

Major Divisions of Geological Time

CENOZOIC ERA (Age of Recent Life)	Quaternary Period	The several geologic eras were originally named Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, and Quaternary. The first two names are no longer used; Tertiary and Quaternary have been retained but used as period designations
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MESOZOIC ERA (Age of Medieval Life)	Cretaceous Period	Derived from Latin word for chalk (creta) and first applied to extensive deposits that form white cliffs along the English Channel.
	Jurassic Period	Named for the Jura Mountains, located between France and Switzerland, where rocks of this age were first studied.
	Triassic Period	Taken from the word "trias" in recognition of the threefold character of these rocks in Europe.
PALEOZOIC ERA Age of Ancient Life	Permian Period	Named after the province of Perm, U.S.S.R., where these rocks were first studied.
	Pennsylvanian Period	Named for the State of Pennsylvania where these rocks have produced much coal.
	Mississippian Period	Named for the Mississippi River valley where these rocks are well exposed.
	Devonian Period	Named after Devonshire, England, where these rocks were first studied.
	Silurian Period	Named after Celtic tribes, the Silures and the Ordovices, that lived in Wales during the Roman Conquest.
	Ordovician Period	Named after Celtic tribes, the Silures and the Ordovices, that lived in Wales during the Roman Conquest.
	Cambrian Period	Taken from Roman name for Wales (Cambria) where rocks containing the earliest evidence of complex forms of life were first studied.
PRECAMBRIAN	---	The time between the birth of the planet and the appearance of complex forms of life. More than 80 percent of the Earth's estimated 4.5 billion years falls within this era.