SPARKS

Igniting ideas in film and media arts

Friends from the Future

In this filmmaking challenge, you'll shoot a fun conversation with yourself – from the future! You'll write a script, shoot a two-way conversation and then piece it together using continuity editing techniques. You can work alone, or include familiy members to help too.

You'll need:

- A video camera
- Editing software or an editing app

Timings: This project should take approximately 90-120 mins.

Talk to Yourself from the Future

You can take this in any direction you like creatively. What does the future look like to you? You can design a futuristic costume for light years ahead, or you can produce something based on you from tomorrow. You can even play around with multiple timelines.

1. Start with an Idea

Before you begin writing your script, you'll need to think about how far in the future you want to go. Pick a setting to work with: 1 day from now? 1 year from now? 1 million years from now?

You'll also need to decide if you're going to play yourself in the future, or maybe you'll be talking to your great-great-great-great-great-great-grand-child. If you play yourself you might want to make yourself look older (or see if you can get Mum/Dad involved).

You can have lots of fun creating what futuristic fashions look like, and imagining how your future life will be different. Decide which option to go for and then you're ready to start writing a script.

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2. Writing your script

You're going to write a dialogue between the two characters: you in the present day and you/your descendent in the future.

Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On one side think about the character from the present, on the other, the future. Write down some ideas about the characters.

What does the character from the future want to say? Why are they sending a message? Is it intentional, or have they come back by mistake? Do they have a warning? Think about how to structure this into a beginning, a middle and an end.

In the present, how would you react if you suddenly got a message from the future? How would the character feel? What questions might they ask? Organise these into a beginning, a middle and an end.
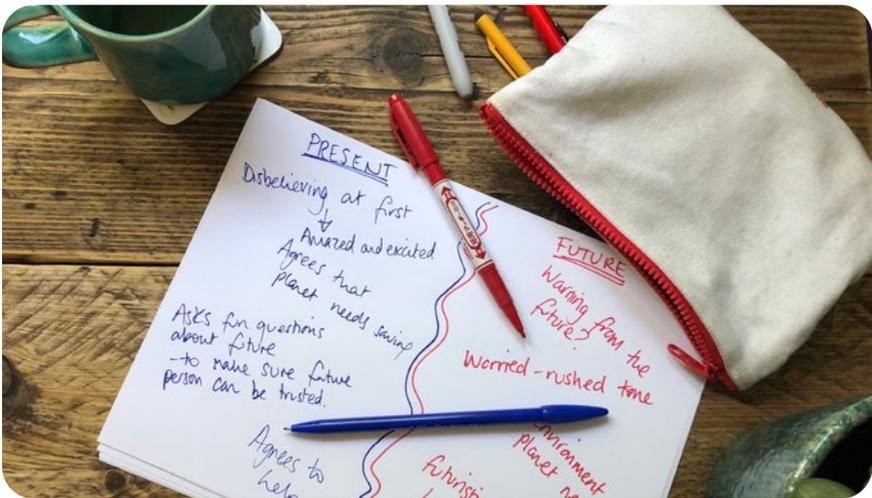
Once you've done this, start writing out your dialogue. Try to stay on track to your original ideas and follow the structure. Remember to include important details like which character says what. Include any key props or location points you need.

Once you've written it, have a look at what you've written and circle anything that doesn't really serve to move the story forward or tell us anything important about the characters. Try and re-write those lines, or remove anything that doesn't need to be there.

3. Storyboarding

This film uses a technique called 'shot-reverse-shot'. It's a way of sequencing a scene that includes shots of two actors (filmed in separate shots) using continuity editing. This mean that the scene flows as if it happened in real time, when it was shot over several different takes and camera set ups.

For this sequence to work you'll need to shoot some specific shots:

- a Mid Shot (MS) of the present day character
- a Mid Shot (MS) of the futuristic character
- the same shot as above without the character in it
- a Close Up (CU) of the present day character
- a Close Up (CU) of the futuristic character
- the same shot as above without the character in it
- a 'profile' (shot from the side) MS of the present day looking to the right, with the character on the left side of the frame
- the opposite of the above in exactly the same location/frame - so the futuristic character looking to the left while standing on the right.
- the above shot without the character in it

The empty shots will help us make our futuristic character appear slightly transparent, so don't miss them out.
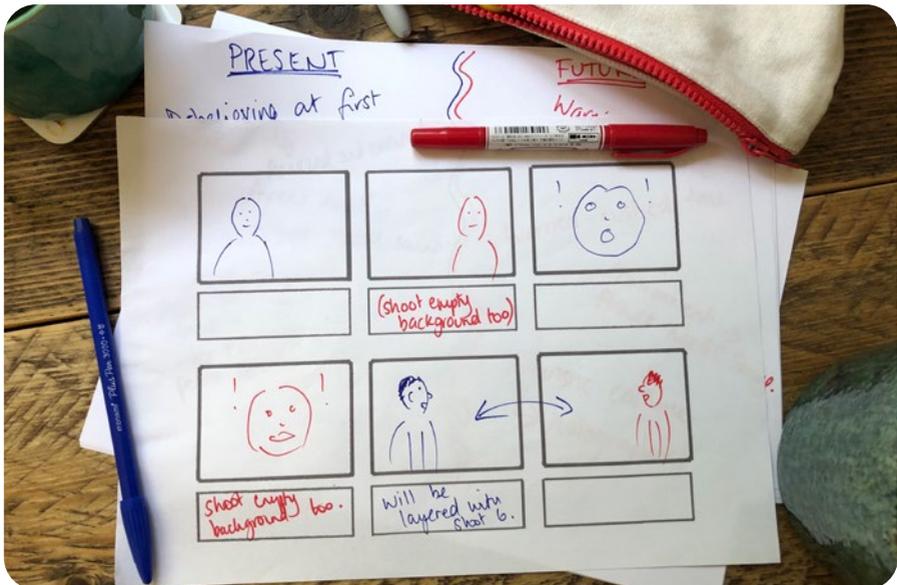
4. Design

If you've chosen to shoot a character from the distant future, now's the time to get creative with your costume. Tinfoil is a great material for futuristic accessories, but you can be creative and shoot your own interpretation of the future.

If you're in the near future, perhaps your futuristic character can wear a different outfit. This will help to make the characters clearer to your audience.

5. Production

It's now time to shoot your masterpiece. It's useful to have a tripod to steady the camera, if not then try to support the camera using a stack of books, or a shelf etc.

Follow your storyboard and film each of the shots. Shoot the shots with one character first and then do the shots for the second character (to save time changing etc). You don't need to shoot them in chronological order.

Check your location for any problematic elements:
• Don't shoot infront of a mirror/reflective surface
• Don't shoot in a place where the lighting might change drastically during your shoot
• Don't shoot in front of a clock or TV/computer screen that shows the time

Rehearse your shots before you shoot them. Take the time you need to make them perfect!

6. Editing

Import your footage into an editing programme.

Select your best takes to add into your timeline. Remember to trim the clips to get rid of things we don't want to watch.

Assemble the shots so that it appears as if the characters are talking to each other, switching between the present-day character and the character from the future so that it appears like a real conversation between the two. You can use your programme's blade tool to split up your clips so we can cut back and forth between the characters.

You can apply some creative effects to make the futuristic character appear like a holographic message. Layer the future character shot on top of the matching empty shot. Then reduce the opacity of the future character's shot (depending on the editing programme you are using this might be called opacity, transparency, layering or level). The result should make you look partly transparent. You can play with the amounts until you're happy with the holographic appearance. You can also explore any video effects in your programme to try and achieve 'flickers' or colour changes.

For the final shots where the chracters are looking at each other, layer the shots on top of each other and use your programme's cropping tool to chop the right hand side of the present day shot to reveal the futuristic character shot underneath. You can then repeat the transparency technique above to make the future character invisible too.

When you're happy, export your movie and share it with your friends and family. We'd love to see it too. You can share your movie with us at hello@sparksarts.co.uk.

With parents' permission, you can also share it online via social media or YouTube. (Make sure not to include any identifying details).

Technical Guide:

Cameras
You can use any camera that will record video for this activity, such as a phone, a tablet, or a camcorder. If using a phone, make sure to record in landscape mode.

Tripods/Grip
A tripod is really useful for this project. You can get adapters or specific mini-tripods for phone and tablet cameras too. If you don't have a tripod, try to steady your camera by resting it on a flat surface.

Editing
You only need basic editing software for this video. Look for Windows Movie Maker on a PC (it should come free) or iMovie for Mac (which comes included). If you're working on a phone or tablet, you can download iMovie from the App store.

Music
If you want to add in any music to your soundtrack, remember to use copyright free tracks. You can find copyright free music from the YouTube music library, or we also love Kevin McLeod's collection at www.incompetech.com. You can use all of these tracks for free, just remember to credit the creator.

Happy Movie Making!

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