

Time and Chronology 3rd to 6th classes

“A class timeline should be a constant point of reference as work is completed on local, national and international history. The items on the line should be added as work is begun on each period or era so that the line develops as the year's work is completed. Through discussion, the child's attention should be drawn to what came before a period under study and what came later.”

History Teacher Guidelines p.8

A class timeline is a vital component of any history unit. Timelines give the children a framework for understanding the passage of time and organising a particular historical period: **when** it all happened, **what** happened at that time (the key events), **how** things developed or stayed the same (change and continuity) and the **sequence** of events

Some general points on timelines:

- Homemade timelines work better than commercially produced ones that often contain too much information or refer to events and periods that are not going to be studied by the class.
- Centuries should be clearly represented on a timeline. The passage of time can be difficult to follow in black and white so it is effective to colour code centuries (or decades on a shorter timeline). Horizontal rather than vertical or zig-zag lines are preferable.
- Dates, pictures, and the written word (captions, labels, explanations, accounts) can all be added to the class timeline over the course of the school year. If possible the timeline should be at a level where the children can reach and add relevant material to it themselves. Artefact displays can be arranged as a 3D timeline.
- A general class timeline can be represented as one long line to represent the period from the Stone Age to the present. At the beginning of the school year a couple of dates should be put up that the children have studied the previous year for example when the Vikings arrived in Ireland. This can then be used as a point of reference throughout the school year by asking questions such as
 - Did this happen before or after the Vikings arrived in Ireland?A second timeline can represent a period from the main timeline for example the 20th century. This is valuable for 5th and 6th classes as many of the strand units they study occurred during this century. A 20th century timeline should be made more personal by adding some personal and local information to it for example
 - When were you born? Choose one child and write “Sophie was born in 1999” and add this as a caption to the timeline with a photo of Sophie if possible.
 - When was your Mum or Dad born? Add “ Sophie’s Dad was born in 1969”
 - When was your Granny or Grandad born? Add “Sophie’s granddad was born in 1940.”
 - When was our school built? “Our school was built in 1971”

Again these dates become a point of reference when studying different strand units and can help to make effective connections across time to other events for example

- Was Sophie's grandad born when World War 1 started?
 - What age was Sophie's grandad when our school was built?
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- It can be valuable in the senior classes to add information above and below the timeline. Above the timeline could represent what was happening in Ireland during this period and below could detail different events that were happening at the same time around the world.
 - It can be useful to get the children to construct timelines themselves.
 1. Personal timelines: From third class onwards children can use dates on timelines. The children can place pictures (either photographs or drawings) of events such as their birthday, first day at school, birth of a sibling etc onto a timeline. Their timeline can be developed to represent the lives of both parents and grandparents. This activity is useful in that it begins to develop the idea that time existed before the child was born.
 2. Physical timelines: A group of children hold artefacts or cards and arrange themselves in order from left to right for example
 - When studying the theme of light they could show the line of development by holding different artefacts such as a candle, paraffin oil lamp, light bulb, electric lamp, torch etc and arrange themselves in the correct order.
 - Using photographs of the presidents of Ireland a group of children could each hold an individual photograph and arrange themselves in chronological order from the first president to our current president.
 - When children are familiar with a class timeline they can each construct their own timeline of shorter periods they are studying such as key events in a famous person's life.