Newspaper from 2040

Think ahead and write creatively

This tool introduces you to creative writing and speculative thinking. Imagine yourself as a journalist from 2040 and write an informative article: develop your own utopian future scenario driven by digital change within society.

⏳	2–4 hours	★★★	advanced
👥	alone or in groups	✎📌	internet access

> **"THE future cannot be predicted, but preferred futures can be envisioned and created."**
>
> Dator, J. (1995) *What Future Studies is, and is not.*

What will our digital society look like in 2040? How will we live and love, how will we shape teaching and work, and how will our legal system change?

The *twentyforty approach* refers to a way of working that was developed in the 2019 HIIG project *twentyforty*. In an international essay competition, scientists were given a platform to create utopias beyond usual research. The visionary stories address the opportunities and challenges that digital technologies pose for society in the future of 2040. Along the five categories (love, live, learn, work and rule), thirteen scholars developed knowledge-based scenarios for the year 2040.

This exercise invites you to try the *twentyforty approach* and report as a journalist from the year 2040.

ASSIGNMENT	This tool introduces you to creative writing and speculative thinking using the twentyforty approach. Decide on one aspect – Live, Love, Learn, Work, or Rule – from the year 2040 that has changed and improved due to a digital development and write an informative article: develop your own utopian future scenario driven by digital change within society. Speculate, criticise, imagine and develop!
LEARNING GOAL	This assignment encourages you to apply speculative thinking and make the future more commonplace. It is an invitation to research, think ahead, and write creatively.
PREPARATION	No preparations are necessary other than providing writing materials and access to the Internet.

LET'S START

Imagine you are a journalist reporting from 2040. You are writing an article on a new digital development or possible impacts of such a development on our society. Your article is intended to develop a desirable vision of the future: it could be a solution to a current or emerging problem.

What are the new innovations, changes or curiosities in the world of work, government policy, love and relationships, or the educational system in 2040?

STEP 1

Choose one of the 5 *twentyforty* categories – **Live, Love, Learn, Work, or Rule** – and write an imaginary article on a topic of your choice:

It is the year 2040. What is the headline of your article? What problem, achievement, or news does the article discuss? Try to be as precise as possible. To do this, it is advisable to start with a factual situation or problem from today. How will this situation or problem have developed in 2040?

You are free to write just a short breaking news note, a cover story, an interview, or a long report. Don't be afraid to find a format that suits you.

EXAMPLES

Are there new dating apps in 2040? How do they work?

Imagine that algorithms affect our choice of partners and forms of relationships.
› See how Kamel Ajji answered this question in his story 'The End of Feelings' on twentyforty.hiig.de

Imagine if NLP (Natural Language Processing) – today used for commercial and political manipulation – was used for sustainable and positive purposes!
› Emma Beauxis-Aussalet has developed a future scenario in relation to this question.

Will there be more sophisticated laws that can better protect our privacy online? What would such laws look like?
› check out Claire Bessant's answer in: 'What would you rather be: A privacy Have or a Privacy Have-Not?'

How does our healthcare system work? How do we communicate? Are there new forms of transportation? How sustainable has our society become? How has schooling changed and by what?

STEP 2	Find answers: Why and how did your issue occur? Who is it affecting and how? Who is profiting from it? Research and find 2–4 sources (such as studies, paper, articles, podcasts, talks) on which you will base your article on. Our extensive collection of materials, the *Making sense of the digital society* compendium, can help you with this. › www.hiig.de/en/making-sense-compendium
STEP 3	Try to **identify factors** that could help your vision come true. How could digital technology help to solve your issue? What is (not) a solution? How can it be modeled? How should it be defined to be resolvable? To develop a plan to achieve your vision, you could think of critical factors in three categories: ▪ Existing processes and systems that are moving in the direction of your vision, and how they can be enhanced and maintained. ▪ Existing processes and systems that stand in the way of your preferred future, and how they can be overcome or marginalised. ▪ New processes and systems that do not currently exist that need to be envisioned, invented, nurtured, and maintained to help achieve your preferred future. When writing your article, identify critical knowledge gaps that need to be closed to create a solution. The designed solution should be beneficial to society and the environment. Try to pass on as much knowledge as possible to understand your chosen problem and your future scenario.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEXT
UNDER JOURNALISTIC CRITERIA**

First things first: The questions "who", "what", "when", "where" and "from which source does the news come" should be answered right at the beginning of the article.

Message, news, report: These texts do not evaluate or express an opinion. They are fact-based and provide news. Their function is to provide readers with knowledge about events that are both new and informative for them. › Personal and individual impressions and opinions are incorporated into this type of text through interview voices.

Op-ed, comment, editorial letter: An op-ed, short for "opposite the editorial page", is a written prose piece in a newspaper or magazine expressing the opinion of an author.

HINTS ON WRITING SCENARIOS OF PREFERRED FUTURES

General guiding questions to help you shape your article:

- What is the title of your article? Try to make it provocative and interesting
- Who is your article aimed at?
- Does it appear in a scientific newspaper, a daily newspaper, an online portal, or on social media?
- Where is your article located?
- What is the specific problem area you are describing?
- Who are its actors?
- Which institutions are involved in your case?
- Are there pros and cons?

A timeline to 2040

Construct a timeline of the way developments should unfold as you move towards your preferred future in the year 2040. This timeline can help you describe your article as you can go into detail about various intermediate steps and incidents that led to your vision.

On the timeline identify:

1. Things that almost certainly will happen between now and 2040 (such as elections, inventions, developments, and sports or societal events).
2. Technological developments that seem likely/possible by 2040 on the basis of existing knowledge, research and funding.
3. Technological and other developments that require plausible breakthroughs to happen by 2040.
4. Technological and other developments that seem highly unlikely now, but which would help you achieve your preferred future if they were to occur.

STEP 4

If you have worked in a group, read your articles to each other. Discuss your scenarios.

Alternatively, send your articles to people you would like to discuss your scenario with.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Where do you see opportunities? Risks?
- How could your ideas be developed further?
- Where do you see commonalities in your developed future visions? Where do they differ?

CONTINUE WITH OUR TOOLBOX

If you have worked on the toolbox in the order we suggested, this is the last exercise. However, the exercises can also be done in other orders.

If you want to delve deeper into digital futures, try the other exercises from our toolbox.

| **SOURCES** | Compendium: Making Sense of the Digital Society ^{EN + DE} |

Compendium: Making Sense of the Digital Society EN + DE
https://www.hiig.de/en/making-sense-compendium

Storytelling and Future EN
McDowell, A. (2019) Storytelling shapes the Future. *Journal of Futures Studies*. DOI:10.6531/JFS.201903_23(3).0009, https://jfsdigital.org/articles-and-essays/vol-23-no-3-march-2019/storytelling-shapes-the-future

Hints on writing scenarios of preferred futures EN
Dator, J. (1994) *Some hints on writing scenarios of preferred futures*, http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/publications/futures-theories-methods/WritingScenarios1994.pdf

Twentyforty: Download of the publication EN
Fecher, B. (2020) *Twentyforty – Utopias for a digital society*. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3678207, https://twentyforty.hiig.de

AUTHORS

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