

Relative Geologic Time Scale

No history course works without a chronological system. The relative geologic time scale below is our standard. Memorize all the era, period, and epoch names below (including spelling and capitalization). You do not need to know the dates. (The abbreviation “m.y.a.” = “million years ago”; “b.y.a.” = “billion years ago”.) This will be quizzed! (and soon!).

ERA	PERIOD	EPOCH	(Some Dates)	
CENOZOIC	Quaternary	Holocene (“Recent”)	(Began 10,000 years ago)	
		Pleistocene	(Began 1.6 m.y.a.)	
	Neogene	Pliocene		
		Miocene		
	Paleogene	Oligocene		
		Eocene		
		Paleocene		(Began 66 m.y.a.)
	MESOZOIC	Cretaceous		
Jurassic				
Triassic			(Began 251 m.y.a.)	
PALEOZOIC	Permian			
	Carboniferous*			
	Devonian			
	Silurian			
	Ordovician			
	Cambrian		(Began 542 m.y.a.)	
PROTEROZOIC	Ediacaran		(Began 635 m.y.a.)	
			(Began 2.5 b.y.a.)	
ARCHEAN			(Began 3.8 b.y.a.)	
HADEAN			(Began 4.54 b.y.a.)	

*The Carboniferous Period is often divided in the United States into the (earlier) Mississippian and (later) Pennsylvanian Periods.

