

Timeline JS

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For additional resources and tutorials, visit www.usmcdh.org



Timelines: An Overview

Timelines are a powerful way to visualize periodization and the relationships between events. They also offer a clear, chronological format to help viewers identify patterns and changes over time. Timelines can be used to trace key historical events, highlight milestones of a project, follow someone's journey, and more.

Creating a timeline is valuable because it transforms complex information into a dynamic format that is easier to view and engage. It allows people to compare events, notice cause-and-effect relationships, and appreciate the broader context in which these events take place. Whether you are a historian, educator, researcher, or storyteller, timelines can make your work more accessible and visually compelling.

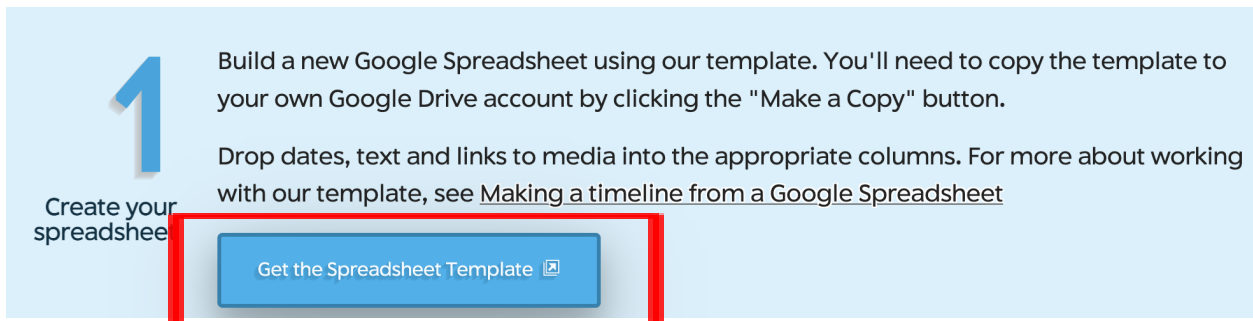
This tutorial walks through how to use [Timeline JS](#). Timeline JS is a free and open-source tool for building interactive, media-rich timelines. This tutorial also requires access to **Google Sheets**, which hosts the data used in your timeline.

Making a timeline with Timeline JS

1. Go to timeline.knightlab.com.
2. Click the green button **Make a Timeline** in the center of the page.
3. The website will scroll down to the instructions for making a timeline.

*Note: Timeline JS requires a Google account and uses **Google Sheets** for building timelines.*

4. **Select “Get the Spreadsheet Template”** to make a copy, and open the spreadsheet template in your Google Drive. If you are not already signed in to google, you can do so by using your Knox ID and password.



1

Create your spreadsheet

Build a new Google Spreadsheet using our template. You'll need to copy the template to your own Google Drive account by clicking the "Make a Copy" button.

Drop dates, text and links to media into the appropriate columns. For more about working with our template, see [Making a timeline from a Google Spreadsheet](#)

Get the Spreadsheet Template

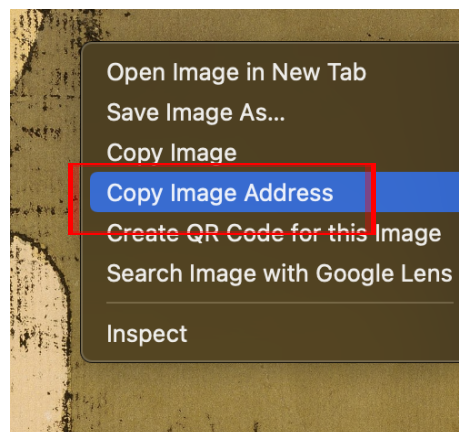
5. The copy of the template will open in Google Spreadsheets. **Change the title** to name your project.
6. This spreadsheet will **save automatically** and always exist in your Google Drive, unless you delete it.

Adding Content to your Timeline

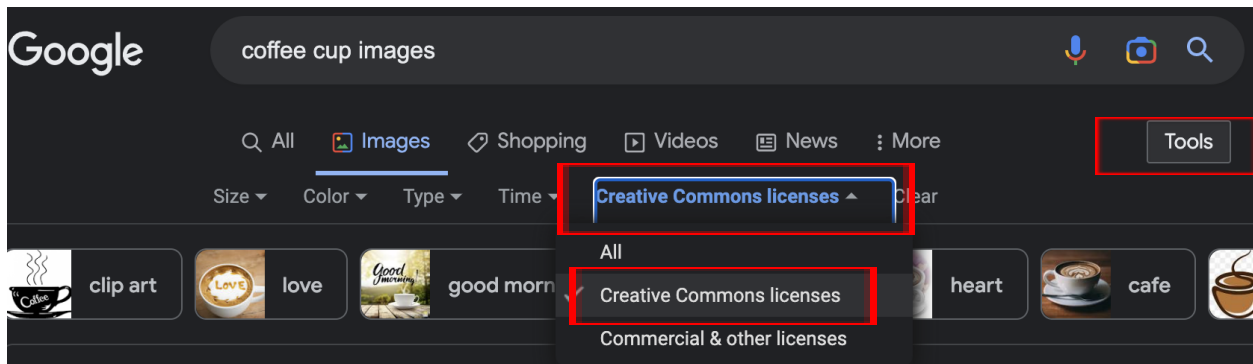
1. Add content by **editing** the spreadsheet template. It comes with sample data, which you can delete and replace with your own. Do not change/edit the column headers or delete any columns. This will keep the timeline from working.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date	Headline	Text	Media	Media Credit	Media Caption
2										Google Spreadsheet Example	This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago by zach.wise
3	2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Another Flickr Example	Timeline	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC
4	2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	https://vimeo.com/1...	Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														

2. Be sure to include a **start date** (exact time is optional) in the format: YYYY-MM-DD. End dates are optional. If you would like the timeline slide to display a specific date on the slide itself, add it to **Display Date**. Add your **Headline** and **Text** to fill out the content of the slide.
3. You can **add media** that is an image, video(youtube), or audio, as long as it exists somewhere on the internet (and not saved locally on your computer). Add the media's URL to the **Media** column of the spreadsheet. Be sure to give credit to the creator in the media credit line of the spreadsheet. To **use an image URL** found on the internet, right-click on the image, and select "copy image address." This is the URL for the *image*, not the entire website.



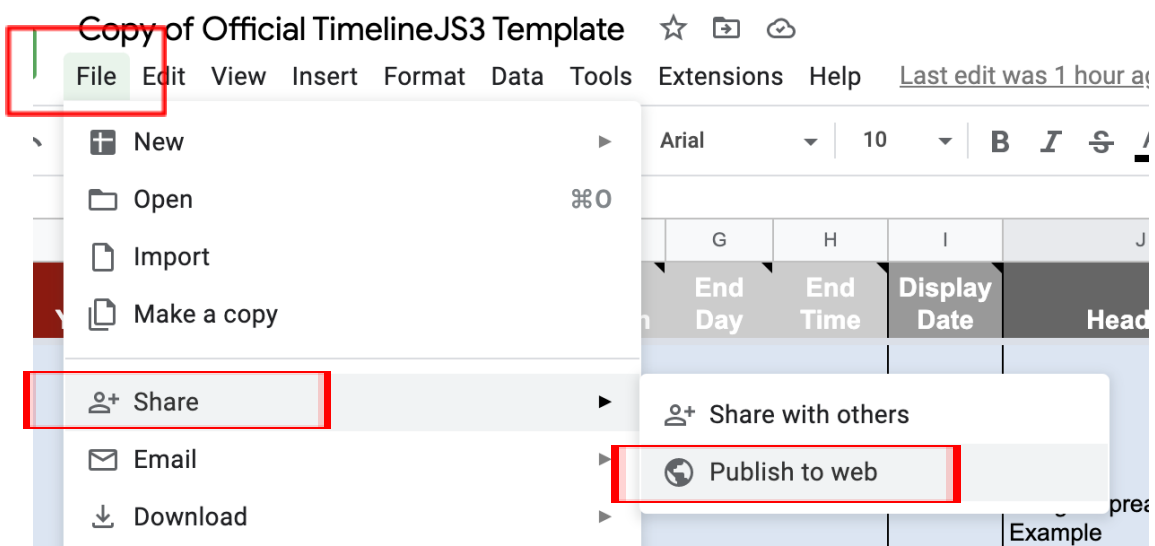
- a. Your media should be in the *Public Domain* or under a *Creative Commons License*, which means that it is labeled for reuse for educational purposes. Good websites for Creative Commons licensed images include **Wikimedia Commons, Flickr**, or a **Google Image search** (select tools> usage rights> creative commons licenses).



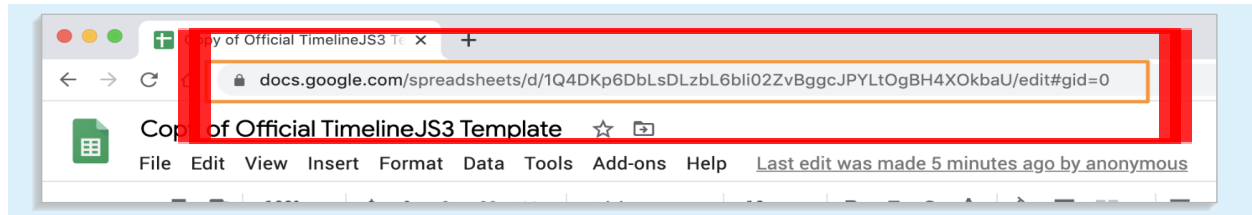
- b. For Youtube videos, select the **filter** option on the video results page, and under **features** select Creative Commons.

Publish your Spreadsheet to the Web

1. When you are done editing your spreadsheet, go to **File > Share > Publish to the Web**. A pop-up window will open, and select the green button, **Publish**.



2. A second window will open with a shareable URL. **DO NOT USE THIS URL LINK!** Close the pop-up window and return to the spreadsheet.
3. After you close the window, **copy the URL address in the browser bar** at the top of the page.



Generate your timeline in Timeline JS

1. **Paste the URL** from your spreadsheet into Timeline JS **under step 3**. There is no need to change the width/height settings.

3

Generate your timeline

Copy/paste spreadsheet URL into the box below to generate your timeline. (Make sure you've published the spreadsheet.)

Width

100%

Height

650

Optional settings (show)
Set language, fonts, starting slide and more.

2. **Scroll down to step 4** where you will see options for sharing a link to your completed Timeline, or an embed iframe code. **Preview** your timeline on the same page or in a new tab.

4

Share your timeline

Share Link
Use this to link directly to your timeline.

If you're embedding on Medium.com or other oembed-aware services, just paste this link on a line by itself where you want your timeline to appear.

Embed
Copy this embed code and paste it on your site where you want your timeline to appear (just like a YouTube video).

Preview

Open Preview in a new window

Important Tips

- Always copy and **save your content in a backup location**—Microsoft Word, Google Docs, etc.
- Google Spreadsheets will **automatically save** any edits made to your spreadsheet, and it will exist in your google drive unless it is deleted.
- **If you make any changes** to your timeline, **you do not need to re-publish your timeline, but you will need to re-paste your URL into Step 3** to generate an updated view.
- Be sure to **give proper credit to your media using the caption/ credit line**. You can (and should) include citations in the content body of the slides as needed. Check with your instructor on the preferred citation format.