



Secondary  
Subject specific

# Walk back in time

Age: 11-13

Subject: History

Topic: Chronology



## Previous learning required

- A century is 100 years, a decade is 10 years.
- Historical time in most calendars is organised around the year when scholars believe Jesus was born.
- This activity will be more meaningful if pupils have studied some CE and some BCE history.

## Learning outcomes

- To develop an understanding of the concepts of CE and BCE and be able to visualise how the BCE year numbers go backwards.
- To help pupils understand how century names relate to numbered years, for example that 1066 was in the 11th century.

## Equipment

- Long tape measure.
- Chalks.
- An object or picture to represent the birth of Jesus.
- Set of CE cards on A4 yellow paper: 1-99, 100-199, 200-299 – as many as you need for your events. Also a set of BCE cards on A4 blue paper: 99-1, 199-100.
- Event cards that are meaningful for your pupils. For example: Battle of Hastings 1066; outbreak of First World War 1914; First Roman invasion of Britain 55BCE; an event recognisable to pupils in the current year such as the last day of term.

### Did you know?

The terms CE and BCE are used in exactly the same way as AD and BC although they are seen by some as more neutral because AD and BC hold religious connotations.

## Activity

1. Use chalk to mark out BCE and CE in the centre of your space, leaving a gap between them. Discuss the meanings of these terms and ask what should go between them. Place the birth of Jesus object between BCE and CE and talk about this being year zero.
2. Ask pupils to consider what distance would be practical to represent a whole century on their timeline – maybe 100 cm?
3. Invite pupils to pick cards from the CE set and ask other pupils to take charge of the measuring. Pupils with cards in the first set (1-99 etc.) should take their places and their positions can be measured so they are evenly spaced using the scale the class has decided on. Ask them to chalk their positions on the ground as well.
4. Hand out the BCE cards to other pupils and ask them to join the timeline, with the class helping them decide where to stand.
5. Start naming the centuries, first by asking which century is the pupil holding the 1-99 card representing? Invite pupils to slot the event cards into their spaces on the timeline. Then ask everyone with CE and BCE cards to place their cards on the ground and step out of the line so they can see the whole timeline.
6. Continue to explore the scale and sequence using a variety of questions and actions, such as:
  - Explore conceptual difficulties of the First World War having started in 1914 but being a 20th century event, or the Norman invasion being in the 11th century when it occurred in 1066. If you need to you can go back to counting the number of years from zero.
  - Compare lengths of historical periods in paces or measurements, for example Roman and Tudor.



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- Stretch the timeline as far as possible in the space available and invite pupils to take a walk back in time, counting how many paces they took between different eras they have studied, such as from 20th century events back to Roman Britain.
- Introduce the concept of prehistory, discuss the meaning and where it fits the timeline – around 5000 years ago.
- Ask pupils how they would like to record this activity so that they can refer back to it in future lessons. Examples include video and photography.

## Check for understanding

1. Chalk the century names, 1st, 2nd, 21st etc., next to each CE and BCE card.
2. One or two weeks later play a game where you present pupils with a date and they have to call the name of the century back to you or do a team relay where pupils collect dates written onto wood cookies or cards. These can later be organised into a quick timeline to consolidate.
3. Invite pupils to create timelines to reflect larger and smaller timeframes. Large scale with Stone Age, Iron Age, Industrial Revolution and modern day. Smaller stretches of time can be pupil birth years to current day. Using tape measures to get the correct scale is a great way to illustrate how far apart the events and eras were in time.



### Did you know:

Did you know that woolly mammoths were still alive while the Great Pyramid at Giza was being built in Egypt in 2660 BCE? Histories can overlap in surprising ways.



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