





A Brief Look at Earth's History

The biological, geological, and climatic events listed appear in reverse chronological order, with the oldest event (at the bottom) and the most recent event (at the top).

Era	Period	Epoch	Beginning of Interval	Major Biological Events of the Era	Major Geologic and Climatic Events of the Era
Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene or Recent	(10,000 years ago)	Human Civilization	Earth's climate has been stable for the past 8,000 years. Great Lakes formed as glacial ice melted. The peak of the last ice age was 21,000 years ago. Earth experienced several periods of glacial conditions (ice ages) and interglacial conditions. ----- Earth became colder and drier. Volcanic activity increased in western North America. Andes, Alps, and Himalaya Mountains formed as crustal plates moved. Colorado River carved out Grand Canyon. Inland seas in North America drained away.
		Pleistocene	1.7 million years ago (MYA)	Saber-toothed Cats, First Humans, Bears, Mammoths, Sloths	
	Tertiary	Pliocene	66 MYA	 Flowering Plants Horses, Cats, Dogs, Primates, Camels, Rhinoceroses, Deer, Pigs, Small Mammals	
		Miocene			
		Oligocene			
Eocene					
Paleocene					
Mesozoic	Cretaceous	245 MYA	 Extinction of Dinosaurs First Flowering Plants Most Dinosaurs	Asteroid impact likely caused extinction of dinosaurs. Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains formed. Climate was much warmer than today. Shallow seas covered much of North America. Atlantic Ocean formed. North America and Africa moved apart. Pangaea began to break up.	
	Jurassic				Larger, Fiercer Dinosaurs First Birds First Small Mammals
	Triassic				Many Cycads and Conifer Trees Reptiles First Dinosaurs
Paleozoic	Permian	570 MYA	 Many Amphibians and Reptiles First Conifer Plants	Land became drier. Basins were larger so water drained into them. Ural and Appalachian Mountains formed. Continents moved together, forming Pangaea. Coal formed in swampy regions. Shallow seas covered most of land.	
	Carboniferous				First Reptiles Coal Forming Swamps
	Pennsylvanian				
	Mississippian				
	Devonian				First Amphibians, Sharks and Insects
	Silurian				Coral Reefs Form First Land Plants
Ordovician	First Fish (Vertebrates)				
Cambrian	First Invertebrates; Trilobites, Brachiopods				
Precambrian			4.6 billion years ago	 Simple Marine Life, Bacteria, Algae, Jellyfish	Ozone layer formed. Outgassing caused the atmosphere to form and eventually the oceans. Meteorites bombarded Earth. Solid Earth divided into core, mantle, crust. Earth formed approximately 4.6 billion years ago.

M.Y.A. = million years ago