

Create a Time Line of Recent History

Construct your own time line of recent events. You can show how people and events have been related over time by creating a time line with several layers. Sources of information could include an interview with your parents, a social studies textbook, and an encyclopedia. Begin by asking about the life of a living older relative, such as a parent, aunt, uncle, or grandparent.

The Years on a Line. Start with the year your relative was born. You don't have to make a tick mark on this line for every single year on the line. It's okay to mark every 5th or every 10th year, right up until the present year. (See the example below.)

Layer 1: Personal Events. Mark some of the important dates in the life of your relative, such as the year he or she was born, when he or she graduated, traveled, married, had children, or found employment.

Layer 2: Technology and Innovation. Mark the years that some recent inventions first came on the market, such as the home computer, cell phone, DVD, or iPod.

Layer 3: National Events. Mark some things that happened in the USA, such as a new federal law (Clean Water Act), a U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Miranda v. Arizona*), economic high or low points (housing market crash), population milestones, presidential terms, major constructions, or major disasters.

Layer 4: World Events. Mark things that affect many countries such as treaties (such as the Kyoto Protocol on global warming) changes of leadership (such as the Secretary General of the United Nations), awards (such as the Nobel Prize for Peace), successes (eradication of smallpox), or wars and natural disasters.

Your finished time line should include at least **three events in each of the layers**: 3 personal, 3 technology, 3 national, and 3 international events.

Your finished time line should include at least **one event that spans a period of time**, which can be shown as a line segment. In the example below, "Mom attends college" spans four years.

Some layers can be above the main time line that shows the years, and some can be below the line. In the example below, layers 1 and 2 are above the line, and layers 3 and 4 are below the main line. This makes it all a bit easier to read.

* Teachers: See "Teaching and Learning with Timelines" in this issue of Middle Level Learning, May/June 2008, pages 4-7.

