

Timeline for World War II — Great Britain

1920s:

- 1922: December 6: The Anglo-Irish Treaty went into effect making the Republic of Ireland independent from the United Kingdom.
- 1922: June 8: The Irish Civil War began between treaty and anti-treaty forces.
- 1925: December 1: The Locarno Treaties were signed by the World War I Western European allies and the new central and eastern nations.
- 1926: January 31: Troops from Belgium and Great Britain left Cologne, Germany.
- 1927: January 19: Great Britain sent troops to the Republic of China.
- 1927: February 19: There was a general strike in Shanghai protesting British presence.
- 1927: May 24: Great Britain severed diplomatic relationship with the U.S.S.R.
- 1927: May 20: Saudi Arabia became independent from the United Kingdom.
- 1927: May 24: The United Kingdom severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.
- 1928: August 27: The Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris by the major powers of the world. The treaty outlawed aggressive warfare.
- 1929: October 29: The Great Depression began.

1930:

- 1930: April 22: The United States, Japan, Italy, and Great Britain signed the London Naval Treaty, which regulated shipbuilding and submarine warfare.

1935:

- 1935: June 18: The Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed by Germany and the United Kingdom to limit the size of their navies.

1938:

- 1938: September 30: Great Britain and France recognized Germany's seizure of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia by signing the Munich Agreement.

1939:

- 1939: January 23: The "Dutch War Scare" centered on the idea of Germany invading the Netherlands and using the country as a base to bomb Great Britain changed British policies toward continental Europe.
- 1939: February 6: In response to the "Dutch War Scare", the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons that any German attack on France would be automatically considered an attack on Britain.
- 1939: March 17: Neville Chamberlain gave a speech in Birmingham stating Britain will oppose any German effort to dominate the world.
- 1939: March 31: The United Kingdom and France offered the "guarantee" of Polish independence.
- 1939: April 13: The United Kingdom and France pledged to support Romania and Greece.
- 1939: April 18: The Soviet Union proposed a triple alliance with the United Kingdom and France. The British and French agreed to take up the offer.
- 1939: April 28: In a speech before the Reichstag, Adolf Hitler renounced the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact
- 1939: September 1: The British government declared general mobilization of the British Armed Forces and began evacuation plans in preparation of German air attacks.

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- 1939: May 6: Carl Friedrich Goerdeler told the British government that the German and Soviet governments were secretly beginning a rapprochement with the aim of dividing Eastern Europe between them. Goerdeler also informed the British of German economic problems which he states were threatening the survival of the Nazi regime, and advised that if a firm stand is made for Poland, then Hitler would be deterred from war.
- 1939: June 14: The Tientsin Incident occurred, in which the Japanese blockaded the British concession in the North China Treaty Port of Tientsin.
- 1939: July 10: Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain reaffirmed support for Poland and made it clear that Britain did not view Free City of Danzig as being an internal German-Polish affair and would intervene on behalf of Poland if hostilities broke out between the two countries.
- 1939: September 2: The National Service (Armed Forces) Act (1939) was enacted immediately and enforced full conscription on all males between 18 and 41 residing in the UK.
- 1939: September 2: The United Kingdom and France issued a joint ultimatum to Germany, requiring German troops to evacuate Polish territory; Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declared the neutrality of his nation; President Douglas Hyde of the Republic of Ireland declared the neutrality of his nation; the Swiss government ordered a general mobilization of its forces. France and Great Britain both guaranteed support to Poland after the German conquering of Czechoslovakia; they offered the same to Greece and Arabia after Italy invaded Albania.
- 1939: September 3: At 11:15 a.m. British Summer Time (BST), British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced on BBC Radio that the deadline of the final British ultimatum for the withdrawal of German troops from Poland expired at 11:00am and that "consequently this nation is at war with Germany". Australia, India, and New Zealand also declared war on Germany within hours of Britain's declaration. Within hours of the British declaration of War, SS Athenia, a British cruise ship en-route from Glasgow, Scotland to Montreal, Canada was torpedoed by German submarine U-30 250 miles Northwest of Ireland. 112 passengers and crew were killed. The "Battle of the Atlantic" began.
- 1939: September 7: The National Registration Act of 1939 passed in Britain introducing identity cards and allowing the government to control labor.
- 1939: September 8: The British Government announced the re-introduction of the convoy system for merchant ships and a full-scale blockade on German shipping.
- 1939: October 3: British forces moved to the Belgian border, anticipating a German invasion of the West.
- 1939: October 6: Polish resistance in the Polish September Campaign came to an end. Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, declaring a desire for a conference with Britain and France to restore peace.
- 1939: October 10: British Prime Minister Chamberlain declined Hitler's offer of peace.
- 1939: October 11: An estimated 158,000 British troops were now in France.
- 1939: October 16: First air attack on Great Britain, aimed at ships in the Firth of Forth, Scotland, occurred.
- 1939: October 20: The "Phoney War": French troops settled in the Maginot line's dormitories and tunnels; the British built new fortifications along the "gap" between the Maginot line and the Channel.
- 1939: October 30: The British government released a report on concentration camps being built in Europe for Jews and anti-Nazis.
- 1939: November 4: A German physicist working at Siemens AG sent an anonymous letter to the British Embassy in Oslo offering England a report on present and future German weapons technologies.

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- 1939: November 8: Hitler escaped a bomb blast in a Munich beer hall, where he was speaking on the anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923. British bombers coincidentally bombed Munich.
- 1939: November 14: The Polish government-in-exile moved to London.
- 1939: November 16: The first British civilian casualty occurred when a German bomber killed James Isbister in an air raid on Orkney in Scotland.
- 1939: November 20: The Luftwaffe and German U-boats began mining the Thames estuary.
- 1939: December 2: British conscription was increased to cover men from 19 to 41.

1940:

- 1940: Both France and Great Britain called for the expulsion of the U.S.S.R. from the League of Nations after the Soviet attack on Finland, considering this move to be siding with Germany.
- 1940: Germany engaged in the "Battle of Britain" with large-scale air-bombing on British cities.
- 1940: Great Britain invaded Iceland; the British public's discontent over this led to Winston Churchill replacing Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister on May 10, 1940.
- 1940: January 7: Rationing of basic foodstuffs was established in the UK.
- 1940: February 5: Britain and France decided to intervene in Norway to cut off the iron ore trade in anticipation of an expected German occupation and ostensibly to open a route to assist Finland. The operation was scheduled to start about March 20.
- 1940: February 14: The British government called for volunteers to fight in Finland.
- 1940: February 16: British destroyer HMS Cossack forcibly removed 303 British POWs from the German transport Altmark in neutral Norwegian territorial waters.
- 1940: March 11: All meat was rationed in Britain.
- 1940: March 28: Britain and France made a formal agreement that neither country will seek a separate peace with Germany.
- 1940: March 30: British undertook secret reconnaissance flights to photograph the targeted areas inside the Soviet Union in preparation for Operation Pike, utilizing high-altitude, high-speed stereoscopic photography pioneered by Sidney Cotton.
- 1940: June 10: Italy declared war on both France and Great Britain.
- 1940: July 3: Great Britain attacked a French fleet in Algeria to prevent Germany from capturing it.
- 1940: July 21: Czechoslovakian government in exile arrived in London.
- 1940: July 23: The British "Home Guard" was officially established, drawing on elderly men and those considered unable to serve in the regular armed forces.
- 1940: August 20: Churchill's speech in Commons stated "never was so much owed by so many to so few".
- 1940: August 25: Churchill ordered the bombing of Berlin in retaliation for the previous night's bombing of Coventry.
- 1940: August 30: The bombing of England continued; London was bombed in retaliation for the bombing of Berlin; thus, the beginning of "the London Blitz."
- 1940: October 13: British civilians were still being killed by German bombs though the attacks dropped off significantly.
- 1940: October 21: Liverpool was bombed for the 200th time.
- 1940: November 7: It became clear that Ireland refused to allow the United Kingdom to use its ports as naval bases.
- 1940: December 1: Bombing raids were exchanged throughout the month between Germany and Britain. First Germany bombed, and then Britain bombed.

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1941:

- 1941: Churchill sent troops from Africa to help Greece against Italy.
- 1941: The British Commonwealth suppressed a coup in Iraq that had been supported by German aircraft and moved into Syria and Lebanon (with the aid of the Free French) to prevent similar occurrences.
- 1941: January 2: German bombers, perhaps off course, bombed Ireland the second night in a row.
- 1941: March 8: Another bombing of London took place, notable because Buckingham Palace was hit.
- 1941: March 19: Worst bombing of London so far in 1941, with heavy damage from incendiary bombs; Plymouth and Bristol were bombed again.
- 1941: April 17: Yugoslavia surrendered. A government in exile was formed in London. King Peter escaped to Greece.
- 1941: April 19: London suffered one of the heaviest air raids in the war; St. Paul's was mildly damaged but remained closed; other Wren churches were heavily damaged or destroyed.
- 1941: May 8: Heavy convoy losses in the Atlantic continued; however, one U-boat (U-110) was captured by the British navy and another copy of the "Enigma" machine was discovered and saved. It helped to turn the fortunes in the Atlantic battle.
- 1941: June 1: Rationing of clothes began in the United Kingdom.
- 1941: July 5: The British government ruled out possibility of negotiated peace.
- 1941: July 8: Britain and the USSR signed a mutual defense agreement, promising not to sign any form of separate peace agreement with Germany.
- 1941: July 19: The "V-sign", displayed most notably by Churchill, was unofficially adopted as the Allied signal, along with the motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.
- 1941: August: U.K. and U.S. jointly issued the Atlantic Charter, to which the Allies of World War II pledged adherence on January 1, 1942. China, the Soviet Union, and 22 smaller or exiled governments issued the Declaration by United Nations, which affirmed the Atlantic Charter.
- 1941: August 25: British and Soviet troops invaded Iran to save the Abadan oilfields and the important railways and routes to Soviet Union for the supply of war material.
- 1941: August 26: Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran, was forced to resign in favor of his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran under pressure from the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union.
- 1941: October 3: Mahatma Gandhi urged his followers to begin a passive resistance against British rule in India.
- 1941: November 22: Britain issued an ultimatum to Finland to end war with Soviet Union or face war with the Allies.
- 1941: December 3: Conscription in the United Kingdom included all men between 18 and 50. Women were not neglected and served in fire brigades and in women's auxiliary groups.
- 1941: December 5: The United Kingdom declared war on Finland.
- 1941: December 8: The United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and New Zealand declared war on Japan.

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1942:

- 1942: February 25: Princess Elizabeth registered for war service.
- 1942: March 5: New conscription laws in the United Kingdom included women and men up to the age of 45.
- 1942: March 17: The United Kingdom instituted rationing of electricity, coal, and gas; the clothing ration was decreased as well.
- 1942: April 15: Malta was awarded the George Cross by King George VI for "heroism and devotion".
- 1942: May 5: British forces began "Operation Ironclad": the invasion of Madagascar to keep the Vichy French territory from falling to a possible Japanese invasion.
- 1942: August 9: Numerous riots in favor of independence in India took place; Mahatma Gandhi was arrested.
- 1942: October 22: Conscription age in Britain was reduced to 18.
- 1942: November: Armed forces of Great Britain and the United States landed in North Africa.

1943:

- 1943: January 14: Casablanca Conference of Allied leaders began. Churchill and Roosevelt discussed the eventual invasion of mainland Europe, the impending invasion of Sicily and Italy, and the wisdom of the principle of "Unconditional Surrender."
- 1943: May 9: German and Italian forces in Tunisia announced surrender to British.
- 1943: May 19: Winston Churchill addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress. He praised the partnership of the two Allies.
- 1943: July: Armed forces of Great Britain and the United States landed in Sicily.
- 1943: August 19: Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Quebec Agreement during the Quebec Conference.
- 1943: November 28: The Teheran Conference took place. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Leader Joseph Stalin met in Teheran to discuss war strategy; (on November 30 they established an agreement concerning a planned June 1944 invasion of Europe codenamed Operation Overlord).

1944:

- 1944: January 9: British forces took over Maungdaw, Burma, a critical port for Allied supplies.
- 1944: January 20: The Royal Air Force dropped 2,300 tons of bombs on Berlin.
- 1944: September 9: The first V-2 rocket landed on London.
- 1944: October 12: The Second Quebec Conference ("Octagon") took place. President Roosevelt and Churchill discussed military cooperation in the Pacific, and the division of Germany.
- 1944: November 5: Zionist terrorists assassinated the British government representative in the Middle East.
- 1944: November 10: V-2 rockets continued to hit Britain, at the rate of about eight a day.
- 1944: December 3: The Dekemvriana ("December events") began in the Greek capital, Athens, between members of the leftist National Liberation Front and government forces, backed by the British. The clashes were limited to Athens however, and the rest of the country remained relatively tranquil.
- 1944: December 24: Manchester was attacked by V1 flying bombs.

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1945:

- 1945: January 15: The British commander in Athens accepted a request for a ceasefire from the Greek People's Liberation Army.
- 1945: March 20: Mandalay, in central Burma, was firmly under British and Indian control.
- 1945: April 9: A heavy bombing at Kiel by the RAF destroyed the last two major German warships.
- 1945: May 8: Ceasefire took effect at one minute past midnight; V-E Day in Britain.
- 1945: May 8: In order to disarm the Japanese in Vietnam, the Allies divided the country in half at the 16th parallel. Chinese Nationalists moved in and disarmed the Japanese north of the parallel while the British moved in and did the same in the south. During the conference, representatives from France requested the return of all French pre-war colonies in Indochina. Their request was granted. Vietnam, once again, became a French colony following the removal of the Japanese.
- 1945: May 23: British forces captured and arrested the members of what was left of the German government formed by Reich President Karl Dönitz after the suicides of both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels.
- 1945: June 19: The United Kingdom began demobilization.
- 1945: July 26: The Labor Party won the United Kingdom general election by a landslide. The new United Kingdom Prime Minister Clement Attlee replaced Churchill at the negotiating table at Potsdam. The Potsdam Declaration was issued.
- 1945: August 30: Royal Navy force under Rear-Admiral Cecil Harcourt liberated Hong Kong.
- 1945: September 5: Singapore was officially liberated by British and Indian troops.
- 1945: September 13: British forces, under Major-General Douglas Gracey's 20th Indian Division (some 26,000 men in all) arrived in Saigon, which was in turmoil. They demanded South Vietnam to disarm and accept surrender of Japanese Occupation Forces in South Vietnam south of the 16th parallel. 180,000 Chinese Nationalist soldiers, mainly poor peasants, arrived in Hanoi, North Vietnam to disarm and accept surrender north of the line. After looting Vietnamese villages during their entire march down from China, they proceeded to loot Hanoi.
- 1945: September 22: The British released 1,400 French Paratroopers from Japanese internment camps around Saigon. Those French soldiers entered Saigon and went on a deadly rampage, attacking Viet Minh and killing innocent civilians including children, aided by French civilians who joined the rampage. An estimated 20,000 French civilians lived in Saigon.
- 1945: October 1: In southern Vietnam, a purely bilateral British/French agreement recognized French administration of the southern zone. In northern Vietnam, Chinese troops went on a "rampage". Hồ's Việt Minh was hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with it.

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