



# Documenting Family Memories

## Chronology Activity

### What is a chronology?

A chronology is a list of historical events arranged in the time sequence in which they occurred. A chronology is a very useful tool in preparing the history of an individual or a family and a valuable part of such a history itself.

### Why should you compose a chronology?

Making a chronology is perhaps the best way to begin a personal history. It is a good place to begin a seemingly large task. It is a simple and straightforward process. It has a clear-cut beginning—birth—and an obvious end—the present. Most people who are serious about writing their life histories should probably begin by first compiling a chronology.

- Compiling a chronology causes you to review the main events in your life.
- Associations are renewed and strengthened as others cooperate to help you compose your life story.
- A chronology will help you come to view your life in a clearer perspective.
- A chronology will help you become more historically precise.
- A chronology will help you be more precise and purposeful as you pose questions in an oral interview.
- Most important, you become excited about composing a respectable history for your posterity.

### What materials will you need?

You will need about 100 cards or small slips of paper. A convenient size is 3x5 inches. Cards are easier to work with than paper, but paper will do.

### How do you record the information?

- The event. Write on each card one single event in your life—any happening that affected your life in a memorable or significant way.
- The date. Write the date of that one event in the upper left-hand corner of the card.
- Sample cards. Completed cards will look something like these:

<p><i>September 1960</i></p> <p><i>Enrolled at Memorial School, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, team-taught by Mr. Rosenberg, Mr. Kazman, Mrs. Donovan, West Springfield</i></p>	<p><i>1958 (through 1965)</i></p> <p><i>Befriended Mr. Edwin Tallman, a rock collector, about 70 years old; field trips, rock identification, rock shows, etc.</i></p>
<p><i>21 March 1964</i></p> <p><i>Elected as secretary, 10<sup>th</sup> grade class.</i></p>	<p><i>Summer 1965</i></p> <p><i>Attended New York World Fair.</i></p>
<p><i>Spring 1961</i></p> <p><i>Won first place in Science Fair, Memorial School, with an exhibit of rocks.</i></p>	<p><i>20 March 1962</i></p> <p><i>Won first place in school Social Studies Fair.</i></p>

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## Which events should you include in your personal chronology?

- Birth date and place.
- Birth dates of younger brothers and sisters and of your own children.
- Major religious events.
- Major illnesses, accidents, surgery, etc.
- Different places you have lived, including reasons for moves.
- Names of congregations, etc., you have attended.
- Close friends: dates met, important contacts, etc.
- Schools attended.
- Deaths of friends and close relatives.
- Church service.
- Spiritual experiences.
- Memorable family activities.
- Extended trips or vacations.
- Frightening, dangerous, or otherwise traumatic experiences.
- Memorable “firsts.”
- Major world or national events.
- Memorable people met.
- Personal crises, disappointments, achievements.
- Embarrassing situations.
- Hobbies, pastimes, sports and other activities—important dates, associated with these.
- Diplomas, certificates, recognitions.
- Participation in special programs and other events.
- Fads and special interests.
- Meeting your spouse.
- Jobs and vocational activities.
- Pets owned.
- Public offices and activities.
- Transportation vehicles owned.
- Books read, talks heard or given, etc.
- Any other events that significantly affected the course of your life.

## What can you do to pin down long-forgotten or fuzzily remembered dates?

Your memory, of course, is your best aid. Write down any main event you can recall, even if you can't pin a specific date on it. As you enlarge your list of events, associating them in some order, dates will begin to fall into place also.

## What should your completed chronology look like?

Now that you have identified all the events you wish to include in your chronology, recorded them on cards, and arranged them in chronological order, you should post them in an attractive, readable format.

