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# Implementing Time Lines in Microsoft Excel Templates

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# Implementing Time Lines in Microsoft Excel Templates

## Description

Microsoft Excel is extremely useful for many different types of digital scholarship projects. This one looks at the ability of Excel to create time lines for historical projects using an Excel template developed for project time lines. Before starting I will warn the reader that because of the way Excel stores and handles dates, these time lines only work for dates after Jan. 1, 1900. There are some potential fixes for this that I hope to address in the future.

The timeline which was developed for this project can be found at <http://chuckkann.com/timelines/excel/Mandela.xlsx>. You can download this and see the finished product.

Attached is a pdf files with step-by-step instructions on how to implement this project. Additional material may be available at <http://chuckkann.com>.

The Microsoft site <https://templates.office.com/en-us/Timelines> has timeline templates in other formats, but they generally work in a similar fashion to the timeline I am using. So once you have done a time line following these steps, you should be able to handle any Excel formatted time line.

If you do timelines using this document, let me know what you think...

Have fun!

## Disciplines

Adult and Continuing Education and Teaching | Curriculum and Instruction | Instructional Media Design | Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching | Online and Distance Education | Public History

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# How to Create a Time Line in Excel

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1. Download a project time line. Go to <https://templates.office.com/en-us/Timelines>, and retrieve the circled template. The other templates at this site also create nice time lines, and they all work on the same basic principles. Once you have done a timeline using this format, you might want to try others and see how they work.

https://templates.office.com/en-us/Timelines

BROWSE BY PRODUCT

- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Word

BROWSE BY CATEGORY

- Agendas
- Blank and General
- Brochures
- Budgets
- Business
- Calendars
- Cards
- Certificates
- College Tools
- Diagrams

12-month timeline  
Word  
FREE

Project planning timeline  
Word  
FREE

Timeline with flags infographic (Berlin theme, widescreen)  
PowerPoint  
FREE

Timeline slide (blue horizontal chevrons, widescreen)  
PowerPoint  
FREE

Circle Arcs Timeline  
Event timeline diagram slide (widescreen)  
PowerPoint  
FREE

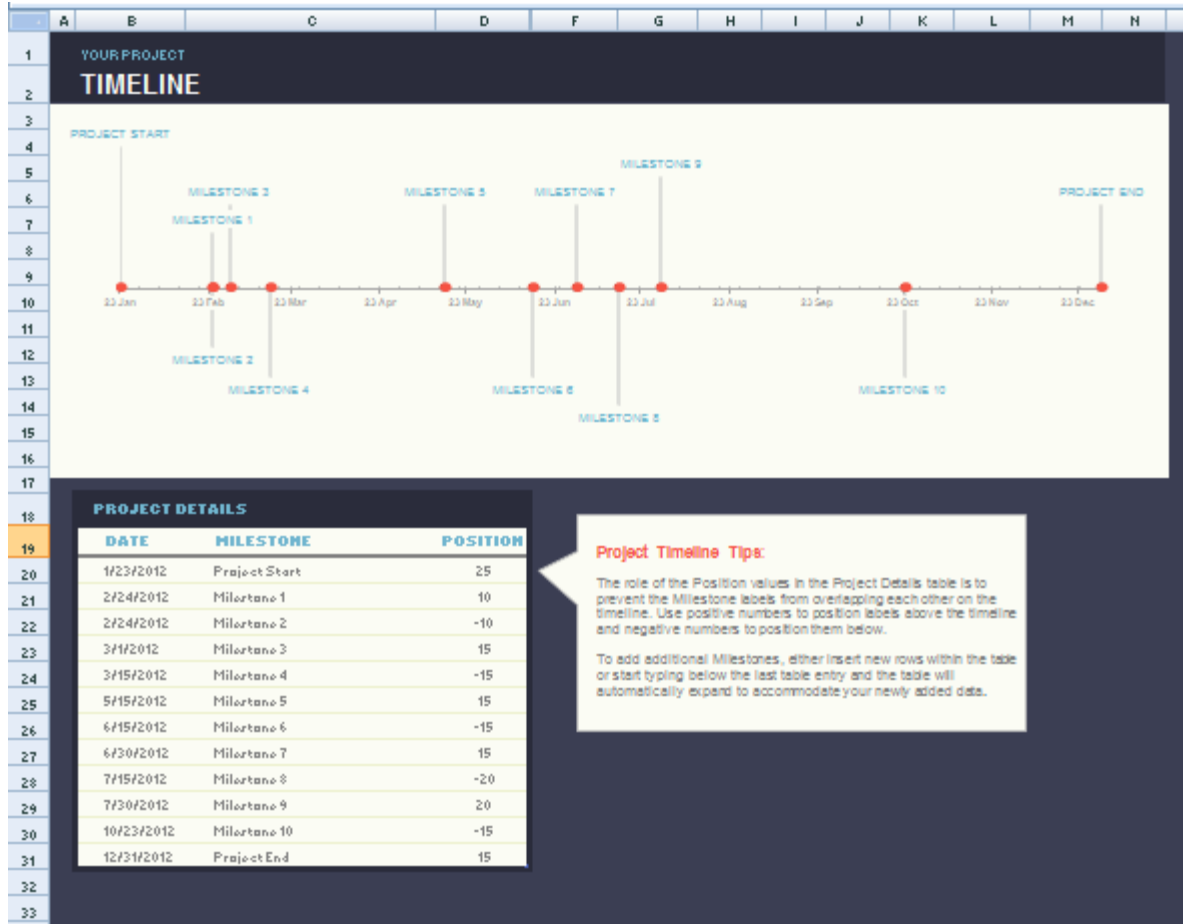
Basic Timeline SmartArt  
Timeline SmartArt diagram slide (white on dark gray, widescreen)  
PowerPoint  
FREE

Project Timeline  
Project timeline with milestones  
Excel  
FREE

4 week project timeline  
Project timeline  
Excel  
FREE

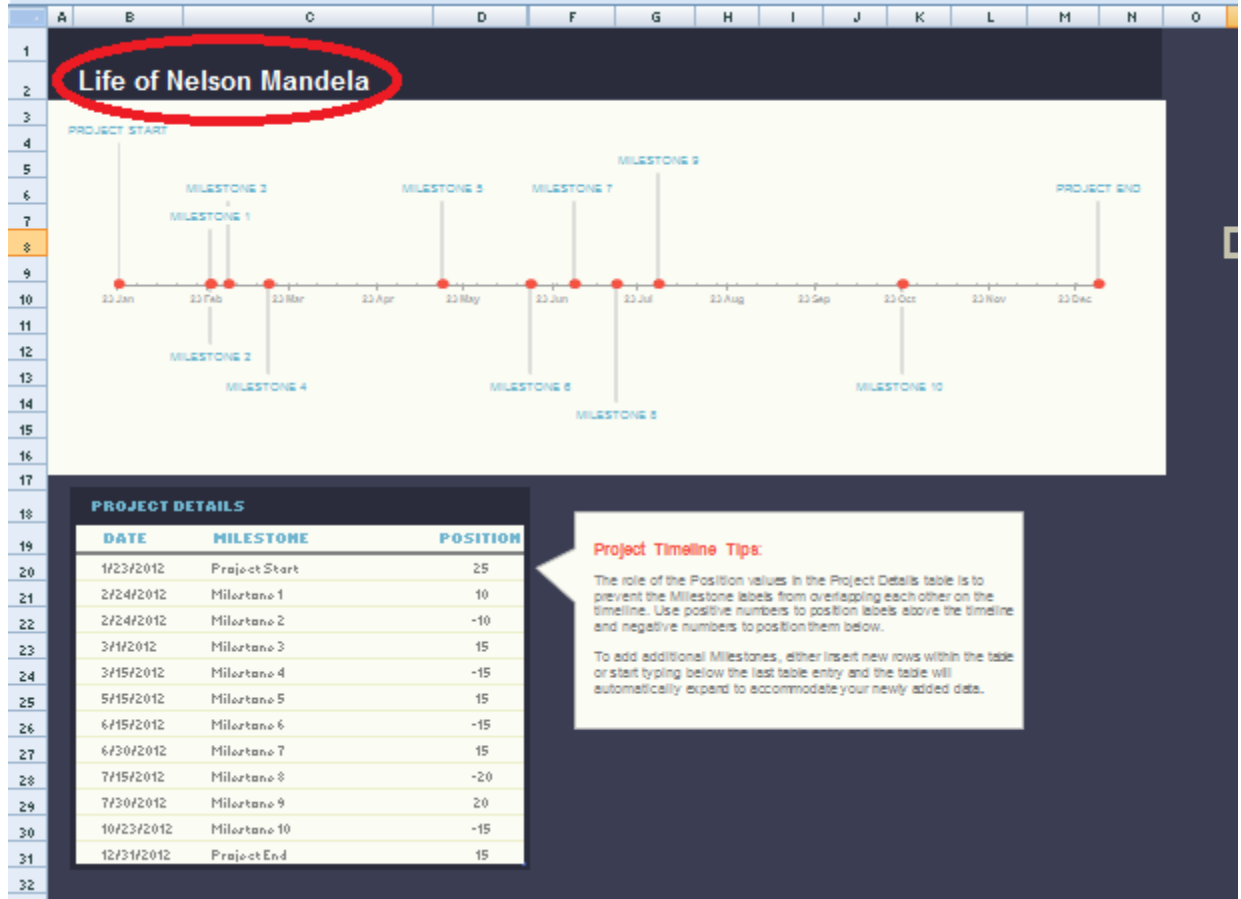


- Your blank timeline should look *something* like the following. These templates change from time to time, but how the templates function changes very little. Realize that small changes in the format will not affect how these instructions.



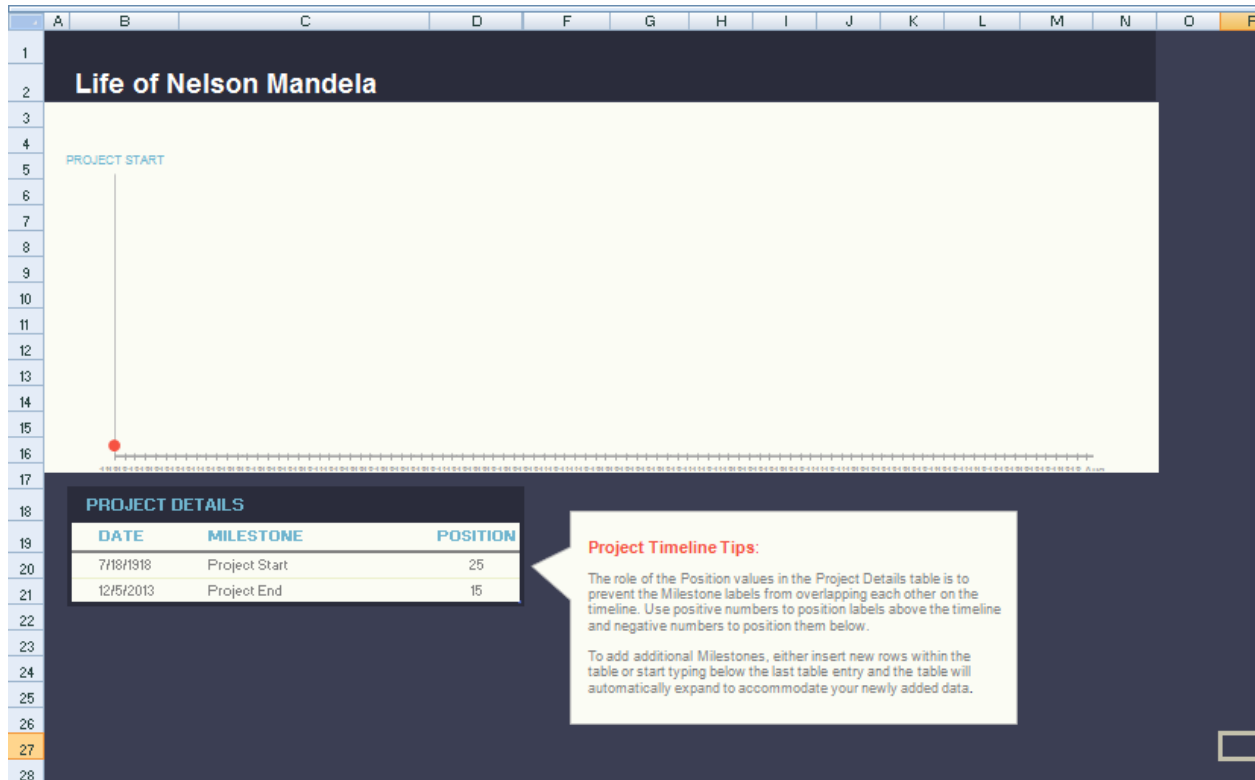


3. Change the title to something more appropriate to your project. To do this, simply type over the existing text.



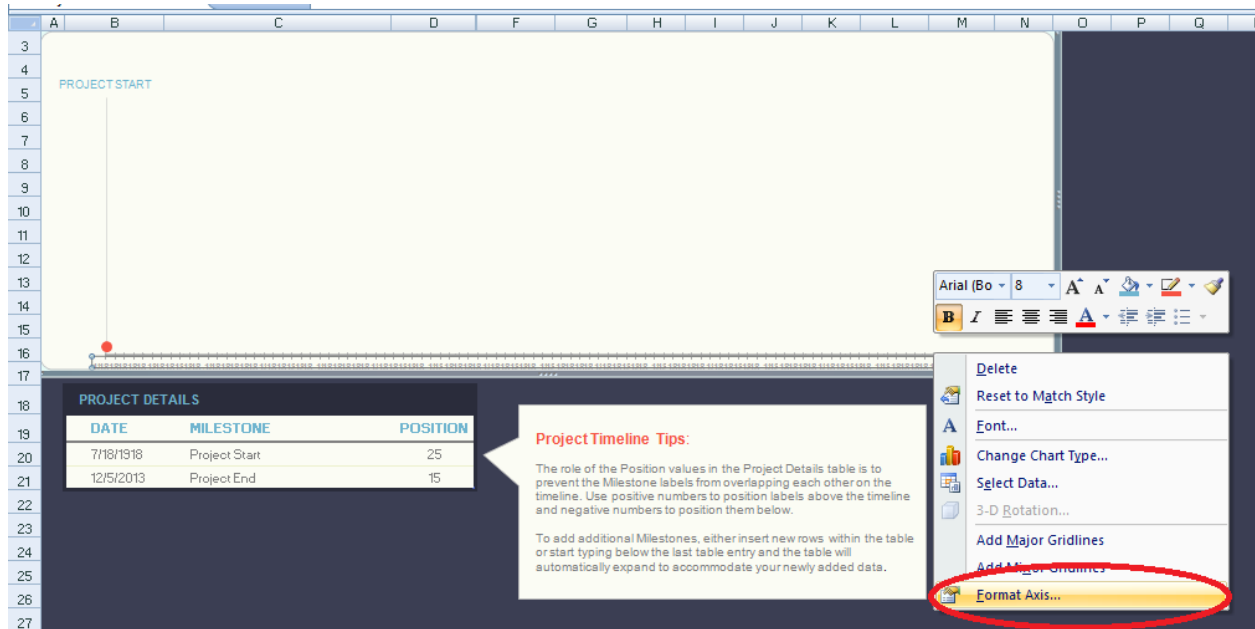


4. Change the first date to be the beginning of your timeline, and the last date to the end of your time line. Delete all the other rows from the table. This will help as you format your time line. Note that dates before 1/1/1900 are not handled in Excel. You can use them, but the timeline will not have the correct spacing between dates.



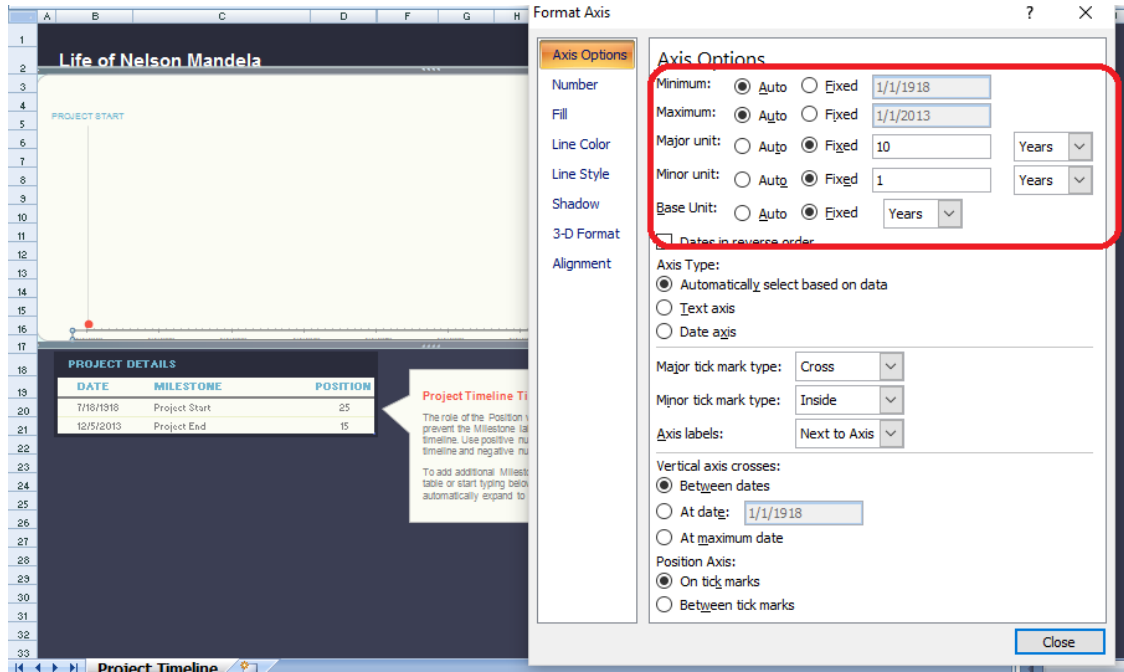


5. Right click on the X axis (be sure you are on the axis, and not in the space above or below the axis or the menu will not be correct. Select the Format Axis option.





6. Format the data in the axis. The Major unit for the chart is the one that gets a value (in our case a date) below it. The Minor unit is the one that gets tick marks. For this chart, we choose 10 years for the Major unit (as Mandela's life was over 90 years), and 1 year as the minor unit. The Base unit is the same as the minor unit.





7. Choose the format for the values in the Axis, and select the date type. You should now be showing the timeline with nice dates in the X axis.

The screenshot shows the Project Timeline task pane on the left and the Format Axis dialog box on the right. The task pane displays a timeline for 'Life of Nelson Mandela' with a 'PROJECT START' milestone at 7/18/1918 and a 'PROJECT END' milestone at 12/5/2013. The Format Axis dialog box is open, showing the 'Number' category selected. The 'Date' option is highlighted in the list. The 'Type' dropdown is set to 'm/d/yyyy'. The 'Format Code' field contains 'm/d/yyyy'. The 'Locale (Location)' is set to 'English (United States)'. The 'Close' button is visible at the bottom right of the dialog box.

**Project Timeline**

**Life of Nelson Mandela**

PROJECT START

**PROJECT DETAILS**

| DATE      | MILESTONE     | POSITION |
|-----------|---------------|----------|
| 7/18/1918 | Project Start | 25       |
| 12/5/2013 | Project End   | 15       |

**Format Axis**

**Axis Options**

- Number
- Fill
- Line Color
- Line Style
- Shadow
- 3-D Format
- Alignment

**Number**

Category: Type:

General: \*3/14/2001

Number: \*Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Currency: 3/14

Accounting: 3/14/01

Date: 03/14/01

Percentage: 14-Mar

Fraction: 14-Mar-01

Scientific: Locale (Location):

Text: English (United States)

Special: Format Code:

Custom: m/d/yyyy

Add

To create a custom format, type in the Format Code box.

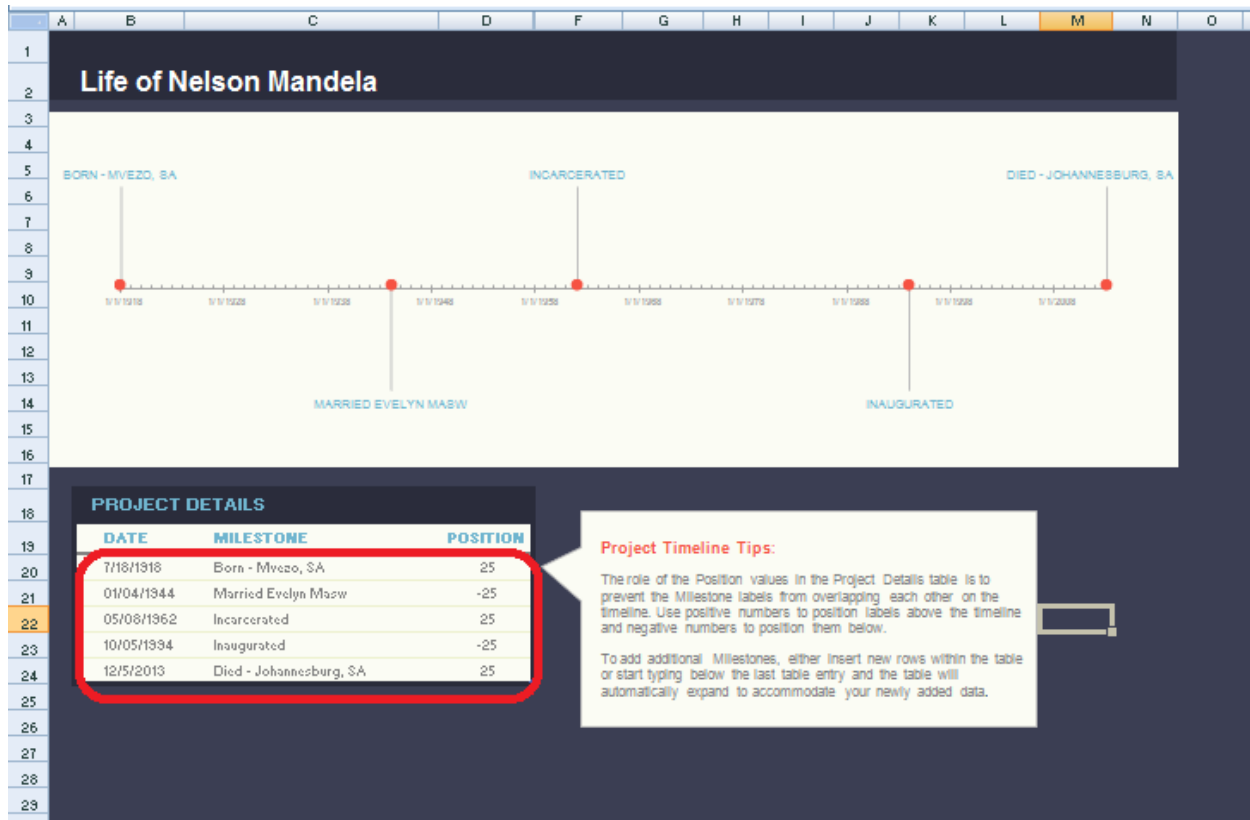
☐ Linked to source

Date formats display date and time serial numbers as date values. Date formats that begin with an asterisk (\*) respond to changes in regional date and time settings that are specified for the operating system. Formats without an asterisk are not affected by operating system settings.

Close

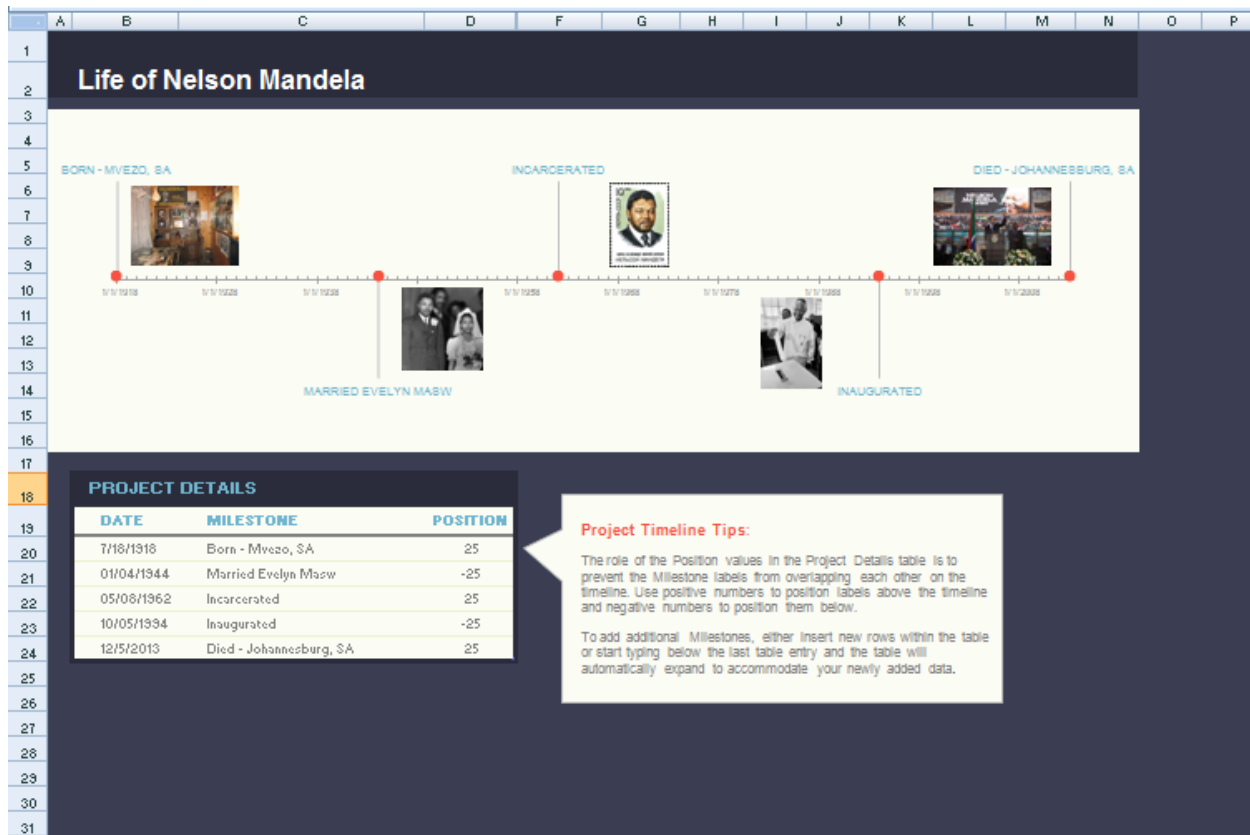


8. Fill in the rest of the dates for your project. When you enter points, make the position of some of the points in positive, and some in negative. This makes the axis easier to see. Positive points are shown above the axis, and negative points are shown below the axis. Note that the magnitude of the number determines how high or low the points will be.





- Find some nice pictures about the events you want to show, and insert them into the spreadsheet. You can drag them around to place them in appropriate positions, and you can resize them by dragging on a corner to make them bigger or smaller.



- This is a nice spreadsheet project for middle school students. To make it better, the events can be hyperlinked to text or other information either in the document or online in the web. I hope to look at doing this in follow on articles.