Eon	Era	Period	Epoch	Ma		Life Forms	N. American Tectonics
Phanerozoic (Phaneros = "evident"; zoic = "life")	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Recent, or Holocene	0.01	Age of Mammals	Modern man	Cascade volcanoes
			Pleistocene	1.8		Extinction of large mammals and birds	Worldwide glaciation
		Tertiary	Pliocene	5.3		Large carnivores	Uplift of Sierra Nevada
			Miocene	23.0		Whales and apes	Linking of N. & S. America
			Oligocene	33.9			Basin-and-Range Extension
			Eocene	55.8		Early primates	Laramide orogeny ends (West)
			Paleocene	65.5			
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous		145.5	Age of Dinosaurs	**Mass extinctions** Placental mammals Early flowering plants	Laramide orogeny (West) Sevier orogeny (West) Nevadan orogeny (West)
		Jurassic		199.6		First mammals Flying reptiles	Elko orogeny (West) Breakup of Pangea begins
		Triassic		251		First dinosaurs	Sonoma orogeny (West)
	Paleozoic	Permian		299	Age of Amphibians	**Mass extinctions** Coal-forming forests diminish	Super continent Pangea intact Ouachita orogeny (South) Alleghenian (Appalachian) orogeny (East)
		Pennsylvanian		318.1		Coal-forming swamps Sharks abundant Variety of insects	Ancestral Rocky Mts. (West)
		Mississippian		359.2		First amphibians First reptiles	Antler orogeny (West)
		Devonian		416	Fishes	**Mass extinctions** First forests (evergreens)	Acadian orogeny (East-NE)
		Silurian		443.7		First land plants	
		Ordovician		488.3	Marine Invertebrates	**Mass extinctions** First primitive fish Trilobite maximum Rise of corals	Taconic orogeny (NE)
		Cambrian		542		Early shelled organisms	Avalonian orogeny (NE) Extensive oceans cover most of N.America
Proterozoic ("Early life")		Precambrian		2500		1st multicelled organisms Jellyfish fossil (670Ma)	Formation of early supercontinent First iron deposits Abundant carbonate rocks
Archean ("Ancient")				~3600		Early bacteria & algae	Oldest known Earth rocks (~3.93 billion years ago)
Hadean ("Beneath the Earth")				4600		Origin of life?	Oldest moon rocks (4-4.6 billion years ago) Earth's crust being formed
						Formation of the Earth	

Figure 2. Geologic time scale; adapted from the U.S. Geological Survey and International Commission on Stratigraphy. 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.