

Timelines and Chronological Understanding

Key Stage 1

At KS1 timelines will continue to develop the understanding of **sequence** introduced in the Foundation Stage. As part of this work, pupils will begin to look at **interval and duration**. Timelines should support an understanding of **significance** too, as children debate what to include and why.

Personal timelines are important in KS1 - develop them further by including local and national events.

Class timelines should feature key moments from all time periods studied while also making links to the present day.

When studying **significant individuals** at KS1 add them to the timeline, but also create separate detailed timelines of their lives. Put each significant person's life within a context by making links to both the local and national events happening at that time.

Add **significant events** to the timeline but also create a separate timeline of the event itself, e.g. the five days of the Great Fire of London, or Neil Armstrong's 8 days in space.

Key Stage 2

Timelines at KS2 should support an understanding of '**big picture history**'. Parallel timelines should be used to place people and events in a **broader historical context**. This means that the timeline for the topic taught will run alongside others that illustrate the local and international context e.g. while studying the Anglo-Saxons, make links to what was happening in other parts of the world in that era e.g. the Maya civilisation.

Look at local place names to track settlement and events in your area related to the time period which can then be featured on the timeline.

At KS2 children sometimes think that one period abruptly stops and another starts, so it's important to challenge this misconception and illustrate how time periods **overlap**. Children may be surprised to find that the early Anglo-Saxon period overlaps with the Roman era and that much of the later stage of this 600-year period overlaps with the Vikings.

When beginning a new enquiry place the period on a timeline within the **wider historical framework** of what you have previously studied – and also the present day.

Towards the end of KS2 experiment with formats different from the 'left-to-right horizontal' style from past to present. E.g. a vertical format which can work like an archaeological excavation going back down through the years.

Time-lining a particular aspect of society, such as medicine, transport, technology, crime and punishment, education or childhood, can help pupils gain a sense of period, and can link into your **post-1066 study (The World Wars)** at KS2.

Children should make their own personal timelines which, to support learning, could be pasted into their books and added to.

Timelines should also be found around school, e.g. in the hall, along corridors and outside. Outside timelines provide opportunities for acquiring the necessary **scale** when looking at ancient civilizations.

As a class learns about a new topic or event they can add it to their timeline. With commercial timelines consider ones that provide opportunities to add your own ideas.

VAK and messy timelines

Active, or VAK, time-lining, where children themselves form the timeline, is a key tool in helping them make sense of chronology. Ian Dawson's www.thinkinghistory.co.uk contains numerous ideas to support activities and make time memorable using props like hats, name cards or different-coloured tabards to denote various time periods.

The best timelines are often messy ones where children are always adding to them and include visuals. Children may not remember the dates but they will remember the order of the images.

In summary:

If we refer to events that happened, 'a long, long time ago' how does this help children's understanding of when that was exactly? A **chronological framework** is needed.

Are important features like **duration, interval and sense of period** included? (Or are the Vikings sandwiched between 'the dinosaurs' and the Victorians on a long timeline?)

Check for stereotypical images. Do they foster misconceptions?

Timelines are no use if they are not actually used.

So what should a good timeline look like?

As a visual representation, timelines should be an essential tool in enabling children to make sense of chronology. Be very clear about what you want the timeline to do. This will vary with the age and ability of the children, so it is essential to **consider progression when planning and using timelines**.