

Reading BCE/CE Timelines

Timelines are used to show when events happened. They are similar to number lines.

- Events on the left side happened *earlier*. Events on the right side happened *later*.
- When exact years are unknown, a timeline will say “ca.” for **circa**, meaning “around.”

BCE/CE timelines divide dates into two periods.

- Dates *before* 1 CE are labeled **BCE** or Before Common Era. They are sometimes labeled BC.
- Dates *in* 1 CE or *later* are labeled **CE** or Common Era. They are sometimes labeled AD.
- BCE dates happen *before* CE dates.

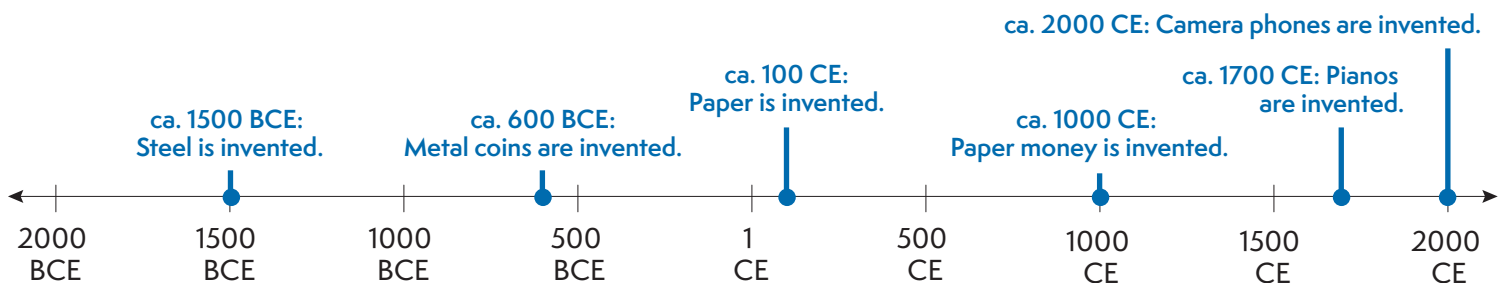
BCE dates and CE dates count differently on a timeline.

- BCE dates count backward. Larger BCE dates happen *earlier*.
- CE dates count forward. Larger CE dates happen *later*.

There is no year zero! The year goes directly from 1 BCE to 1 CE in a single year.

- There are 199 years between 100 BCE and 100 CE.
- There are 1,999 years between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE.

This timeline shows when different inventions happened. Read the timeline. Then answer the questions.



1. Which invention on the timeline happened *earliest*?
The invention of steel happened earliest, around 1500 BCE.
2. Which invention on the timeline happened *latest*?
The invention of the camera phone happened latest, around 2000 CE.
3. Which happened *earlier*, the invention of paper or pianos?
Paper was invented earlier.
4. Which happened *earlier*, the invention of metal coins or paper money?
Metal coins were invented earlier.
5. About how many years apart were the invention of paper and paper money?
Around 900 years apart.
6. About how many years apart were the invention of steel and camera phones?
Around 3,500 years apart.

Bonus question: Which year happened *earliest*; 10 CE, 100 CE, 100 BCE, or 10 BCE?

100 BCE