

LIFE SKILL EXAMPLE BOOK • 13

Futures Literacy

Use multiple futures to make better choices
now.

A WORKING DEFINITION

Futures literacy is the capacity to notice how assumptions about the future shape the present, imagine multiple plausible and desirable futures, explore their implications, and use that range to improve choices and experiments now.

Futures literacy is the capacity to notice how assumptions about the future shape the present, imagine multiple plausible and desirable futures, explore their implications, and use that range to improve choices and experiments now.

IN PRACTICE

Scans signals, reveals hidden assumptions, creates contrasting futures, examines consequences and rehearses present actions without treating any scenario as a prediction.

It is

A disciplined use of imagination.

Comfortable with multiple possible futures.

Explicit about assumptions and uncertainty.

Connected to decisions and experiments now.

It is not

Predicting the one correct future.

Trend lists without implication or action.

Optimism, pessimism or science fiction alone.

Using dramatic scenarios to manufacture certainty.

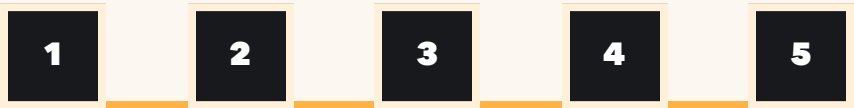
WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

AI systems can generate forecasts and scenarios at great speed. Futures literacy helps people question the assumptions inside them and avoid letting one probable story narrow present-day imagination and agency.

THE CAPABILITY LOOP

Use the future to see the present differently.

The future does not yet exist. Its value lies in how different imagined futures reveal assumptions, choices and possibilities now.



Observe Reveal Imagine Explore Act now

- | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Which signals, changes and persistent forces matter? | What future are we already assuming or treating as inevitable? | What contrasting plausible, possible and desirable futures can we create? | What would each future mean for people, systems and decisions? | What robust move, option or experiment improves readiness today? |
|--|--|---|--|--|

SIGNALS What may be changing? Distinguish evidence from noise, novelty and wish.	ASSUMPTIONS What future is hidden in the plan? Make expectations and inevitability claims visible.	OPTIONS What should remain possible? Use scenarios to preserve agency and adaptive capacity.
--	--	--

BEHAVIOR CLUE

Scans signals, reveals hidden assumptions, creates contrasting futures, examines consequences and rehearses present actions without treating any scenario as a prediction.

8 CONNECTED CAPABILITIES

Futures Literacy is a system.



Signal sensing Notices emerging change and persistent structural forces.	Assumption awareness Makes implicit expectations about the future visible.
Multiple-futures imagination Creates contrasting possibilities instead of one forecast.	Uncertainty literacy Works with ambiguity without pretending that all futures are equally likely.
Systems connection Explores how changes interact across people and institutions.	Implication exploration Examines what scenarios would mean for choices and capabilities.
Scenario use Uses future stories as learning devices, not predictions.	Anticipatory action Builds options, experiments and readiness in the present.

The components strengthen one another. Development depends on how they are combined in context—not on maximizing one behavior in isolation.

WHY WE PROTECT THIS SKILL

Three signals—three different questions.



Human Core

How central should human agency, judgment and responsibility remain?



Human leads

Signal 4/5



Future Readiness

How strongly does this help people learn and act as roles and technology change?



Foundational

Signal 5/5



Safeguard Value

How strongly does this protect capability from over-reliance, deskilling and loss of agency?



Strong safeguard

Signal 4/5

READ THESE AS STRATEGIC SIGNALS

They describe why the capability matters—not how advanced a learner is.

AI can generate scenarios and detect patterns. Humans must decide which futures matter, whose imagination is included and what present choices preserve responsible possibility.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Five stages of using the future.

The progression describes how a person uses imagined futures to improve present action - not prediction accuracy or confidence about what will happen.



USE THE PROGRESSION WELL

Ask for the next observable behavior—not a label for the person.

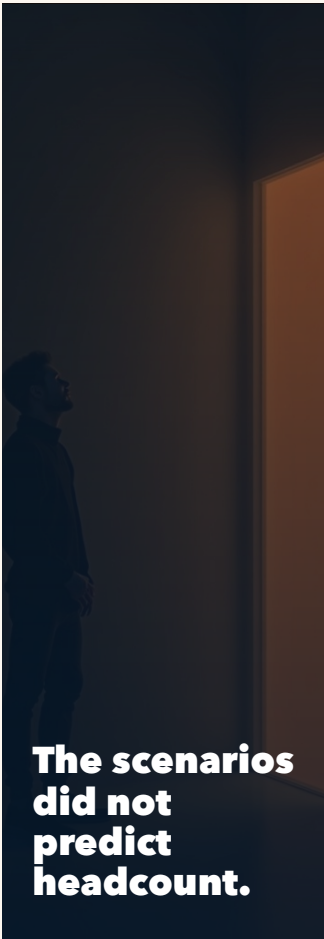
BEHAVIOR MAP

What futures-literate people do around a strategic choice.

01 Before Set the horizon Chooses a timeframe far enough to expose change. Scan broadly Looks across social, technological, ecological, political and economic signals. Name the default Writes the future the current plan assumes. Invite imagination Includes people whose futures are often decided by others.	02 During Build contrasts Creates futures that differ in meaningful drivers and values. Separate likelihood Distinguishes plausible, possible, probable and preferred. Explore implications Asks what each future changes for capability, identity and risk. Look backward Identifies what would need to happen for each future to emerge.	03 After Find robust moves Selects actions useful across more than one future. Preserve options Avoids irreversible commitment when uncertainty is high. Run experiments Tests assumptions through present-day learning moves. Renew the set Updates scenarios as signals, values and conditions change.
--	--	--

CASE STORY · COMPOSITE

When one AI forecast freezes the workforce strategy.



The challenge. A company forecast predicts rapid automation and large role reductions. Leaders treat the scenario as inevitable, pause development investment and trigger fear across the organization.

1 • Observe

The team separates current evidence, vendor assumptions and genuine uncertainty.

2 • Reveal

They name the default story: automation substitutes tasks, and capability investment therefore loses value.

3 • Imagine

Four futures vary adoption speed, regulation, job redesign, customer trust and human-AI complementarity.

4 • Explore

Each scenario reveals different needs for judgment, mobility, wellbeing and learning infrastructure.

5 • Act now

Leadership funds role experiments and transferable skills that create value across several futures.

CAPABILITY IN PRACTICE

The scenarios did not predict headcount. They reopened choices that one confident forecast had closed.

A PRACTICAL PROTOCOL

SHIFT the future frame.

Use this short structure in real work, reflection or coaching. Keep the action specific enough to observe.

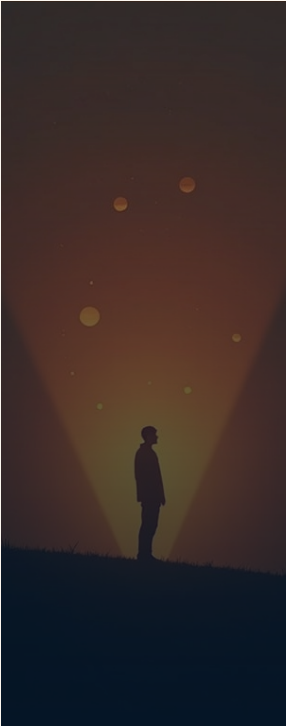
S Scan signals What may be changing, persisting or interacting?	H Hold multiples Which contrasting futures should remain thinkable?	I Identify assumptions What does the current plan treat as inevitable?	F Find implications What would each future change for people and choices?	T Test now What robust action or experiment increases readiness today?
--	--	---	--	---

One-minute start: “The future our plan assumes is ... Another plausible future is ... A robust move now is ...”

The protocol supports practice. It does not remove the need for context, expertise, ethical judgment or appropriate human support.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING CULTURE

Replace one forecast with a portfolio of futures.



- SIGNAL** Create regular space to notice change beyond the usual industry lens.
- INCLUDE** Broaden who imagines the future and whose consequences count.
- VARY** Require strategically different scenarios, not optimistic and pessimistic versions.
- TEST** Use scenarios to rehearse decisions, identity, capability and ethics.
- INVEST** Protect options and experiments that remain useful across multiple futures.

ADJACENT EVIDENCE · 2025

A systematic review of 87 AI-literacy studies argued that future readiness extends beyond technical use to ethics, societal impact, practical application and adaptable interdisciplinary education. This was not a direct test of futures literacy.

Biagini, International Journal of AI in Education. [R1]

SEVEN-DAY EXPERIMENT

Use three futures in seven days.

- Day 1** Choose a real strategic question and set a meaningful time horizon.
- Day 2** Collect five signals and two persistent forces without turning them into predictions.
- Day 3** Write the default future hidden inside the current plan.
- Day 4** Create three contrasting futures with different drivers, values and consequences.
- Day 5** Explore what each future requires people to learn, protect, stop or redesign.
- Day 6** Select one robust move and one option worth preserving across the scenarios.
- Day 7** Run a small experiment and record which assumption it begins to test.

MY FUTURES RECORD

The default future:

A contrasting future:

A robust move:

An assumption to test:

Track behavior and evidence. Reflection matters when it changes the next action.



FUTURES LITERACY · HUMAN CAPABILITY FOR CHANGE

The future is not data waiting to be found.

Reveal the assumed future. Imagine alternatives.
Explore what they change. Use the range to act more
wisely now.