

Eon	Era	Period	Epoch	Ma	Life Forms	N. American Tectonics	
Phanerozoic (Phaneros = "evident"; zoic = "life")	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Recent, or Holocene	0.8	Age of Mammals	Modern man	Cascade volcanoes
			Pleistocene			1.8	Extinction of large mammals and birds
		Tertiary	Pliocene	5.3		Large carnivores	Uplift of Sierra Nevada
			Miocene	23.8		Whales and apes	Linking of N. & S. America
			Oligocene	33.7			Basin-and-Range Extension
			Eocene	55.5		Early primates	Laramide orogeny ends (West)
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous		145	Age of Dinosaurs	<b>Mass extinctions</b>	Laramide orogeny (West)
						Placental mammals	Sevier orogeny (West)
						Early flowering plants	Nevadan orogeny (West)
	Jurassic		213	First mammals	Elko orogeny (West)		
	Triassic		248	Flying reptiles	Breakup of Pangea begins		
	Paleozoic	Permian		286	Age of Amphibians	<b>Mass extinctions</b>	Super continent Pangea intact
						Coal-forming forests diminish	Ouachita orogeny (South)
							Alleghenian (Appalachian) orogeny (East)
							Ancestral Rocky Mts. (West)
Paleozoic	Pennsylvanian		325	Age of Amphibians	Coal-forming swamps		
					Sharks abundant		
					Variety of insects		
					First amphibians		
					First reptiles	Antler orogeny (West)	
Paleozoic	Devonian		410	Fishes	<b>Mass extinctions</b>		
					First forests (evergreens)	Acadian orogeny (East-NE)	
Paleozoic	Silurian		440	Fishes	First land plants		
					<b>Mass extinctions</b>		
Paleozoic	Ordovician		505	Marine Invertebrates	First primitive fish	Taconic orogeny (NE)	
					Trilobite maximum		
Paleozoic	Cambrian		544	Marine Invertebrates	Rise of corals	Avalonian orogeny (NE)	
					Early shelled organisms	Extensive oceans cover most of N.America	
Proterozoic ("Early life")	Precambrian		2500		1st multicelled organisms	Formation of early supercontinent	
					Jellyfish fossil (670Ma)	First iron deposits	
						Abundant carbonate rocks	
Archean ("Ancient")	Precambrian		~3800		Early bacteria & algae		
						Oldest known Earth rocks (~3.93 billion years ago)	
Hadean ("Beneath the Earth")	Precambrian		4600		Origin of life?	Oldest moon rocks (4-4.6 billion years ago)	
						Earth's crust being formed	
					Formation of the Earth		

Figure 7: Geologic time scale; adapted from the U.S. Geological Survey. Red lines indicate major unconformities between eras. Included are major events in life history and tectonic events occurring on the North American continent. Absolute ages shown are in millions of years.