

# Kids in Time

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## 1. Introduction

Dr. Wanda Wilson couldn't understand it. All of the calculations were correct. She'd sent objects back in time, that was for sure. Not smart phones or radios, of course, but spoons and knives, sure! She'd sent animals back in time, but why couldn't she send people? People didn't cause paradox events, so they should be able to be sent, but each time, the team just sat in the Wilson Transform Box and nothing happened. It just didn't make sense.

Then, one night in the lab, Wanda's daughter Erika began walking around in the lab. She was supposed to be doing her homework, of course, but that was boring, and she began wandering around the lab. Dr. Wilson had decided to try sending a spoon back in time to witness the signing of the Declaration of Independence, something that had worked before. She looked on with horror as she saw young Erika in the Wilson Transform Box. Dr. Wilson's fear was not because Erika would be hurt, but that Erika would ruin the experiment. People couldn't be sent back! Nothing would happen!

To Wanda's amazement, she was wrong. Erika disappeared along with the spoon! Would Wanda's daughter return in the 24 hours allotted? Wanda hoped so. 24 hours later, Erika and the spoon re-appeared in the Box. Erika described what she had seen. She'd seen Ben Franklin just like in school! She'd seen John Hancock sign the document! The details were too detailed, too amazing to be wrong!

Wanda finally figured it out. Adults, with their knowledge of modern events, would cause the same paradox events that would be caused by advanced technology, but kids would be unobtrusive enough to prevent the paradox. With the help of Wanda and scientists like her, historians began planning to getting information they needed with Kids in Time.

## 2. About this Game

This game is a role-playing game. It was created as part of the 24 hour Role Playing Game contest on the [rpggeek.com](http://rpggeek.com) web site. If you are reading this, you probably know what a role-playing game is already. In this game, a game master will prepare and adventure for the players. The players will create characters and explore the GM's world.

The theme of this game is that the players will take the roles of kids between the ages of 5 and

11. The kids will go back in time and have adventures. Perhaps they will witness historic events. Perhaps they will encounter unknowns in history and help them out. Perhaps sinister things people were not meant to know await. Regardless, the kids will have to solve their own problems without adult supervision. Luckily, they'll have the wisdom of the future to guide their actions.

This game's mechanics use a system of coins. While dice can be used as a substitute, the coin system was created to allow the system to be as minimalistic as possible. The author wanted to be able to create a game that used materials he could have obtained when he was growing up.

### 3. Generating a Character

#### Basic Character Information

In Kids in Time (KiT), each player plays a character, usually between the ages of 5 and 11. The world of KiT is very much like our own, but time travel back in time is possible for humans younger than the age of 11. The actual age of the character depends on the player and game master's (GM) wishes, but first characters should be between the ages of 9 and 11.

Character information is stored on a piece of paper called a character sheet. Each character should have a name, whether the character is a boy or a girl, a description of their personality, a set of skills, and perhaps a disadvantage.

Generally, each character starts the game with 10 points worth of skills. The basic mechanism for determining skills is to toss 10 coins. For every heads result, the player may take a point of physical skills. For every tails result, the player may take a point of mental skills. Players should consult with the GM to see if there are limitations as to what skills and the level of skills the players may take. A good guideline for initial characters is that they may only take skills at level 1.

As with most games, the choices are ultimately left to the GM and the players. A GM may want to run a game where the players are all the heirs to a great martial arts tradition and go back in time to help their ancestors. All the player characters (PC) might have fighting at the highest level! Another possible deviation from the guideline is that the GM may allow the players to simply choose how to allocate 10 skill points without tossing the coins to determine skill type.

Character Example:

Erika Wilson (girl)

Description: Daughter of Dr. Wanda Wilson, Erika stumbled into the Wilson Transform Box and has been asked to go back in time to tell what she sees. She likes skateboarding, computers, and most of the other things 10 year old girls like.

Result of skill generation toss:

5 heads and 5 tails. Erika will have 5 physical skills and 5 mental skills

Skills

Skills are divided into two types, physical skills and mental skills. Physical skills are acts that require some kind of physical feat. Mental skills are skills whose success is primarily based on mental ability. Often characters tend to have slightly more of one type than the other, and this can be used to flesh out their personality. Note, however, that just because a character is heavier in one type of skill than the other does not mean that they lack general intelligence or coordination as the case may be. A kid who likes biking, skateboarding, and football isn't necessarily a mental clod, he simply prefers one kind of play over another.

Skills have 4 possible levels, levels 0, 1, 3, and 6:

Level 0: This is a skill that it can be assumed a person has learned at a base level simply because of the culture he lives in. For instance, a 10 year old kid from the United States in 2015 will probably be able to ride a bike, use a computer, and perform basic mathematics. These skills, while common today, might be totally foreign to cultures 100 years ago. This skill level is used to break ties in contests.

Level 1: This is a skill that a kid has spent some time learning. A skill at this level means that the kid has spent some additional time learning to do this. Any kid in 2015 can ride a bike, but the kid with the level 1 skill has learned to do it pretty well.

Level 3: This is a skill that an average adult that has studied that skill would have. Note that under normal circumstances, a new character would not be able to have a skill at this level, but a GM might want to allow it depending on the circumstances.

Level 6: This is a skill that an adult knows at an exceptional level. Someone with a level 6 skill is highly trained. Characters should not be allowed to take level 6 skills except under extraordinary circumstances. A kid with a level 6 skill would be someone like a prodigy who graduated from medical school at the age of 10. For some skills, a person at level 6 may have some kind of specialty. The effects of a specialty are described later in the rules.

Level 1 skills cost 1 skill point of the appropriate type (physical or mental) Level 3 skills cost 3 skill points of the appropriate type. Level 6 skills cost 6 skill points of the appropriate type.

Here is a list of some possible skills. It is in now way meant to be comprehensive, but it should allow the players and GM to have a starting point for fleshing out their characters.

#### Physical Skills:

Fighting (This skill represents any form of fighting with fists)

Running

Strength

Sports (by type)

Climbing

Biking

Skateboarding

Throwing

Weapon Use (by type guns, swords, knives, etc.)

#### Mental Skills

Science (by type)  
Engineering  
Fast Talk  
Streetwise  
Merchant  
Electronics  
Computers  
History  
Survival

#### Character Example:

Erika Wilson can purchase 5 levels of physical skills and 5 levels of mental skills. Erika Wilson likes skateboarding and computers, so she chooses skateboarding (physical) and computers (mental) at level 1. Since her mom is a scientist, she chooses time travel science (mental) at level 1. Since she has done some time traveling, she's become interested in history (mental) at level 1. She is pretty fast, so she takes running (physical) at level 1. She's been to camp where she learned horseback riding (physical) at level 1 and survival (mental) at level 1. At school, she's pretty good at math, so she takes math (mental) at level 1. Around the neighborhood, she likes to climb trees and ride her bike, so she takes bicycle (physical) at level 1 and climbing (physical) at level 1.

#### Final Skill List for Erika Wilson:

##### Physical

Skateboarding - 1  
Running - 1  
Horseback riding - 1  
Bicycle - 1  
Climbing - 1

##### Mental:

Computers - 1  
Time Travel Science - 1  
History - 1  
Survival - 1  
Math - 1

#### Disadvantages:

A disadvantage is some kind of character flaw. Many game systems have disadvantages at a variety of levels. In KiT, there are three levels of disadvantages. Level 1 disadvantages are minor flaws that generally do not impact the character's ability to function. Level 2 disadvantages are flaws that impact the character's ability to function in a significant, but not critical way. Level 3 disadvantages are flaws that impact the character's ability to function in a critical way. In KiT, a player character should never have more than 1 disadvantage, and it should not be more than a level 2 disadvantage.

Note that context matters. A character with poor eyesight that can be corrected with eyeglasses would have a level 1 disadvantage if that character were to be traveling back in time where eyeglasses were available. If the same character were going back in time to where he could not take his eyeglasses, the disadvantage might be level 2 or even level 3. Talk to the GM beforehand to flesh out the details.

Each player character is required to have one level 1 disadvantage. A character may take a level 2 disadvantage in exchange for an additional skill point, mental or physical as the player chooses. A player character should generally not have a level 3 disadvantage, as it creates too much trouble for the character to properly be a time traveler. If the GM allows level 3 disadvantages for PCs, the PC should get 3 additional skill points to spend for it, mental or physical as the character chooses.

Examples:

Level 1 Disadvantages:

Always wears a red article of clothing  
Says his prayers every night  
Slightly poor eyesight, correctable with glasses  
Cannot ride a bike (Normal characters would have biking at level 0, but this character does not.)

Level 2 Disadvantages:

Always tells the truth  
Poor eyesight that cannot be corrected  
Physically unable to run long distances (asthmatic, out-of-shape, whatever)  
Has only one functioning hand/arm

Level 3 Disadvantages

Significantly blind  
Significantly deaf  
Significantly lame (needs wheelchair, etc.)

Character Creation Example:

Erika Wilson has mild nearsightedness that is correctable with glasses. If she travels back to an era where glasses are available, she can take them with her. If she travels back to an era where glasses are not available, then she will be hindered, but not unable to function. This is a level 1 disadvantage. She decides not to take a level 2 disadvantage since her player is satisfied with her skill set.

#### 4. Tests and Contests

During the course of an adventure in time, a character will need to perform skills to achieve his goals. Sometimes, he might be performing this skill against another character, like in a fight. Sometimes, he might have a task that requires necessary skill, but doesn't have another person actively opposing him. If there is no person actively opposing him, the character will perform a test. If there is another person actively opposing him, there will be a contest.

## Tests:

Suppose a character needs to climb a tree or research something in a library. A test will be required. A test will be based on a physical or mental skill. To perform a test, a character must have that skill at level 0 or better. To perform a test, the character tosses 1 coin plus one coin for every level of skill that character has. For physical tests, the character gets one success point for every coin that lands on heads. For mental tests, the character gets one success point for every coin that lands on tails.

Each test has a target number. To succeed at a test, the character needs to meet or exceed the number of success points of the test.

The GM may decide to modify the number of coins use for a particular test depending on the circumstances. For instance, if a character takes extra time or less time than normal to perform a particular tasks, the GM may allow the player to add or force the player to subtract one coin from his toss.

## Example:

Erika needs to solve a math problem. The task requires one success point to succeed. Normally, she would be able to toss 2 coins, but she has access to her mom's books for this one and a lot of time, so the GM allows her to toss an extra coin. She tosses two heads and one tails, so she gets one success point, solving the problem!

The level of tests are as follows:

Easy (0 successes) - anyone with skill in this area will be able to succeed.

Average: (1 success) – requires some level of skill

Hard (2 successes) – A trained adult doesn't always succeed at this.

Very Hard (3 successes) - Only well-trained people at the adult level will even attempt this.

Extremely Hard (4 successes) – Only possible by trained doctors, engineers, etc.

Impossible (5 successes) – You need to be Albert Einstein to even attempt this, and even then you probably won't do it.

Note that an easy test doesn't mean one that everyone will succeed. You still need to know how to ride a bike in order to ride a bike to city hall! You need to have enough skill to toss coins, even if you don't need any successes as a result of the toss!

## Contests:

When performing a task against another person, you and the other person must perform a contest. To perform a contest, toss as many coins (plus 1) as you have level in the appropriate skill, and your opponent does the same. Whoever has more successes wins the contest and is welcome to whatever reward that entails. If the contest is a tie, then the GM must decide what that means. The GM may decide that ties must be broken, in which case another contest is made.

## Example:

Erika is in a race with Johnny. Whoever gets to Independence Hall first will get the quill to John

Hancock! Erica has level 1 in running, while Johnny has level 0. Erica tosses 2 coins (1 + 1 level or running) , while Johnny tosses only a single coin. Erica tosses one heads (on physical success point) and one tails, while Johnny tosses one tails. Erica makes it to Independence Hall first, and gives John Hancock her quill!

Effects of specialization on a contest:

If a particular contestant has a specialization in a particular skill and the other participant does not AND the specialization is relevant to the contest, the the character with the specialization wins the contest automatically.

Example:

John Sharpton has fighting level 6 and a specialization of 'boxer' in fighting. Millie Lane also has fighting level 6, but with a specialization in Karate. If they fight in a boxing match, John will always win. If they fight in a Karate tournament, Millie will always win. If they encounter each other and fight with now particular rules, then the contest will take place by tossing coins like normal.

## 5. Clarifications, and Possibilities

The Obligatory Combat Section:

Many role-playing games have detailed sections describing combat, and nearly every game must describe how combat works in some capacity. KiT is not designed to be a combat-themed game, but it is nearly inevitable that some kind of fighting will occur. Fights between two individuals can generally be settled as contest of skill between the two opponents using the appropriate skill. For groups, the GM may want come up with a way to generate a single contest based on the total fighting skills of the respective groups. For instance, a group of six untrained kids with skill 0 wrestling a trained adult wrestler of skill 3 may be an even match, let each player toss 4 coins.

Dramatic fights may be set up and resolved with several contests of skill, each contest representing a combat 'round' used in may role-playing games. The result of the contest may be being knocked back, knocked out, or whatever the GM deigns appropriate.

Theme

My vision of Kids in Time is as a light spirited adventure game. Here are a few guidelines that I suggest based on this.

1. Characters, both good and bad, should not die. Character death is permissible, but it should be dramatic and always to achieve some kind of dramatic victory. Kids losing fights should be knocked out, locked in the closet, or penalized in some other way besides injury or death.
2. Realistically, contests between kids and adults will usually be won by adults. KiT is not designed to be realistic. Contests should be set up so that the player characters have a chance to succeed, and kid cleverness should be able to beat adult experience and skill.
3. History is full of dark moments. KiT should not be. Avoid slave ships and Black Deaths. These things should be studied and debated, but not in KiT.

## Wizards, Ghosts, Space Aliens and All That

KiT is designed so that the players start in the modern worlds and go back in time to see historical events based on the modern world. However, the Game Master might want to introduce supernatural elements into the game. Perhaps sorcery, not science, is how the characters travel back in time. Are ghosts real? Are there dark forces waiting to conquer the world at different points in history? There is nothing about KiT that restricts these ideas. Fleshing out these ideas is left as an exercise to ambitious game masters.

## The Problems of Time Travel

What happens if the characters go back in time and cause something to happen so that their character's parents never meet? Don't ask me. The answers to these questions are left to the Game Master. If you are running the game as a campaign, I'd suggest making it very difficult to cause problems like this. If you're running the game as a one-shot adventure, you might make the game about exploring the consequences.

## Language and Culture

What happens when the kids from the modern United States travel to 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan? In reality, they would not be able to speak the language, and they would find the culture to be shocking. How these changes are handled in the game should be left to the Game Master, but the author suggests making them as unobtrusive as possible. Part of the time travel technology should include some kind of universal translator so that the characters should be able to communicate with the natives. Culture shock should be presented, but it should probably be presented once up front and then assumed to be properly understood for the rest of the session.

## 6. Adventure Ideas

1. The Declaration of Independence is being signed, but they've run out of quill pens and/or beer! Could a sinister cabal of time travelers be opposed to making this event happen? Our heroes need to help the founding fathers get quills (and/or beers).
2. Did King Arthur really exist, or was he just a legend? The heroes could visit various periods of British history to find out, and maybe have other adventures along the way.
3. Let's visit 1950s Nevada just to see how things were different for kids back then! Maybe we'll discover that there's more to the flying saucer legend to originally meets the eye, and there are modern day repercussions.
4. Travel to 1990s Seattle and experience the Grunge Movement. Maybe not is all as it seemed then.

## 7. Other Information

### About the Game

This game was designed on September 20, 2015 as an entrant into the 2015 RPG Geek 24 Hour RPG contest. It's loosely based on a game I tried to write about 35 years ago at age 12 that I called 'Kids and Crises' which was about kids having adventures in the neighborhood. My entry was



originally going to be themed based on that game, but I decided to look at the random generator provided with the contest, and I saw 'Time Traveling' as one of the periods. My son, who is now 9 years old, read a lot of the Magic Tree House <sup>TM</sup> books by Mary Pope Osbourne over the past two years, and I thought it might be fun to try to make my game in a similar vein to those books.

For the game's mechanics, I wanted to be able to use items that would have been available to me when I was 12 years old, which meant no dice other than six-siders. I came up with the coin idea based on recently having read the rules to the Coin Age game available from Tasty Minstrel Games. I started playing role-playing games back in 1981, and played regularly until about 1995, and played irregularly since then. I've never seen a system that used coins, though I would not be at all surprised to find out that they exist and are similar to mine. I assure the judges that any similarities are coincidental, but I will accept their judgment on the issue.

For what it's worth, I think the best part of the game is the coin mechanic, and I think the worst part is my lack of original time-travel scenarios.

I've never tested played this game, and I expect no one ever will. Regardless, I'm very happy with the result, as I never thought I would be able to write a game. I'm grateful to the existence of the contest to inspire me to write such a thing.

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