This guide will help you get up and running with the Big History Project — everything from finding your way around, setting up a class, exploring content and lesson plans, and joining the teacher community.

The website is the best way to experience the Big History Project, offering interactive lessons, videos, classroom management tools, inline guidance and support, and more. If you prefer to work offline, simply download or print the course materials you want.

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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Introduction to BHP

Welcome to the Big History Project! Your adventure through 14 billion years of history is about to start.

Landing 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 — a “classroom” version (on the right) and the “public” version (on the left). The classroom 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 Teachers: Register, add your profile details, and get started. Fill in the form to register to teach Big History. Your application will be sent off for approval. Check your email! You will receive a welcome message. Sign in to begin your journey through Big History.
Teaching Big History

For teachers new and newish to the Big History Project, it’s helpful to have an in-depth introduction to the course, the lessons, and the community. Our new training course, Teaching Big History, provides teachers with a comprehensive overview. Access it via the Units dropdown menu in the upper left navigation bar.

Designed in partnership with BHP teachers and the University of Michigan, Teaching Big History delivers about 9 hours of training. It covers each of the eight thresholds of BHP using selected videos and articles from the course itself. It reviews the key instructional practices from the course so that teachers can choose what to adopt into their own practice. It covers the core logistical elements of the BHP program, explaining how to set up a class, enroll students, and access key resources. Finally, the course will introduce teachers to the BHP Teacher Community, inviting them to comment on units and discuss the process of planning their school year.
Learn the Course Structure

The Big History timeline page is the "front door" to the school course, and is where you will land after logging in to Big History at [http://school.bighistoryproject.com](http://school.bighistoryproject.com).

The timeline shows you all 10 units of the course, arranged sequentially. Within each unit are a number of lessons. Big History content is also organized around key thresholds. These are called out along the timeline.

**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.

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**Figure 4. Big History timeline page**

- **Universal navigation**
- **Search the course**
- **Access FAQ, glossary, and help docs**
- **Your user profile**

Roll-over sections of the timeline to reveal Unit details.
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 unit guide, practice and feedback opportunities such as quizzes and surveys, supplemental materials for the unit, and related external web links.
Lesson View

Within a lesson, the content is structured in the following order: Lesson Outcomes, Opening Activity, a series of Watch, Read or other learning Activities and then finishes with a Closing Activity. At the end of each lesson is a short Quiz.

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. 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.

You can toggle between the teacher view, and the student view. 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.
Get to Know the Content

Each lesson includes several different types of content:

- **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.

- **World History:** Selected topics in support of local standards in New York, California, and other regions around the world. While not a replacement for a World History course, they explore the intersection of Big History and World History.

- **Science:** Specific science lessons helps teachers and students explore Big History a little more deeply.

- **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.

- **Jacqueline Howard Presents:** Videos exploring the connection between science and Big History with the editor of Huffington Post Science.

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

- **Unit Slides**: Print or project all content for units (lesson, articles, and activities) using PowerPoint or PDF format.

- **Text Readers**: Access editable Word documents that contain all of the reading materials. Readings include multiple copies at different Lexile levels. Refer to the source PDF for full charts and images.

- **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.
Using the Console

The teacher console is your home for course management. To access the Console, begin on the Big History timeline page and select the Console link in the top navigation bar. This is the Console homepage, where behind-the-scenes course administration takes place. This includes updates, student scores and data, tests and surveys, and teacher resources and feedback.

You can also connect to the Teaching Big History unit, and join the Yammer community from any tab in the Console.

**BHP Updates**

BHP Updates offers the latest course-related news through Course Messages, social media platforms, and the Teacher Blog.

*Figure 14. Teacher Console - BHP Updates*
**Student Scores & Data**

The Student Scores & Data page lets you manage classes and activate BHP Score.

BHP Score a free essay scoring extension service that takes student writing submissions for Investigations 2, 6 and 9 and send them to professional scorers to grade against our rubric. At each milestone, you’ll receive results and reports to review on your own or share with your students.

You can also program periods, and invite students to join your classroom. Depending on the number of Big History classes you are teaching, you may need to add and edit periods to your classroom setup.

**Invite Students**

You can add students via join code, or an email invitation. The Join Code allows you to copy and share the unique Classroom Code any way you choose—via email, writing it on a board, or adding it to a syllabus. The Send Email option allows you to send registration instructions to students by email one at a time, or as a group of 40 separated by commas.

**Admin Panel**

Once you’ve set up your classroom, the admin panel will display stats on student numbers, progress, recent activity, and current unit.
Assessment & Feedback

Student Surveys & Assessments

You can control your students’ ability to view surveys and quizzes from Student Surveys & Assessments area.

Figure 17. Teacher Console - Assessment & Feedback
Teacher Resources

The Teacher Resources page provides a wealth of course planning documents all in one place. Course resources include this Quick Start Guide, the full Course Guide, and a BHP Standards document.

Course Planning docs include a rich selection of templates, pacing guides, and outlines to help you plan your course for various durations.

The Posters section centralizes all of the great Big History infographics in one place.

Figure 20. Teacher Console - Teacher Resources and Feedback
Teacher Surveys & Logs

The Big History Project needs active, frequent feedback from teachers to improve the course. This is accomplished in the Teacher Surveys & Logs area.

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.

Your participation in completing each unit’s logs and surveys will be crucial to helping us make Big History even better. A status box shows you which logs or surveys have been completed.

Thank you for helping to improve the Big History Project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey/Log</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unit 1 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beginning Survey</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unit 2 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Unit 3 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Unit 4 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unit 5 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Midpoint Survey</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Unit 6 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Unit 7 Log</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Unit 8 Log</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Unit 9 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Unit 10 Log</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. End Survey</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We ask that teachers submit a short, ten minute log after teaching each unit.

We ask that teachers submit a short survey at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. This helps us refine and improve the course based on your feedback!
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. Big History teachers gather on Yammer, a social networking service, for discussion, collaboration, and sharing. It’s a valuable space for both new and experienced Big History teachers. 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 22. BHP Teacher Community*