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Family Folklore- Your Personal Timeline  
Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service  
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# Your Personal Timeline

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**PURPOSE:** To record and preserve your own past

**YOU'LL NEED:** A long piece of paper (at least 4 feet long) OR 3- by 5-inch cards and a long piece of string

Ruler

Pen, pencil, or felt tip marker

Tape

**TIME:** 45-90 minutes

**HOW TO DO IT:**

1. At the very top of your paper or on the first card, give your timeline a name such as "My Personal Timeline" or "Special Times in My Life."
2. If you use cards, hang or clip them to a string. If you use paper, draw a horizontal line across the paper from one edge to the other. Starting on the left side, make a mark for each year of your life up until now. Write the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on for each mark like this:

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1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    11

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3. Next, for each year on your timeline, write in every important event, accomplishment, activity, or tidbit that you can remember. Draw pictures to show what happened too. Include items like the following:

- My first 4-H project
- "Firsts" (like going on a trip or learning to swim)
- Places you have lived or visited
- What you did on holidays or at family celebrations
- Things that happened to you like getting an allowance or having an operation
- When you got pets
- Your hobbies or favorite things to do
- When you first read your favorite book or saw a favorite movie or heard a favorite song
- When you met your first best friend or teacher

**WHAT ELSE?**

1. Hang up your timeline and add things to it as you remember them or as they occur. Add paper as you need more space. Put each birthday and other events on it. Keep it up-to-date.

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2. Ask your parents and family to help you add even more events and happenings to your timeline. The family photo album or keepsake box might give you some ideas too.
  3. Compare your timeline to someone else's. How are the timelines similar or different?
  4. Help your parents and other family members to make a timeline of their lives. Find out what others remember from their early years. What kinds of things do people remember first?
  5. Make a family timeline of events and important memories of your whole family. Start the timeline when your parents met—or even earlier! Get everyone to help.

*Adapted from My Backyard History Book, by David Weitzman, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975.*