

GEOLOGICAL TIME SCALE

Period or epoch	Beginning and end, in 10 ⁶ years	Key events
<i>Cenozoic era</i>		
Quaternian		
Contemporary	0–10,000 y ± 2,000 y	
Pleistocene	10,000–1,000,000 y ± 50,000 y	Homo Erectus breakout
Tertiary		
Pliocene	1.8–5.3	Ape man fossils
Miocene	5–25	Origin of grass
Oligocene	25–37	Rise of cats, dogs, pigs
Eocene	37–55	Debut of hoofed mammals
Paleocene	55–67	Earliest primates
<i>Mesozoic era</i>		
Cretaceous	67–138	Demise of dinosaurs
Jurassic	138–208	First birds
Triassic	208–245	Appearance of dinosaurs
<i>Paleozoic era</i>		
Permian	245–290	Flowers, insect pollination
Carboniferous	290–360	First conifers
Devonian	360–410	First vertebrates ashore
Silurian	410–435	Spore-bearing plants
Ordovician	435–520	First animals ashore
Cambrian	520–570	Vertebrates appear
<i>Pre-Cambrian</i>		
Pre-Cambrian III (Proterozoic)	570–2500	First plants, jellyfish
Pre-Cambrian II (Archean)	2500–3800	Photosynthetic bacteria
Pre-Cambrian I (Hadean)	3800–4450	Earth formed 4600 million years ago

Reference: Calder, N., *Timescale - An Atlas of the Fourth Dimension*, Viking Press, New York, 1983.