

Timescale of the Earth

ERA	PERIOD	EPOCH	BEGINNING	MAJOR EVENTS
Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene	10,000	HUMAN CIVILIZATION BEGINS
		Pleistocene	1,800,000	ICE AGE; NEANDERTHAL AND CRO-MAGNON MAN EVOLVE; MAMMOTHS ROAM FREE
	Tertiary	Pliocene	5,000,000	OLDEST HOMINID FOSSILS; SOUTH AMERICA JOINS WITH NORTH AMERICA
		Miocene	24,000,000	GRASSLANDS EVOLVE; HOOFED ANIMALS PROLIFERATE; MOUNTAIN CHAINS FORM
		Oligocene	34,000,000	CARNIVORES AND GIANT MAMMALS EVOLVE; ANTARCTIC ICE-SHEET FORMS
		Eocene	55,000,000	FIRST LARGE MAMMALS OCCUR; PLANET BECOMES DRIER; SMALL EXTINCTION EVENT
		Palaeocene	65,000,000	MANY MODERN MAMMAL FAMILIES EVOLVE; JUNGLES COVER THE EARTH
Mesozoic	Cretaceous	Late	99,000,000	MAMMALS AND BIRDS DIVERSIFY; PTEROSAURS DECLINE; DINOSAURS BECOME EXTINCT
		Early	144,000,000	
	Jurassic	Late	159,000,000	OLDEST MAMMALS, DINOSAURS DOMINATE; FLOWERING PLANTS AND BIRDS; GIANT MARINE REPTILES IN SEA
		Middle	180,000,000	
		Early	206,000,000	
	Triassic	Late	227,000,000	OLDEST DINOSAURS, CROCODILIANS AND PTEROSAURS OCCUR; CONIFERS AND CYCADS BECOME COMMON; EXTINCTION EVENT
		Middle	242,000,000	
		Early	248,000,000	
Palaeozoic	Permian	Late	256,000,000	REPTILES BECOME LARGE; DESERTS PROLIFERATE; GREAT EXTINCTION EVENT DEVASTATES LIFE
		Early	290,000,000	
	Carboniferous	Late	323,000,000	COMPLEX LAND COMMUNITIES OCCUR; COAL FORESTS DOMINATE; OLDEST REPTILES AND INSECTS OCCUR
		Early	354,000,000	
	Devonian	Late	370,000,000	OLDEST SHARKS AND JAWED FISH; OLDEST AMPHIBIANS OCCUR; LOBE- AND RAY-FINNED FISH EVOLVE
		Middle	391,000,000	
		Early	417,000,000	
	Silurian	Late	423,000,000	OLDEST LAND PLANTS AND ANIMALS; CORAL REEFS ARE COMMON
		Early	443,000,000	
	Ordovician	Late	458,000,000	COMPLEX MARINE COMMUNITIES OCCUR; ARTHROPODS DOMINATE THE SEA; JAWLESS FISH BECOME COMMON
		Middle	470,000,000	
Early		490,000,000		
Cambrian			543,000,000	THE CAMBRIAN EXPLOSION; OLDEST HARD-SHELLED FOSSILS; OLDEST JAWLESS FISH
Precambrian	Proterozoic Eon		2,500,000,000	THE FIRST SINGLE-CELLED ORGANISMS EVOLVE; THE ATMOSPHERE BECOMES RICH IN OXYGEN; SNOWBALL EARTH; THE FIRST ANIMAL LIFE EVOLVES
	Archaean Eon		4,600,000,000	EARTH FORMS; ITS SURFACE IS BOMBARDED BY METEORITES; LIFE CANNOT SURVIVE