

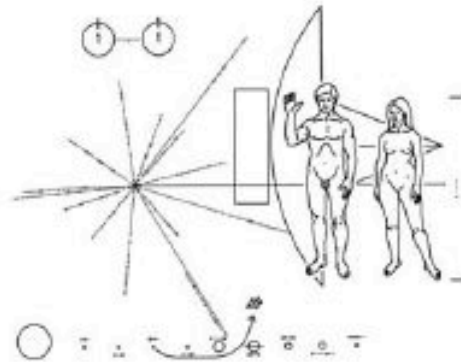
TIME CAPSULE

Decades back, NASA commissioned a platinum disc that was sent into deep space with the hope that some distant civilization might recover the artifact, figure out how to access the information within it, and hence be introduced to humankind. The designers of this time capsule faced the challenge of embedding data and recording images that would represent our species in a world and time beyond imagining.

This little assignment is along the same lines, only you will be going low-tech. And instead of building a record for extraterrestrials, the creature to discover your probe is your very own self—a future self.

The immediate challenge is to use your cell phone as an anthropologist might. You are to systematically make field photographs that show your daily experience over three days. The broad goal is to capture those small moments that make your life yours and essentially meaningful.

To get ready, try out your mobile phone's camera. Figure out how to send the images to your computer. Research the file format used by your camera and learn how to transfer your images into JPEGs. Wear a white suit, goggles, and a face mask, just like NASA techies. Give yourself a whole day for testing.



In 1977 NASA launched the first man-made object that would escape Earth's gravity and sail into the cosmos. It carried two golden discs. One was a plaque filled with symbols that another intelligent species could figure out (left). The second disc (right) was an analog recording of the sounds of Earth—different languages, music, natural sounds. Wikipedia has excellent articles explaining this landmark probe into interstellar space. [NASA](#) by way of [Wikipedia](#)

I. BLAST OFF

Start this project without thinking too much about what will emerge. Let the natural patterns of your days dictate what to shoot. But do shoot often—at least one shot on the hour and on the half hour. At the end of the day, download and look at your pictures. Label them. Don't throw anything away. At this point consult the following checklist. Between what you shot on day one and what gets triggered by this list, give yourself some specific objectives for the last two days of shooting.

- the first thing you see waking up
- a photograph of a photograph
- an object in your room
- a special person in your life
- the view from your window
- an addiction
- lunch or dinner leftovers
- the place you feel most comfortable
- a person you don't know
- an article of clothing you wear frequently
- a pet
- getting exercise
- what you watch on TV
- something you are proud of
- your biggest fear
- self-portraits via mirrors and surfaces
- someone you are jealous of
- a favorite creation
- a present from someone or to someone
- the neighborhood gathering place
- shelves: kitchen, bathroom, office
- a sentimental object
- water
- the palm of your hand

- multiple pix: same place, different times
- a habitual action
- aspirations
- family

2. DEEP SPACE

Direct yourself more on the second day. Select some parts of your routine you want to document. When you look over the day's pictures, scan for patterns. Are there more favorite or less favorite things you want to show yourself some years hence?

3. DEEPER SPACE

On the last day of your Time Capsule, revisit things that you liked seeing in your pictures from days one or two. Perhaps you've covered the obligatory stuff in your life and can now find something totally new to shoot. Finish with a sprint: Shoot more pictures on day three than on the other days.

4. BEYOND THE RADAR

The final "capsule" can take a number of different forms, from a set of photo prints stored in a box to a slide show you put on a DVD and save for your grandchildren. Give yourself a full evening (around three hours) to finish off this project. Take a moment to compose a short note addressed to self. Wrap up your time capsule so you cannot even see the container. Label it "do not open before" and give a date (2020? 2018? 2013?) and store it somewhere safe. Last but perhaps most important of all, erase all the images from your hard drive. This ensures that the time capsule, when discovered, will feel like a true missive from a distant shore.