

**Table 2: Some Major Events in the History of the Earth**

Event	Comments	Years since Earth's formation	Years ago
Earth formed	Frequent impacts with asteroids and comets will continue for at least 500 million more years	---	4.5 billion
Oldest known rocks formed (Crystals called zircons may be older.)	Older rocks were destroyed by asteroid and comet impacts or by plate tectonics	500 million	4.0 billion
Oldest evidence for life	chemical "fossils"	800 million	3.8 billion
Oldest fossils of single cells	fossils look like modern bacteria	1,100 million (or 1.1 billion)	3.4 billion
Oldest known cells like our own	called eukaryotes, these cells are more complex than bacteria	2,400 million (or 2.4 billion)	2.1 billion
First known fossil animals and plants	Before this time, only single-celled creatures were abundant	3,900 million (or 3.9 billion)	600 million
First fish	The first animals with backbones?	(4,000 million) (or 4.0 billion)	500 million
First land plants	Plants with flowers and seeds develop in 270 million more years	4,100 million (or 4.1 billion)	400 million
First amphibians	Amphibians and insects begin to conquer the land	4,150 million (or 4.15 billion)	350 million
First reptiles	Unlike amphibians, reptiles could move away from water to colonize the land	4,200 million (or 4.2 billion)	300 million
Dinosaurs appear	<i>Eoraptor</i> was only a meter long	4,273 million (or 4.273 billion)	228 million
First mammals	These first mammals were small mouse-like creatures that laid eggs!	4,280 million (or 4.28 billion)	220 million
First birds	The first bird was called <i>Archaeopteryx</i>	4,350 million (or 4.35 billion)	150 million
Extinction of dinosaurs	Many scientists believe this was caused by an asteroid impact	4,435 million (or 4.435 billion)	65 million
Early humans	<i>Homo habilis</i> made and used stone tools	4,496 million (or 4.496 billion)	2 million
Modern humans	These people looked like people today	4.49987 billion	130,000
Civilization	People began growing crops, making permanent homes, etc.	4.49999 billion	10,000

Note: All times are approximate, and may change with as new fossil evidence is discovered.