

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!

ERA	PERIOD	EPOCH	(Some Dates)
CENOZOIC	Quaternary	Holocene (“Recent”)	(Began 10,000 years ago)
		Pleistocene	(Began 1.6 m.y.a.)
	Tertiary	Pliocene	
		Miocene	
		Oligocene	
		Eocene	
		Paleocene	(Began 65 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 4.6 b.y.a.)	

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

