opened by the person who made them or by other people.



The phrase “time capsule” was first used in 1938 when the Westinghouse company created one for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, but the idea is much older. No one knows exactly when people first thought of the idea of saving objects for the future in this way.

Famous Time Capsules

Time capsules can be used to mark important events. The Millennium Vault 2000 is a huge structure in the grounds of Guildford Castle, big enough to keep a car and lots of other objects in. It was sealed in the year 2000, and is not due to be opened until the year 3000! It contains a great many items to help people in the future understand what life was like, including letters to the future from hundreds of people.

One of the oldest known time capsules was opened in 2015 in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. It was placed under a stone in the State House in 1795. It had been found once before, in 1855. At that time it was put in a new box and reburied. It was thought that the contents had been damaged, but when it was opened, all of the items were in good condition. The contents of the box included newspapers, coins and a silver plaque.

What you need:

- **A container for the time capsule.**
This should be watertight, especially if you are planning to bury it.
- **A label for the capsule.**
- **Objects and documents.** Here are some ideas for things you could include:
 - Artwork.
 - Newspaper cuttings.
 - Information about yourself.
 - A letter to your future self, or the person who opens the time capsule.
- **A safe place to put the capsule.** If you have a suitable spot and have checked with an adult, you could bury your capsule.
- **Paper and a pencil to make a map or instructions.**

Instructions

1. Check that your capsule is large enough to hold all of the objects you have chosen.
2. Label the time capsule clearly, so it doesn't get opened too early or thrown away! Include your name, the date it was made and the date it should be opened.
3. Place the items in the capsule and seal it.
4. Put the capsule in the safe place you have chosen.
5. Make a map or instructions so that the time capsule can be found again.



Time Capsules

Questions

1. In what year was the phrase “time capsule” first used?

2. What is the meaning of the word “created”?

3. When will the Millennium Vault 2000 be opened?

4. How many letters will be found when they open the Millennium Vault 2000?

- One
- A few
- Hundreds

5. Which of these is the best definition of “good condition” in this text?

- Undamaged
- Dirty
- Broken

6. Draw lines to match the facts about the time capsules to the place where they were first buried.

Created for the World’s Fair in 1939.

Guildford Castle.

Big enough to keep a car in.

The State House, Boston, Massachusetts.

Placed under a stone in 1795.

New York.

7. Why should the container you chose be watertight?

8. What sort of word is watertight?

- Verb
- Adjective
- Noun

9. Write three things that the text suggests you could put in a time capsule.

10. Underline the two verbs in this sentence:

Place the two items in the capsule and seal it.

11. Why is it a good idea to make a map or instructions?

12. Number these events to show what order they happened in. The first one has been done for you.

Make a map or instructions.	
Check your capsule is large enough.	1
Put the capsule in a safe place.	
Label the time capsule.	
Place the items in the capsule.	

Time Capsules

What is a time capsule?

A time capsule is a way of preserving a moment in history, to be opened in the future, usually on a specific date. Items that give information about the person (or people) that made the time capsule and what life was like at that time are placed in a secure container. Capsules can be intended to be opened by the person who first made them or by other people. There are time capsules set to be opened thousands of years into the future, while some people make a time capsule to be opened on a particular day, for example, their eighteenth birthday.



A time capsule can be an important historical source in the future. Think carefully about what you will put inside yours! The first usage of the phrase “time capsule” was recorded in 1938 when the Westinghouse company created one for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, but the idea is much older. No one knows exactly when people first thought of the idea of preserving things for the future in this way.

Famous Time Capsules

Time capsules are often used to mark an important event. The Millennium Vault 2000 is a huge structure in the grounds of Guildford Castle, measuring 100 cubic metres, or 3,531 cubic feet. To preserve it, it was welded shut and buried in concrete. It was sealed in the year 2000, and is not due to be opened until the year 3000! It contains a great many items to help people in the future understand what life was like, including letters to the future from hundreds of people, a mini car and a pair of trainers.

The famous British children’s TV show Blue Peter has buried several time capsules. The first one was buried in 1971 and dug up in the year 2000. In 1998 they buried the Millennium Capsule underneath the Millennium Dome (now known as the O2 Arena) to be opened in 2050. It was accidentally dug up during building work in 2017, 33 years too early! The capsule later went on a tour around the UK before being resealed and placed in the National Archive.

One of the oldest known time capsules was opened in 2015 in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The capsule had originally been placed under a stone in the State House in 1795. It had been found once before, in 1855, when the contents were put in a new brass box and reburied. It was feared that the contents had been damaged, but it was first x-rayed and then opened to reveal objects including newspapers, coins and a silver plaque. All of the items were in good condition.

What you need:

- **A container for the time capsule.** This should be watertight, especially if you are planning to bury it, and made from a material that will not rot away or rust. If the container does not seal by itself, you could use very strong tape to seal it up.
- **A label for the capsule.**
- **Objects and documents.** Here are some ideas for things you could include:
 - Artwork, such as a picture of your family.
 - Newspaper cuttings. A newspaper cutting is an interesting report or letter that has been cut out of a paper to keep. If you don’t get a paper newspaper, you could print something from a news website.
 - Information about yourself.
 - Photos of yourself and people who are important to you.
 - A letter to your future self, or the person who opens the time capsule.
- **A safe place to put the capsule.** Often, time capsules are buried, but you can also put them somewhere safe in your home, such as under a bed or at the back of a cupboard. If you are going to bury it, make sure you have permission from an adult who has checked that the site is safe and suitable.
- **Paper and a pencil to make a map or instructions.**

Instructions

1. Check that your capsule is large enough to hold all of the objects you have chosen.
2. Label the time capsule clearly, so it doesn't get opened too early or thrown away! Include your name, the date it was made and the date it should be opened.
3. Place the items in the capsule and seal it.
4. Put the capsule in the safe place you have chosen.
5. Make a clear, detailed map or instructions so the time capsule can be found again.



Time Capsules

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word “preserving”?

2. In what year was the phrase “time capsule” used for the first time?

3. List three items that are inside the Millennium Vault 2000?

4. Find and copy the word that shows that the Blue Peter Millennium capsule was not dug up on purpose.

5. Which of these is the best definition of “good condition” in this text?

- Undamaged
 - Dirty
 - Broken
-

6. Draw lines to match the facts about the time capsules to the location where they were first buried.

Dug up 33 years too early.
Welded shut and buried in concrete.
First sealed in 1795.

Guildford Castle.
The State House, Boston, Massachusetts.
The Millennium Dome.

7. Using information from the text, use a tick to show whether each statement is true or false.

	True	False
The 1939 World’s Fair was held in Boston, Massachusetts.		
The O2 Arena used to be called the Millennium Dome.		
Blue Peter has only buried one time capsule.		
Newspapers can remain in good condition in a time capsule.		

8. Explain why the container you choose should be watertight and made from a material that will not rot away or rust.

9. Underline the main clause in this sentence:

If the container does not seal by itself, you could use very strong tape to seal it up.

10. If you are not going to bury your capsule, which two alternative locations are suggested in the text?

11. Why is it important to check with an adult before you bury a time capsule?

12. Why is it a good idea to make a map or instructions?
