



COURSE 1

**READY SET FUTURE**

# What are the four types of futures thinking?\*

\* And how to play the future four-square game



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**FUTURES THINKING**

taught by Institute for the Future with **Jane McGonigal**

# How to play the Future **Four-Square** Game

When you're starting a new futures thinking project, or meeting with a group to talk about the future, the Future Four-Square game is the perfect way to see where people stand. Are they worried about the future? Are they hopeful? Do they have ideas for actions they can take, today, to make the future better?

The results of the game can also suggest which *type* of futures thinking will be most helpful to you and your group to increase your ability to actively shape and change the future.

**Here's how to play, and how to interpret your results.** (For a demonstration of the game, watch Week 4: Video 1 from Institute for the Future's Coursera course "Ready, Set, Future!")

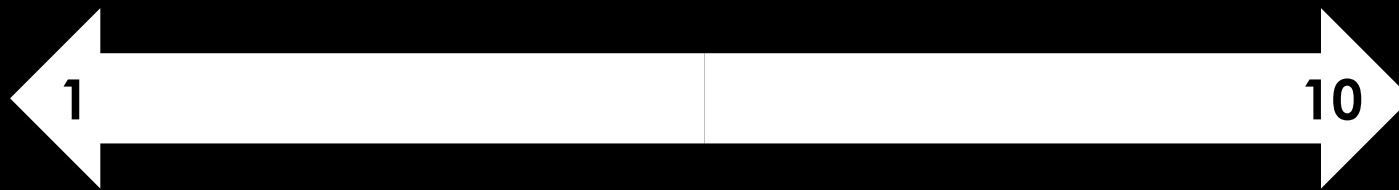
# How to play

**Pick a future topic.** (such as the future of farming, the future of videogaming, the future of Los Angeles, the future of democracy, the future of aging, the future of driving)

When you think about your chosen Future topic: **On a scale of 1 to 10, do you think it's getting better or worse?** Right now, overall, is this future headed in a better direction, or a worse one?

**(10 is much better, 1 is much worse)**

**Touch the line** where you would put your future of X on this scale from 1 to 10:



it's getting

**Worse**

it's getting

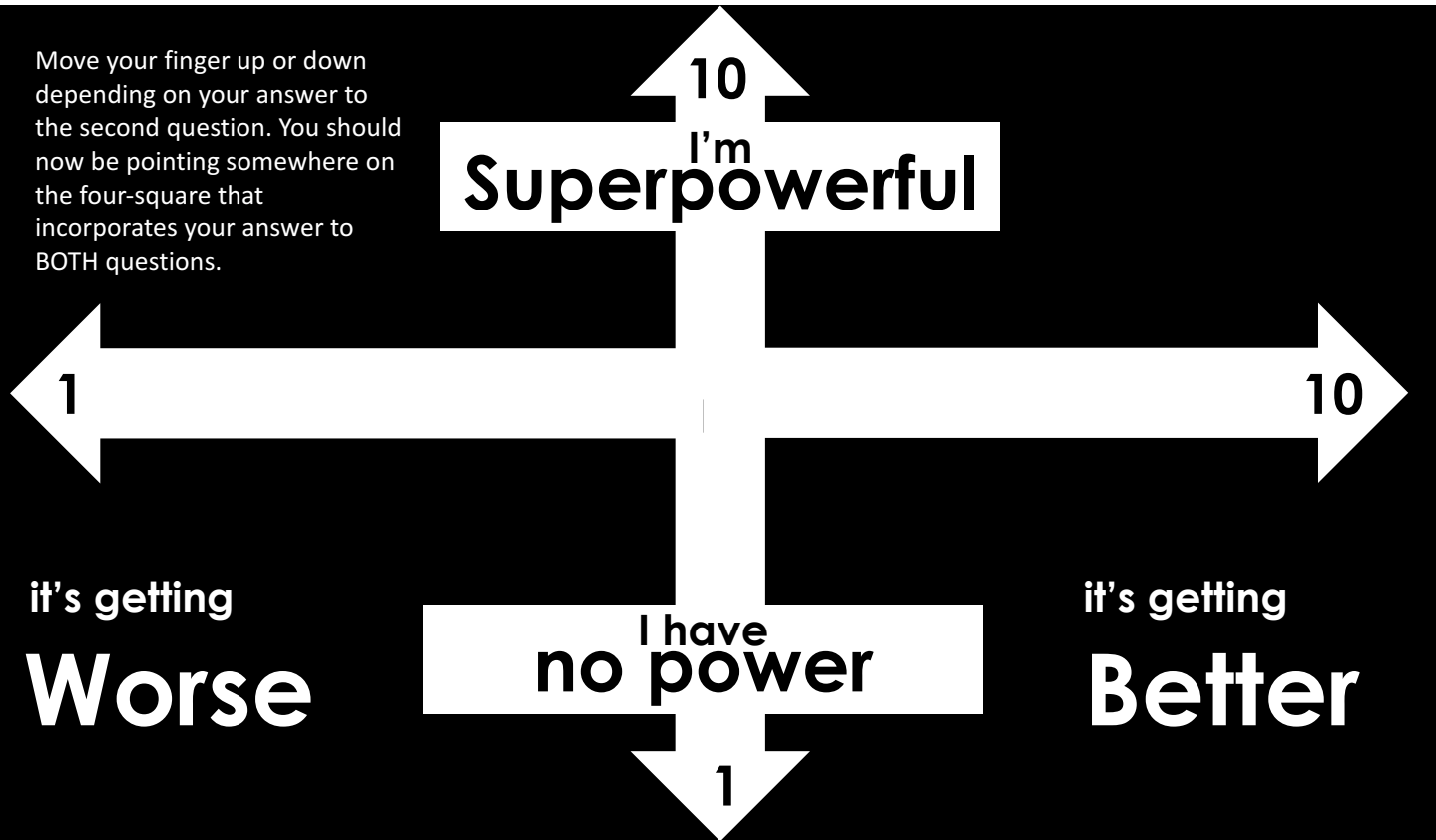
**Better**

When you think about **the same Future** of X:

On a scale from 1 to 10, **how much power do YOU personally have to shape or influence that future**, and help decide whether it gets better or worse?

**(10 is a lot of power, 1 is no power)**

Move your finger up or down depending on your answer to the second question. You should now be pointing somewhere on the four-square that incorporates your answer to BOTH questions.



Which of the four squares  
did you, or most people  
in your group, land in?

I'm  
**Superpowerful**

4

3

2

1

it's getting  
**Worse**

I have  
**no power**

it's getting  
**Better**

Which of the four squares  
did you, or most people  
in your group, land in?

I'm  
**Superpowerful**

The future is getting worse, but you feel  
capable of helping change and reshape it?  
Use your **ACTION SKILLS!**

The future is getting better, and you can  
help move things in the right direction,  
faster? Use your **GAMING SKILLS!**

The future is getting worse, and you don't  
think you have any power to influence it?  
Use your **SIMULATIONS SKILLS!**

The future is getting better, but you don't  
think you have any power to influence it?  
Use your **FORECASTING SKILLS!**

it's getting  
**Worse**

I have  
**no power**

it's getting  
**Better**



The Futures Thinking  
Specialization on Coursera  
will teach you all 4 types of  
futures thinking. Each of  
courses focuses on one of  
these skill sets.

I'm  
**Superpowerful**

**action**

**gaming**

**simulation**

**forecasting**

it's getting  
**Worse**

I have  
**no power**

it's getting  
**Better**



## What to do next in your future state of mind...

*"Things are generally getting better in a future I care about, but I have no personal power to accelerate that change, no individual role in making that future happen. I'm just along for the ride."*

**Basic future forecasting skills** are a good place to start if you've landed in **Square #1**.

Why? Forecasting skills can help you discover signals and drivers of change that YOU can get actively and directly involved with today.

They can also help you create future scenarios where you personally (or your company, or your community) have discovered new ways to play a more active role in making a better future.



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## What to do next in your future state of mind...

*"Things are generally getting worse in a future I care about, and I have no personal power to make it better."*

**Simulation skills** are a good place to start if you've landed in **square #2**.

Why? Simulation skills can help you push the boundaries of what you believe can be different in the future, so you can find realistic reasons for hope.

And they can help YOU identify concrete ways YOU can play a direct role in making a better future today.



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## What to do next in your future state of mind...

*"Things are generally getting better in a future I care about, and I have a big part to play in making things move in the right direction, faster."*

**Collaborative gaming skills** are a good place to start if you've landed in **square #3**.

Why? Collaborative gaming skills can help you see the world from others' point of view, and see how a future you want might affect others differently. They make sure your optimism doesn't have any blind spots. They will help you anticipate hard-to-predict long-term consequences. You'll be better able to take actions that are less likely to cause unintended harms.



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## And depending on your future state of mind...

*"The future is getting worse – but I can already think of ways I can directly help change it and make it better!"*

**Urgent Optimism / Action skills** are a good place to start if you've landed in **square #4**.

Urgent optimism skills can help you plan your strategies so you can start taking action to make a better future today. They can help you increase hope for the future in others and motivate them to join you in action.

They can also help you teach futures thinking to your larger community, so you have more allies in making the future you want.



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### About this Specialization

The Institute for the Future is declaring 2020 “The Year of the Future,” because we believe that foresight is a human right. Every human should have the chance to develop the creative skills needed to imagine how the future can be different, and to participate in deciding what the future will be. We believe futures thinking shouldn’t be something that only happens in Silicon Valley. With our specialization in Futures Thinking on Coursera, we are the first organization ever to offer massively open, free training in futures thinking. We aim to upskill the entire planet in future thinking and future making, by teaching one million online learners via the Coursera platform. This text is one of 100 free readings distributed as part of our “Year of the Future” training.

### Institute for the Future

Institute for the Future is the world’s leading futures thinking organization. For over 50 years, businesses, governments, and social impact organizations have depended upon IFTF global forecasts, custom research, and foresight training to navigate complex change and develop world-ready strategies. IFTF methodologies and toolsets yield coherent views of transformative possibilities across all sectors that together support a more sustainable future. Institute for the Future is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Palo Alto, California.  
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