

Packing a Punch with Timelines & Maps

By Maggie Hogan

Introduction

Everything happened somewhere. Everything happened sometime.

Two Keys

1. What we perform, we remember.
2. If it's fun, we're motivated to do more!

Why use timelines?

Most of us learned history in chunks here and there, rarely in chronological order, and rarely in conjunction with other events in the world that were happening simultaneously. Yet, it is so beneficial to see in a visual form the order of history.

Timelines provide both the chronological framework and a clearer understanding of concurrent events.

Before or After? These questions come from *The Ultimate Geography & Timeline Guide*:

Q. Was Stonehenge built before or after Hammurabi wrote his codes?

Q. Who was born first, Buddha or Socrates? Buddha was born almost 100 years earlier.

Q. Was the French Revolution before or after the California Gold Rush?

God is orderly but mankind isn't. History is Messy. It doesn't happen in neat and orderly chunks of time. It's intertwined and overlapping - despite what you might think from looking at pretty & well ordered timeline books :-)

Types of Timelines

1. **Informational**: comes complete with everything the publisher or author thinks is important. These are often done thematically (i.e. Civil War or inventions, etc.).

2. **Activity Timeline**: blank or with very few details. Designed for the student to add to it, with just the right amount of detail appropriate for his age and ability.

There are many different types of activity timelines:

- **File cards** –
- **Strips** –
- **Poster style** -
- **Notebook method** -

Strands: Use double lines to track specific subjects or concurrent events happening elsewhere. For example: track inventions around the world during the Civil War; math during Ancient Greece; Literature during the Middle Ages or Art & Music during the Westward Expansion.

Or - consider tracking European events while covering early American history. Africa while studying the Roman Empire. Your family's heritage while learning about 20th century America. You will see connections you never saw before!

Timeline Figure tip: After cutting & coloring in figures, cover in poor man's laminate - packing tape. Use re-stickable glue or blue fun tak to attach to laminate surfaces.

Perfectionism: Better to start and make a mess than to never have started at all! This applies to both timelines and maps. The really fancy project you are planning but never get around to is not nearly as beneficial as the simple one that you can realistically accomplish!

Outline Maps

- Do you look at blank maps with a blank face? Don't! The very fact that they are unlabeled gives you much more room for research and creativity.
- An outline map: typically a simple B&W map showing the shape of a land mass. It may include a nation or state's borders but it doesn't include political details. May include geographic features such as rivers, oceans, mountain; it doesn't include text.

Benefits

- Practice using reference materials.
- Creative outlets.
- Great for visual & kinesthetic learners.
- Will improve long-term memory retention. We remember best what's recorded in an active way.

Paper or Laminate

Both! The choice depends on the objective, the specific assignment, the age and preference of the student. Advantages to each:

Laminate:

- Re-usable. Water based markers stay on, even when bumped, but wipe clean with a damp cloth.
- Can use restickable glue sticks to affix stamps, postcards, flags, temporarily during studies.
- Keep up on the wall and add to it all year. Store under couch.
- Eliminates the dog-eared map look.
- Easy to correct mistakes.
- Great for short term assignments - don't spend money on a map just needed for a couple of lessons.
- When your 6-year-old spills his milk on it, you won't scream!

TIP: Use Vis-à-vis **wet erase** markers (NOT dry erase!). Clean with mild window cleaner to remove natural oils and our natural PB&J smears!

Paper:

- Can work in pencil, make corrections, then do a final color copy.
- Can work in much finer detail.
- Can fold and store in student notebook. Doesn't use up much room.
- Can cover w/contact paper after completed.

What Goes Where?

Provide a list of items to be labeled.

Label items as they arise in your studies.

Require student to label according to their independent research.

TIPS:

- Identify bodies of water/rivers first in order to orient yourself to the map.

- Have a variety of atlases & reference materials handy, especially from middle school on up. One atlas is unlikely to have everything you need.
- A good teacher is prepared: look over the assignment ahead of time & make sure students have the proper tools & references to complete it.
- Teach students how to use reference tools!

Packing a Double Punch!

Everything Happened **SomeWHERE**.

Everything Happened **SomeTIME**.

- When you post a timeline figure of Christopher Columbus on your timeline - put the same figure on your outline map.
- Alexander the Great - put his horse on the map and the timeline.

Seeing the **WHERE** along with the **WHEN** makes a bigger impact than either alone.

Outline Map and Timeline ideas taken from:

[*Hands-On Geography*](#)

[*The Ultimate Geography & Timeline Guide*](#)