This guide will help you get up and running with the course website — everything from setting up a class to exploring the content and lesson plans. The website is the best way to experience the Big History Project, offering interactive lessons, videos, classroom managements tools, inline guidance and support, and more. If you prefer to work offline, simply download or print any and all of the course material.

To learn more about teaching Big History, including how to structure the course, insights on assessments, and topic-specific information, see the BHP Course Teacher’s Guide or FAQ.
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Home page

The Big History Project home page (http://www.bighistoryproject.com) is where anyone and everyone can learn about Big History. It’s important to note that the Big History Project provides two different experiences — the “school” version (on the right) and the “public” version (on the left). The school version is optimized for teachers and students and includes everything from original content to projects, activities, and assessments. It is designed to support teachers delivering Big History in a classroom setting. The public course is a tour of Big History designed for the science nerd and history buff in us all – and particularly useful for parents of students wanting to know more about the course.

If you’re ready to dive into the course, click Register, add your profile details, and get started. If you want additional info before registering, click to Learn More and to hear what our teachers have to say.

Figure 1. Big History home page

Figure 2. Big History registration form

Sign in to the course from the home page, or click the Sign In button located in the top right corner of the school page. You’ll be asked to change your password and complete your profile the first time you log in.
Landing on the timeline page

This page is the “front door” to the school course, and is where you will land after logging into http://school.bighistoryproject.com. Bookmark this page for future reference, and send students a link to this page to ensure easy access to the course.

The timeline shows you all ten units of the course, arranged sequentially. Big History is organized around key “thresholds” and these are called out at their respective points.

NOTE: Teachers and students will have different experiences on the site. Students will not see the class management tools in the teacher console. Similarly, when you access individual units and lessons as a teacher, you will see inline tips, tricks, and other support info that will not be visible to students.

Figure 3. Big History timeline page
Learn about the course

Gear up to teach the course by clicking **Console** in the top navigation bar, and then the **Teacher Resources** tab. Here you will find this Quick Start Guide, an in-depth course teacher guide, sample course plans, an overview of our standards alignment, and more. You can also click the **BHP Updates** tab to view course messages from the BHP team and our Facebook and Twitter feeds.
Use the console to set up and manage your class

The teacher console is your home for course management. Click Classroom Setup to add a period and enroll students. You can add students via join code, or an email invitation. To add students using a join code, simply direct your students to the listed URL, and have them enter the class-specific join code. If you prefer to send an email invitation, add your students’ emails in the appropriate box and click send. You can add emails one at a time, or as a group separated by commas.

Once your class is setup, you can change the period name, track student progress, view student scores, and more.
Explore the unit view

Each unit has its own page, which is divided into rows that represent lessons. Lessons are aligned to specific unit learning outcomes and are made up of an assortment of videos, articles, quizzes, and other activities that have been designed and developed by teachers. The unit view provides the highlights of each lesson so you can quickly jump to different content elements, and access them a la carte.

Use the lesson rows

When you click on the ellipses of any content item in the lesson row, you’ll see a window pop up that contains information about that item, along with a set of actions you can take. Students and teachers see a description and options to open (play) the item, download it, open an associated notebook, or download a transcript. Options vary depending on the content type. As a teacher, you can also mark content as “optional” or "required" for your students. Access the full lesson plan for the content item by clicking Start Lesson at the end of the lesson row.

Access additional unit resources

Each unit has a variety of additional resources, including a unit guide, practice and feedback opportunities such as quizzes and surveys, supplemental materials for the unit, and related external web links.
Plan and teach with the lesson view

Each lesson in the course is accompanied by a detailed lesson plan. These plans are designed to provide guidance on structuring the content associated with lesson topics. There are between three and five lessons per unit. We define a lesson as the context and structure for content items. Lessons include suggested steps to take with your class in a period, but they are not prescriptive: use what works for you. While some lessons will take a single class period, the majority of lessons are designed to take two to three 50-minute class periods.

The student view provides instructions and context for students to “self-guide” through a specific lesson — appropriate for homework, extended in-class time, or group work. Teachers can always see what the students see by choosing Student Mode, listed in the dropdown menu under your name.

In each lesson plan, you will find scaffolding for all video and article content items, including guiding questions that focus on glossary and key ideas. In addition, the teacher view will include suggested responses and talking points to support classroom discussion. In the left margin of the lesson you will find “Teaching Tips” to help you deliver the lesson. Students will see corresponding “Learning Tips.” In both the teacher view and student view, the right margin will include related videos, images, and other content relative to that particular part of the lesson. The right margin also includes “Random Facts” — anecdotes and links loosely related to lesson content that help keep the course light and, dare we say, fun!
Get to know the content

Core Content

Each lesson includes several different types of content, including:

- **Video Talks**: Short talks delivered by the course originator, David Christian, that cover core concepts of the course; or talks delivered by one of a series of scholars from different disciplines that provide unique perspectives on the Big History narrative.

- **Articles**: Diverse reading materials that can be read directly within the browser, or downloaded to read offline. All articles are available across multiple reading levels. Check out the BHP Reading Guide for a deep dive on our approach to reading.

- **Crash Course Big History**: A series of content videos from John and Hank Green.

- **H2 Big History**: Video clips from Big History, a History Channel program on H2, dynamically connect course concepts and themes.

- **Infographics**: A series of engaging infographics cover interesting topics relevant to each unit.

Figure 13. Lesson content - Video talks, Articles, Crash Course Big History, Infographics
Activities

The course includes a diverse set of activity types that repeat and deepen over the course of the year. Each activity takes about 15 – 30 minutes and can extend over more than one class period, providing students ample opportunity to explore and challenge their own understanding of the key ideas of the course. These activities include:

- **Openings**: Designed to activate prior knowledge and stimulate student learning, these short activities are intended to help students state what they already know about a topic — misconceptions and all — and transition into the class period.

- **Closings**: Closings are simply activities that we recommend be used for assessment purposes so that both teachers and students get a sense of how the students are doing in the class.

- **Investigations**: Each unit of the course includes an inquiry-based assessment activity that asks students to respond to a driving question by drawing evidence and insights from a selection of leveled readings. These help frame some of the big issues tackled in each unit. Students compose a five-paragraph essay that is evaluated for the construction of their argument, use of evidence, understanding of the core ideas of the course, and writing mechanics.

- **Vocabulary**: The vocabulary in Big History is difficult, but vital to understanding the course content. To help reinforce the course vocabulary, in many lessons we suggest you engage students in a vocab activity. Check out the Vocab Activities Guide for a complete list of these activities.

- **Project Based Learning (PBL)**: PBL is a method of instruction that has students take part in an extended inquiry about a complex question, problem, or challenge. The Big History Project includes three PBL activities. Each of these activities is written to cover two weeks of instructional time. In each, students work in groups to research their questions, compose a written response, and share their results with their class and the community.

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Figure 14. BHP Activities include Investigations and Debates
**Unit Resources**

Each unit of the course includes a set of teacher support materials to help teachers manage instruction as well as create their own materials in support of the course. These include:

- **Unit Teaching Guide**: Each unit includes its own teaching guide that walks through the unit learning outcomes, key ideas, and instructional tips from other Big History teachers.

- **Teaching Big History**: In Units 1 and 5, veteran Big History teacher Tammy Shreiner talks about best practices of teaching the course in a two-part video.

- **Guiding Documents**: In every lesson, we provide a variety of methodologies for you to use that address reading, writing, and approaches to teaching and learning. To help implement these methodologies, we offer guiding documents as suggested approaches. However, all lessons can be adapted to your preferred format. You’ll find the guides in the Guiding Documents section of the BHP Course Teaching Guide.
Quizzes

The course includes short, quiz-style activities that repeat throughout the curriculum. These activities are not considered secure, because students can access them by signing up for the course as a teacher. As a result, the materials are recommended as supporting activities rather than traditional quizzes and tests. These include:

- **Lesson Quizzes**: There are quizzes for each lesson in the course. These quizzes were created by seasoned Big History teachers using Big History learning outcomes and key vocabulary. They are great for homework, studying, small group, and whole class activities. Quizzes can be toggled on and off in the teacher console.

- **Glossary Challenges**: Each unit includes a quiz covering the glossary terms for that unit.

Assessment

Big History takes a multifaceted approach to assessment, and we like to think of all our activities as informative assessments. Each lesson in the curriculum closes with an assessment activity, and every unit has at least one formal writing assessment that includes research papers and investigation-related writing. We also provide a consistent set of rubrics to grade student writing, presentations, peer review, and research, so that both you and your students can monitor their understanding of course concepts.
Course Feedback

The course includes three surveys for both teachers and students. This survey data is used to help the Big History Project team continuously improve the course materials, website, and program. All of the data collected is submitted anonymously. We ask that all schools take these surveys three times: in the first week of the course, after completing Unit 6 (or at about the midpoint of the course term), and again at the end of the course.

NOTE: All assessments, activities, and quizzes are optional. Big History Project provides these resources based on teacher participation and feedback. Teachers are free to administer them online (students can easily “submit” to share results with you) or you can print hard copies as needed. Test keys are also easily accessible in “teacher view” at the unit level.

Logs and surveys: The Big History Project needs active, frequent feedback from teachers to improve the course. These are purely optional but all teachers are encouraged to fill out and submit both surveys and logs to keep us up to speed on their successes and challenges with the course.

All teachers and students are encouraged to take a short survey at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. This helps us refine and improve the course based on your feedback!

We ask that the Beginning Survey be submitted the first week you start the course, and the Midpoint Survey and End Survey be submitted by February 2nd and June 1st, respectively.
Join the BHP Teacher Community

When you start teaching Big History, you join a dynamic, global community of educators who are working toward the same goals. It’s a complex course and there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. In the Big History Project Teacher Community, you’ll be able to share lesson plans, course structure ideas, and your suggestions for improving the course. Simply click the Community tab and request an invite.

Get Help

We hope that you’re excited to dive into Big History. If you need help along the way, there are several resources available:

- The full course guide: Teaching Big History
- Teaching Big History videos: Veteran Big History teacher Tammy Shreiner describes best practices of teaching the course.
- Resources section in the Teacher Console

If you have more questions, send an email to support@bighistoryproject.com.

Figure 19. BHP Teacher Community