

“TRIAL”:

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
ACTION AND LEARNING



AN INTERGENERATIONAL TOOLBOXES CURRICULUM

PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences • Cooperative Extension

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# Introduction

This curriculum guide explains how to create and use activity toolboxes to help young people and older adults share life experiences with each other. Participants will develop two plastic tub toolboxes: one will include items/artifacts depicting young people's life perspectives and experiences, while the other will include items that provide insight into the lives of older adults. The boxes are intended to prepare, entice, motivate, and excite people for intergenerational engagement experiences. These toolboxes can be used as complete activities in themselves, or they can serve as a prelude to other intergenerational activities.

This project was developed for use by cooperative extension, a nationwide system of local, nonformal educators associated with major public universities in the United States. However, the project also is suitable for use by teachers, community and youth development professionals, and other individuals interested in promoting better relationships among the generations in their communities.

TRIAL program facilitators are encouraged to publicize the availability of the toolboxes, demonstrate how they can be used, and lend them to educators and human service professionals interested in using the toolboxes to facilitate intergenerational sharing.

<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Youth (ages 8–18) and older adults (60+)—together
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To provide Penn State Cooperative Extension county educators and other professionals with accessible, easy to use resources designed to promote intergenerational communication activities in schools, community centers, retirement communities, and other settings.
<b>LENGTH</b>	Six sessions, each lasting 60–90 minutes.
<b>FORMAT</b>	This program requires a facilitator to recruit participants, coordinate activity sessions, stimulate intergenerational sharing, and contribute ideas about resources that can be inserted into the TRIAL toolboxes.

There are six intergenerational activity sessions:

Session 1: What Are TRIAL Toolboxes?

Session 2: Scavenger Hunt!

Session 3: Item Sort

Alternative to Sessions 1–3: Learning from Toolboxes (after toolboxes have been created)

Session 4: Theatre Activity

Session 5: How Are We the Same? How Are We Different?

Session 6: “Labeling Party”

## **EVALUATION**

The TRIAL toolbox activities can be evaluated by measuring the attitudes of participants in each age group toward people in the other age group. Before the first session begins, divide the participants into two groups: senior adults and youths. Ask each group to list as many words describing the other age group as they can think of. The facilitator records the words and makes note of the discussion that follows.

After the final session of the program, the facilitator will again ask youth and senior adult participants, once again in groups divided by age, to list as many words describing elders/young people that they can think of.

All words—including those provided before and after the project—are then to be coded as either “positive,” “neutral,” or “negative.”

Pre- and post-activity words can then be compared and findings used as one measure of program impact on attitudes toward the other age group.

The facilitator should keep a record of each TRIAL toolbox program, including dates held, number of participants, and a few notes describing the utilization patterns of the toolboxes and intergenerational interaction dynamics (see Appendix A).

## **SUPPORT FOR TRIAL TOOLBOX FACILITATORS**

### **Networking between toolbox facilitators**

Agents who establish or facilitate TRIAL programs can come together annually (perhaps as a part of a larger cooperative extension in-service meeting) to show and share their toolbox items with each other.

### **Potential for funding**

A funding proposal template is provided to support participating organizations in their efforts to raise funds to purchase items for the toolboxes (see Appendix D). In addition, “umbrella” grants, ideally at the state level, can be written in an effort to find support for numerous sites interested in implementing the project.



## Session 1—

# What Are TRIAL Toolboxes?

### OBJECTIVES

1. Youths and elders who participate in the program will create a list of items that could go into their generation-specific toolboxes.
2. Youths and elders who participate in the program will establish teams for the “scavenger hunt” activity (Session #2).

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- “What represents us?” handout (Appendix B)
- “Toolbox scavenger hunt list” (Appendix C)
- pencils
- flip chart and markers

### I. FOCUSING ACTIVITY

(10–15 minutes)

Conduct this focusing activity before you explain the project. Give each participant a copy of the “What represents us?” handout (see Appendix B) and instruct them to fill in as many ideas as possible for their age category.

### II. SMALL GROUP SHARING

(25 minutes)

Gather the participants together into two groups—one of elders and one of youths. Ask the members of each group to share their ideas from the focusing activity. This then becomes a brainstorming activity, with individuals contributing ideas they came up with on their own. Use a flip chart and label it either “older adult toolbox” or “youth toolbox” depending on which group you are working with. (Have one representative from each group serve as the “recorder.”) If the list is slow in forming, use the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- Think about what you and your peers do and see every day. Does this give you any other ideas to add to this list?
- If we look at the list now, what kind of person does it describe?
- Does this list provide a true sense of what people in your generation are like?
- Does this list include objects that would help others to understand the kinds of things you know a lot about?



Once each group develops a list of at least 15 items, have participants decide on the 10 items that they feel best summarize their generation.

**III. LARGE GROUP SHARING**  
(15 minutes)

Reconvene the two groups into one larger group. Have one or two people from each group present their lists and say a few words about their group discussions. Encourage questions and some preliminary discussion about items that draw interest.

**IV. PREPARATION FOR SCAVENGER HUNT**  
(30 minutes)

At this point, tell participants about the toolboxes and tell them about the scavenger hunt in the next activity. Divide the participants into intergenerational groups of 4 to 6 people. Hand out copies of the “Toolbox Scavenger Hunt List” (see Appendix C) to all members. Have each group note the items already listed on this form (and define them for each other if necessary—for example, “What is a perfume atomizer?”), and then copy down the new items they identified from the previous activity.



## Session 2—

# Scavenger Hunt!

### OBJECTIVES

1. Intergenerational groups will collect objects for the boxes.
2. Youths and elders will begin to learn from one another as they try to make sense of the objects on the lists.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- milk crates or black garbage bags
- letter of introduction (optional)

### NOTE TO FACILITATOR

To ensure that this activity works well (in terms of finding items for the toolboxes), some additional preparation is needed. If possible, try to obtain one or two items (such as a washboard or a new superhero figure) to get each box started. This should help generate excitement and involvement on the part of the participants. Also, it will help to provide participants with some clues about places to go and things to look for.

### I. FOCUSING ACTIVITY (15 minutes)

Break into the same groups of 4 to 6 people that were formed during the end of Activity #1. Have participants discuss their ideas about where to find the objects on the list. The groups may choose to subdivide for speed, but these subdivisions should not be made based on age.

### II. THE HUNT BEGINS!

There are several ways to conduct the scavenger hunt. Because scavenger hunts are a lengthy process, any of the following options will likely act as a motivating start that can be followed by independent “homework” to find the bulk of the items.

One way to start the scavenger hunt during project hours is to have groups visit shopping districts to solicit donations from store owners, particularly those of thrift shops. For this strategy to work, the groups will need a letter of introduction directed to community members and retailers that they can present when asking for a donation. This letter would explain the nature of the project that these donated materials would be used to support.

Alternatively, groups can hunt for items that have been discarded or are likely to be discarded. This might entail visiting their homes, neighborhood garage sales, flea markets, and items left on curbsides for removal.

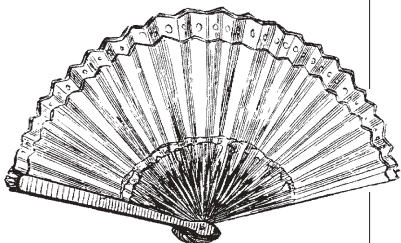
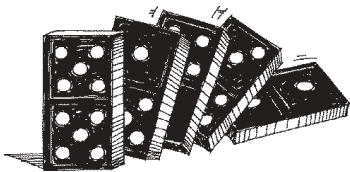
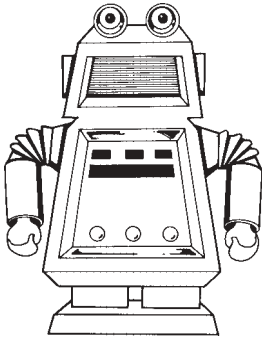
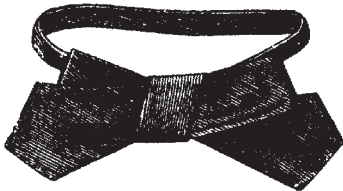


For either approach, make sure that the meeting facility is kept open during the “hunting” period—people may finish early, get tired, or need to drop off larger items.

The scavenger hunt also can be organized as one large homework activity, with each team member given the task of bringing in one or two toolbox items for the next program meeting. In this case, the focusing activity above can be extended to include discussion about the specifics of toolbox item collection.

### III. RECONVENE (15 minutes)

When the groups reconvene, have them assess what they collected, identify items they still need, and assign “jobs” to complete by the next meeting. You may want to provide the groups with black garbage bags or milk crates that they can use to store their findings until the next meeting.







## Session 3— Item Sort

### OBJECTIVES

1. Youths and elders will learn about the items they obtained during the scavenger hunt activity.
2. Participants will create the toolboxes.
3. Groups will celebrate their work.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- 2 large plastic tubs (with lids)
- Celebration items/prizes (optional)

### I. FOCUSING ACTIVITY

(10 minutes)

Ask participants to share any additional items that they found. They then check off all the items found on their Toolbox Scavenger Hunt List and hand the completed sheet to the project facilitator.

### II. GROUP SHARE AND TOOLBOX CONSTRUCTION

(30 minutes)

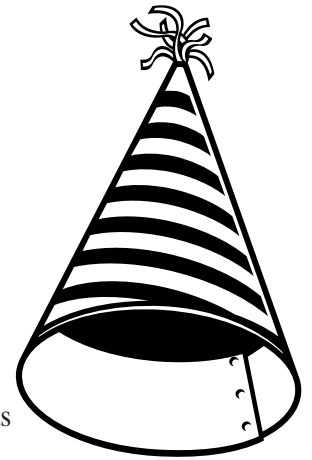
The facilitator then raises the large plastic tubs and identifies one as the “Youth Toolbox” and the other as the “Senior Adult Toolbox.” As each group presents their findings to the entire group, they place their items into the appropriate toolbox. There may be some repeated items, but usually that is acceptable. For example, it is unlikely that more than one group would have selected the same newspaper front page.

As the groups present, make sure to give others the opportunity to ask questions about the items. “How does a hat pin work?” “Where did you find an old radio tube?” “Is there a difference between your group’s Pokémon card and ours?” If nobody is asking questions, you may want to prompt them by asking observers if they can guess what an object’s name or function is before the group explains it.

### III. SHOW AND TELL

(30 minutes)

Ask each member to select one item from either box that has particular significance to them. This can be an item that they feel offers a view into their own lives or the lives of other people of their generation. After making their selections, each person should share something about the object with the larger group. They could describe how the object works or tell a story about how they have used this object. As the facilitator, you may want to stimulate discussion and encourage participants to share aspects of their lives that are likely to disconfirm age-related stereotypes. For example, a striking party hat brought in by an older adult might disconfirm the idea that senior adults don’t party or have fun like people of other generations. As another example, a jazz CD brought in by a youth



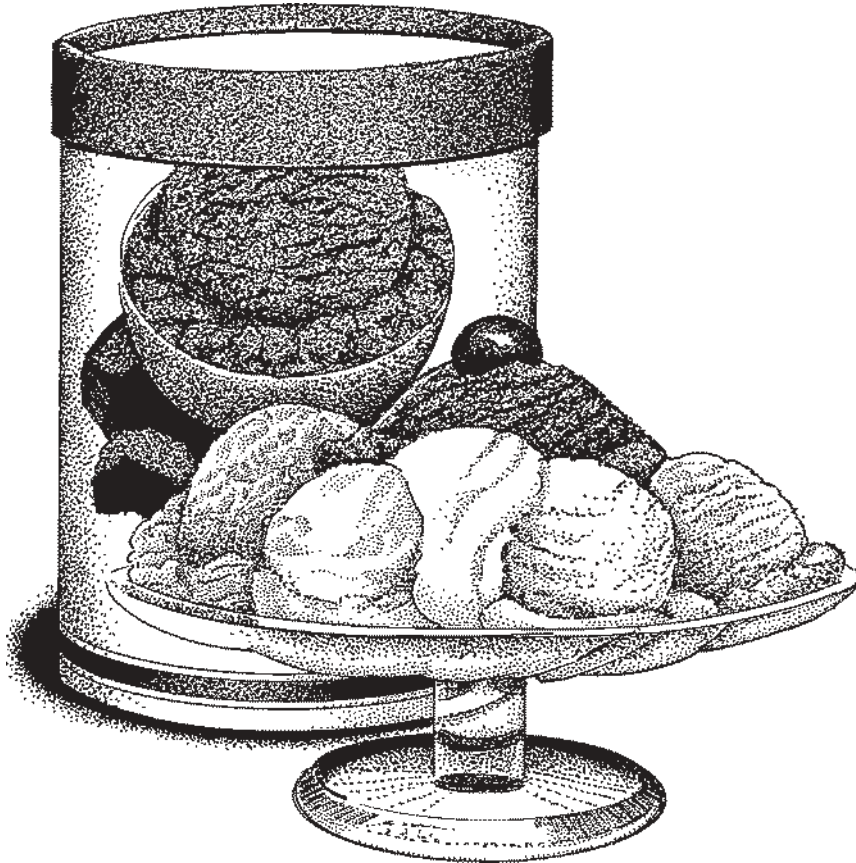
might surprise older adult participants who have certain preconceived ideas about what types of music youths listen to.

#### **IV. WINNER!**

(Optional;  
20 minutes)

Announce the winning group and the number of items they found. Be sure to congratulate everyone for their hard work. As a celebration for everyone's hard work, a prize that all people enjoy is usually the best. These types of prizes include:

- an ice cream party where the winners get to keep their mugs
- tee shirts for everyone, and winners receive shirts that have “scavenger hunt winner” printed on them
- pizza party—winners get 2 slices instead of 1
- prize basket—winners get first pick





## Alternative to Sessions 1–3— **Learning from Toolboxes**

### **OBJECTIVES**

(Note: This is an alternate activity for groups who are using the toolboxes after they have been created.)

1. Participants will be introduced to the toolboxes.
2. Participants will learn about items associated with the life experience of the other generation.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

- older adult and youth toolboxes
- prizes/materials for celebration (optional)

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

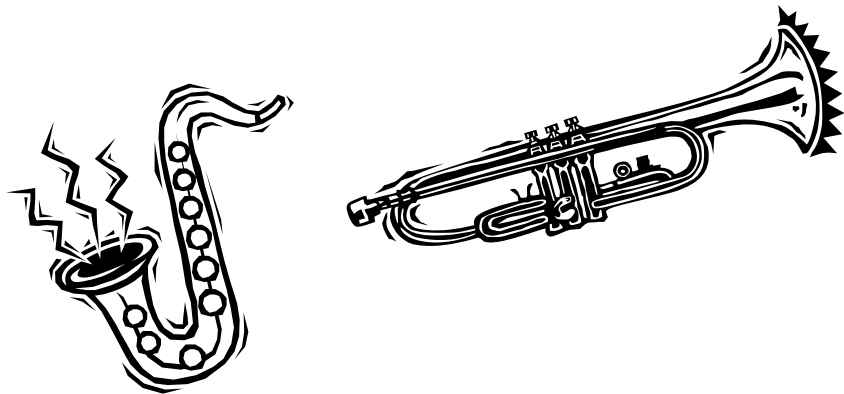
Gather the entire group of participants and explain to them that the toolboxes are boxes filled with objects that have particular significance to youth (ages 8–18) and elders (ages 60+). Also explain that these toolboxes were put together by youths and elders in previous projects in the county.

### **II. THE INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE GAME** (45 minutes)

Break the group into at least four groups—two groups of elders and two groups of youths. Place the toolboxes in front of the groups and make sure that the contents are not visible to the groups. As the facilitator, you will hold up objects, one at a time, from one of the toolboxes. The elders can only answer questions about the youth toolbox and the youths can only answer questions about the older adult toolbox. When an object is raised, the first team on the answering side to raise their hand gets to answer. They get one point for the correct name and one point for the correct function. An incorrect answer means a point deduction. A team may answer only the name or only the function for just one point. Each team gets one five-point “stinger”—they can bet five points that one of their opposing teams will not be able to answer both questions for the next object. If the team does not answer correctly, then the “stinging” team gets 5 points; however, if the team being “stung” gets the question right, they get the five points. The team with the most points at the end of the game is the “winner!” This can be a good activity for breaking down stereotypes and learning about new things. Many participants may be surprised by what the other generation knows!

### III. INDIVIDUAL SHARE (30 minutes)

Ask each participant to select one item from either box that has particular significance to them. This can be an item that they feel offers a view into their own lives or the lives of people of their generation. After making their selections, each person should share something about the object with the larger group. This can be a lesson on how the object works or a story about how they have used this object. As the facilitator, you may want to stimulate discussion and encourage participants to share aspects of their lives that are likely to disconfirm age-related stereotypes. For example, a striking party hat brought in by an older adult might disconfirm the idea that senior adults don't party or have fun like people of other generations. As another example, a jazz CD brought in by a youth might surprise older adult participants who have certain preconceived ideas about what types of music youths listen to.



### IV. GAME WINNER! (Optional; 20 minutes)

Rather than giving prizes right after the game, wait until the individual sharing period is over. A small prize for the winning group should be determined in advance—ribbons or first pick from a grab-bag are good options. It is also nice to turn the prize into a mini-party, which gives the elders and youth opportunities to socialize informally. These could be ice cream or pizza parties where the winners get special treatment.



## Session 4—

# Theatre Activity

### OBJECTIVES

1. The intergenerational group will produce a skit using the toolboxes.
2. The participants will be encouraged to think critically about stereotypical attitudes about age and aging.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- youth and older adult toolboxes
- a room with a performing area

### I. INTRODUCTION

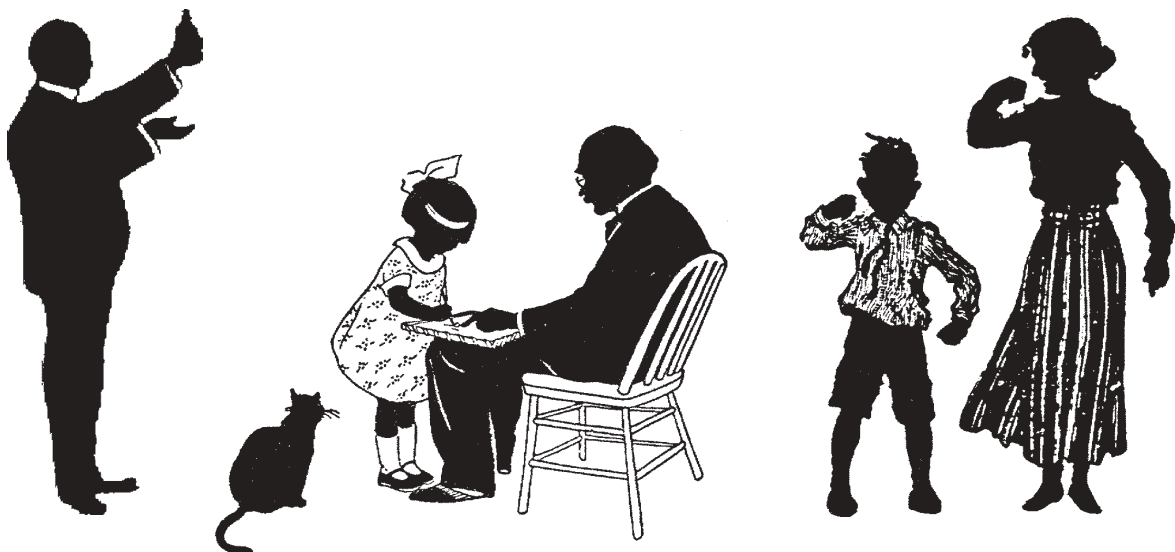
Introduce the activity to the participants. Explain to them that this activity is an improvisational skit activity in which they will be broken into intergenerational groups that will develop skits using objects from the toolboxes as props and then perform the skits for each other.

### II. SCRIPT WRITING AND REHEARSAL

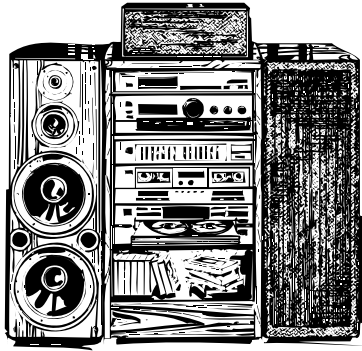
(30 minutes)

There are a couple of ways to structure this activity. After assigning participants to intergenerational groups, either:

- give them scenarios and allow them to select props,
- give them props and allow them to make up scenarios, or
- allow them to select both.



If you will be presenting the groups with scenarios, choose one of the following intergenerational communication situations or develop one of your own:



1. A teenager and his 75-year-old grandmother going shopping together to buy a stereo system for their home.
2. A first meeting between a senior adult tutor (school volunteer) and a teenager who is popular in school but flunking in math.

Float around the room while the groups practice. Provide time reminders periodically so that they will make sure to finish on time. Although these are brief skits (3–5 minutes), encourage the groups to figure out ways to dramatize and resolve the types of interpersonal conflicts that might arise in their given scenarios.

### **III. PERFORMANCE** (40 minutes)

After each group performs, take the time to discuss what happened in the scene. Encourage participants to consider their attitudes toward people of other age groups and explore the similarities and differences between people of other age groups. Some questions that might prompt this type of reflection include:

- What attitudes towards youths/elders were demonstrated in this skit?
- Have you ever seen a scenario like this played out in real life? Explain.
- What is a different way that this scene could have been played?
- Can you empathize with any of the characters?
- How different would the scenario be if the characters' ages were switched?



## Session 5—

# How Are We the Same? How Are We Different?

### OBJECTIVES

1. Youths and older adults will gain an increased sensitivity to the ways people of other generations live and think.
2. Youths and elders will gain more of a sense of the similarities and differences between the generations.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- youth and older adult toolboxes (created in previous activities)
- blackboard
- chalk

### I. FOCUSING ACTIVITY (15 minutes)

To gain a sense of the many similarities and differences between the generations, we can look at how they spend their time on a daily basis. It would help to find out about the following:

- preferences for entertainment
- ways of cooking and eating
- hobbies
- ways of dressing
- reading material
- toys and games
- ideas about home decor



Divide the group into intergenerational groups of 4 to 6 people. Assign a “daily living theme” (or category) for each group (you can draw from the list above). Ask the groups to brainstorm a list of the types of objects included in both the toolboxes that have a bearing on their assigned “daily living theme.” Then have the groups select relevant items from the toolboxes. Make sure to keep the toolboxes in a location where all groups can gain access to them during the activity.

While the group is brainstorming draw a chart on the board:

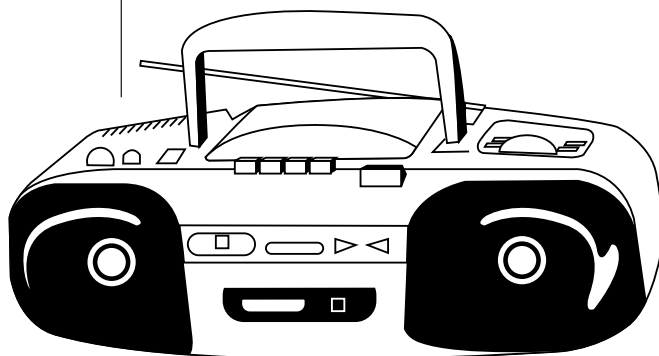
Category	Elders	Youth
(Example)		
TOYS	Jacks	Pokemon cards

**II. GROUP SHARE**  
(20 minutes)

Compile the list on the board. As groups mention certain items, hold the object up for reference. For example, if one of the categories is toys, under elders you might have bridge or jacks, while under youth you might have Pokémon cards or video games. After you have compiled the list, ask the groups to consider what additional things could be included on the list. Engage the group in a discussion about the ways in which things have stayed the same and the ways in which things have changed (for instance, “girl groups” and comic books are both still around, with similar and different themes).

**III. GROUP TEACH**  
(30 minutes)

In the same groups as before, ask the elder members to select one item from their toolbox and the youth members to select one item from their toolbox. The item should be something that has teaching elements, such as a game, a craft, a type of cosmetic, a piece of technology, or a piece of clothing (such as a tie). Taking turns, the elders, followed by the youths, should teach each other about the item they selected and how it works. As they teach each other, they should answer these questions: Are there objects similar to the one shown here, but from the other generation? What are these comparable objects?







## SESSION 6— “LABELING PARTY”

- OBJECTIVES**
1. Attain a sense of closure to the program.
  2. Organize and label all items for each toolbox.

- MATERIALS NEEDED**
- labels, markers
  - light refreshments
  - music (optional)



**I. PARTY** One way to attain closure is to have an end-of-program party. Since there is also the logistical need to label the toolboxes and the items within, holding a “Labeling Party” can accomplish both goals. As participants write out labels and attach them to the items, pass around refreshments, play music from different eras, encourage participants to display their favorite dance steps, and promote similar activities.

**II. EVALUATION** For program evaluation purposes, repeat the same data collection procedure conducted before the first session (this should take about 10 minutes). Break participants into youth and elder groups and ask them to list as many words describing the other age group as they can think of. The facilitator records the words and makes note of the discussion that ensues. Record these words, code them as “positive,” “neutral,” or “negative,” and then compare them to pre-activity words.

**III. CONSIDER ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES** At this point, after six sessions together, the young participants and the senior adults will be well on the road to developing friendships. To extend these budding relationships and build upon the sense of camaraderie that might be forming between the younger and older participants, consider holding additional intergenerational program activities. Such activities might include traveling (e.g., to museums, festivals, and zoos), cooking, dancing, reading, exercising, hiking, and surfing the Net together.



**Appendix A—  
Record of TRIAL  
Programs Held**

Date	Number of sessions	Number of participants	Notes on use of boxes	Intergenerational interaction dynamics



## Appendix B— What Represents Us? (Handout)



We are going to be creating “toolboxes” filled with items that provide clues about how young people (8 to 18 years old) and senior adults (60 years old and older) live and what they consider to be important. There will be two toolboxes—one filled with items relevant to older adults, and one filled with items relevant to youths.



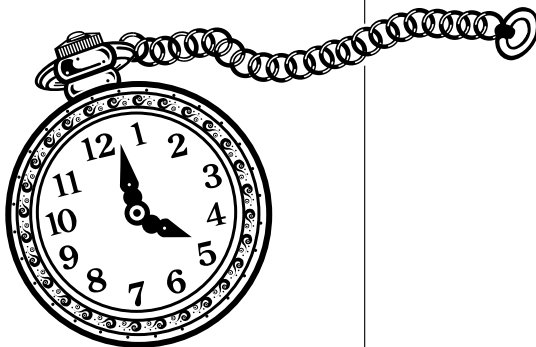
To make these boxes work for our activities, we need you to help think of some items to be included in the box for your generation. There are no right or wrong answers. Try to think about what things you feel are best for demonstrating who you are, how you live your life, and what you find (or have found) to be “meaningful” in your life experiences.

[If it helps, you could imagine that some aliens from outer space visited Earth and told you that they want to bring back things to their planet that will help them to describe what our young people/older adults are like and how they live. What items should they take back with them?]



Use the space below. Try to think of as many things as possible.

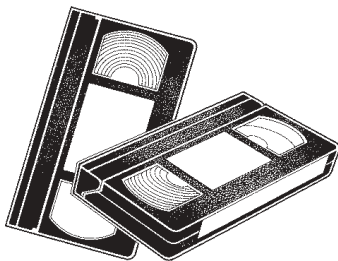
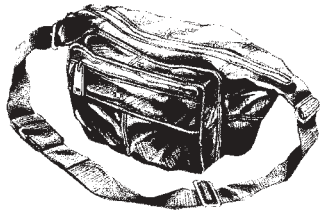
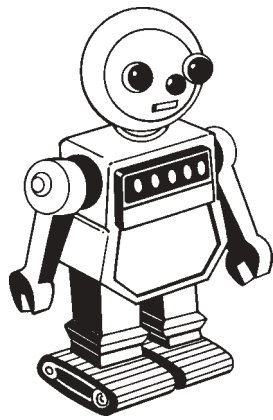
Items for the \_\_\_\_\_ toolbox (youth, senior)



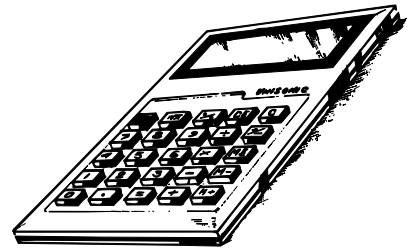


# Appendix C— Toolbox Scavenger Hunt List

## YOUTH TOOLBOX



- CD
- Anti-tobacco video
- a pager
- body glitter
- “Top 40” music list from within the last month
- paraphernalia associated with BMX bikes
- Pokémon cards
- Harry Potter book
- Barney toy
- wallet chain (modern style)
- “Fruit by the Foot”—snack food
- comic book
- video game cartridge box
- picture of a pop music idol
- a pocket calculator

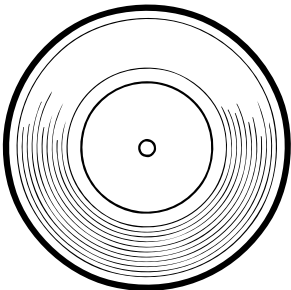


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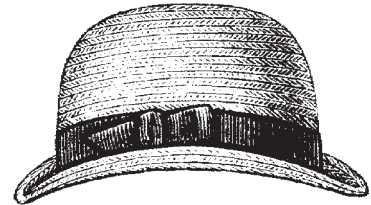


## Appendix C— Toolbox Scavenger Hunt List

### OLDER ADULT TOOLBOX



- copy of front page of a newspaper from before 1960
- copy of an old stamp
- a hat pin
- an old item with the original (now outdated) price on it
- an old record
- a muff
- old dress-making patterns
- an old radio tube
- perfume atomizer
- large-print book
- a magazine advertisement for a product no longer in use
- fountain pen
- “radio memories” audiotape
- jelly bottling/canning paraphernalia
- a toy made out of iron
- old maps of places that have changed (for instance, Russia or Africa)
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## Appendix D—Proposal for Funding/ Materials Donation (template)

<b>DATE</b>	_____										
	Request for Funding (or _____ Materials)										
	Submitted to _____										
<b>NAME OF PROGRAM</b>	Tools and Resources for Intergenerational Action and Learning (TRIAL): _____ (Name of County or Community)										
<b>NAME OF ORGANIZATION REQUESTING SUPPORT</b>	_____ _____ _____										
<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	Address _____ _____ Telephone Number _____ Fax Number _____ E-mail _____ Web Site Address _____										
<b>AMOUNT OF REQUEST</b> (itemized budget)	<table><thead><tr><th>Budget Items</th><th>Cost</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Items used to create two toolboxes</td><td>[\$200]</td></tr><tr><td>Refreshments for intergenerational sessions</td><td>[\$15–\$50]</td></tr><tr><td>Part-time project coordinator (6 weeks)</td><td>[\$400–\$800]</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Total _____</td></tr></tbody></table>	Budget Items	Cost	Items used to create two toolboxes	[\$200]	Refreshments for intergenerational sessions	[\$15–\$50]	Part-time project coordinator (6 weeks)	[\$400–\$800]		Total _____
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<b>ORGANIZATION INFORMATION</b>	Penn State Cooperative Extension is an educational network that gives people in _____ County access to Penn State’s resources and expertise. The mission of Penn State Cooperative Extension is to extend nonformal outreach educational opportunities to individuals, families, businesses, and communities throughout Pennsylvania. Through its educational and community service programs, cooperative extension provides educational enrichment and social support for people of all ages.										

**NEEDS TO BE  
ADDRESSED**

Over the past two decades, there has been a trend in which young people and older adults are becoming increasingly separated in terms of living arrangements and recreational outlets. This pattern of age segregation has been linked to the decline in life satisfaction among older persons, less available adult guidance for the young, and an increase in negative stereotypes toward the aged and aging. New ways are needed to stimulate interaction between young people and older adults.

**THE PROPOSED  
INITIATIVE**

**Primary Objective**

To provide community organizations with an accessible, mobile, easy to use resource to promote intergenerational communication activities in schools, community centers, retirement communities, and other settings.

**Description**

Two Tupperware-like tub “toolboxes” will be developed—one will include items/artifacts depicting young people’s life perspectives and experiences and the other will include items that provide insight into the lives of older adults. These boxes will be housed at Penn State Cooperative Extension’s \_\_\_\_\_ County office and loaned out to various school and community groups interested in participating in intergenerational activities. The boxes are intended to prepare, entice, motivate, and excite people for intergenerational engagement experiences.

Cooperative Extension 4-H/Youth Development Agents and Family and Consumer Science Agents will provide leadership in working with local young people and older adults in building the intergenerational toolboxes, demonstrating how they may be used, publicizing the availability of the toolboxes, and distributing them to educators and human service professionals interested in using the toolboxes. Some examples of intergenerational activities using the toolbox approach include the following:

- Scavenger Hunt to find items to incorporate into the toolboxes.
- Intergenerational show-and-tell sessions in which young and old participants present the items and describe how they reflect some characteristic of the lives of people in their generation. Participants will be encouraged to ask each other questions: For example, “Did these large round things really produce music?”
- Improvisational theatre exercises: Participants will work together to develop and then perform theatrical (improvisation-type) skits using some of the items in the toolboxes as props.
- Group discussion sessions: Participants will be encouraged to revisit their attitudes toward people of other age groups and explore the similarities and differences between people of other age groups.

### Sample items

—For toolboxes depicting young people’s lives:

- CDs
- Body-piercing and body art paraphernalia
- paraphernalia associated with BMX bikes
- trendy clothing items
- Pokémon cards and figurines

—For toolboxes depicting older adults’ lives:

- copies of old stamps
- some old items with prices on them (to illustrate process of inflation and the changing value of money)
- clothing items
- a 78 rpm record
- old dress-making patterns
- household accessories
- old newspaper clippings
- old postcards

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of county) Cooperative Extension staff will keep a record of each toolboxes program, including dates held and number of participants.



For other resources available through the Penn State Intergenerational Program, visit the Web site:  
<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/fcs/mk/menu.html>

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Visit Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences on the Web: <http://www.cas.psu.edu>

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