



Your Life in Weeks


 May 7, 2014 By Tim Urban

Note: If you want to print this post or read it offline, the PDF is probably the way to go. You can [buy it here](#).

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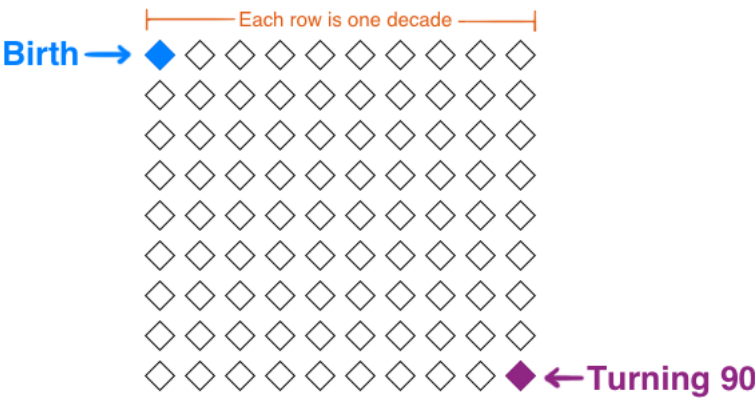

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a long human life in years:

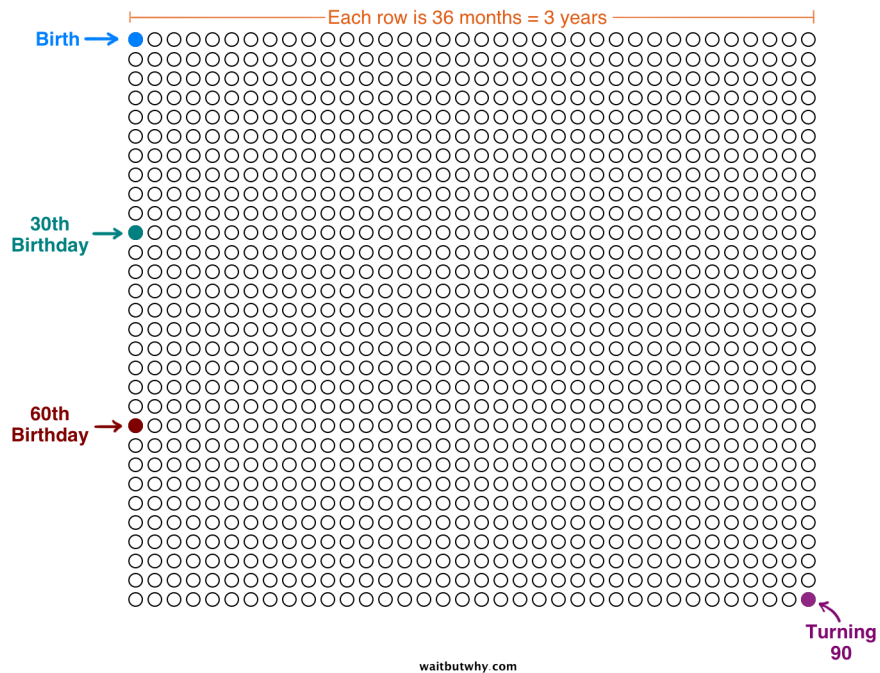
A 90-Year Human Life in Years



waitbutwhy.com

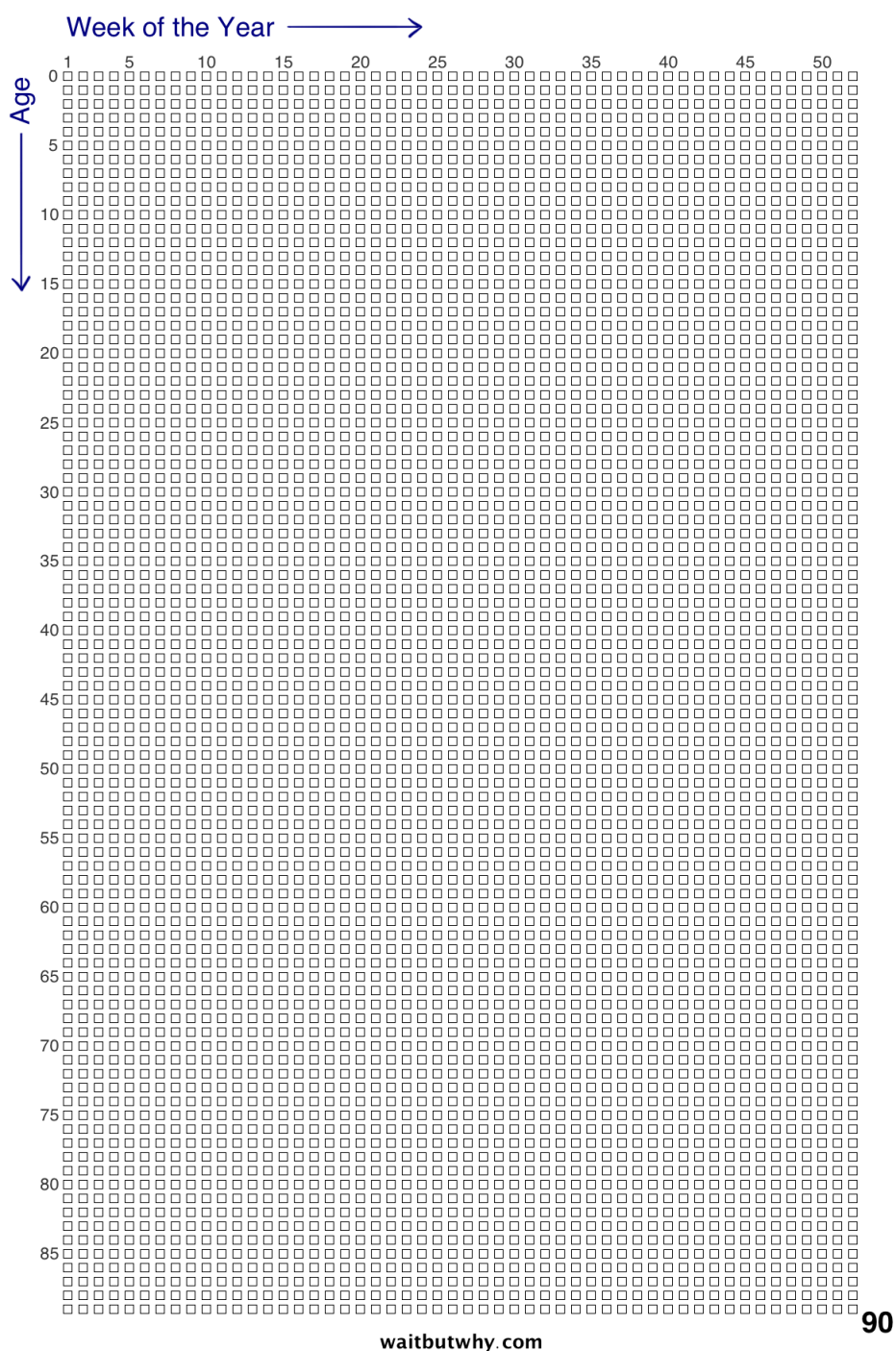
And here's a human life in months:

A 90-Year Human Life in Months



But today, we're going to look at a human life in weeks:

A 90-Year Human Life in Weeks

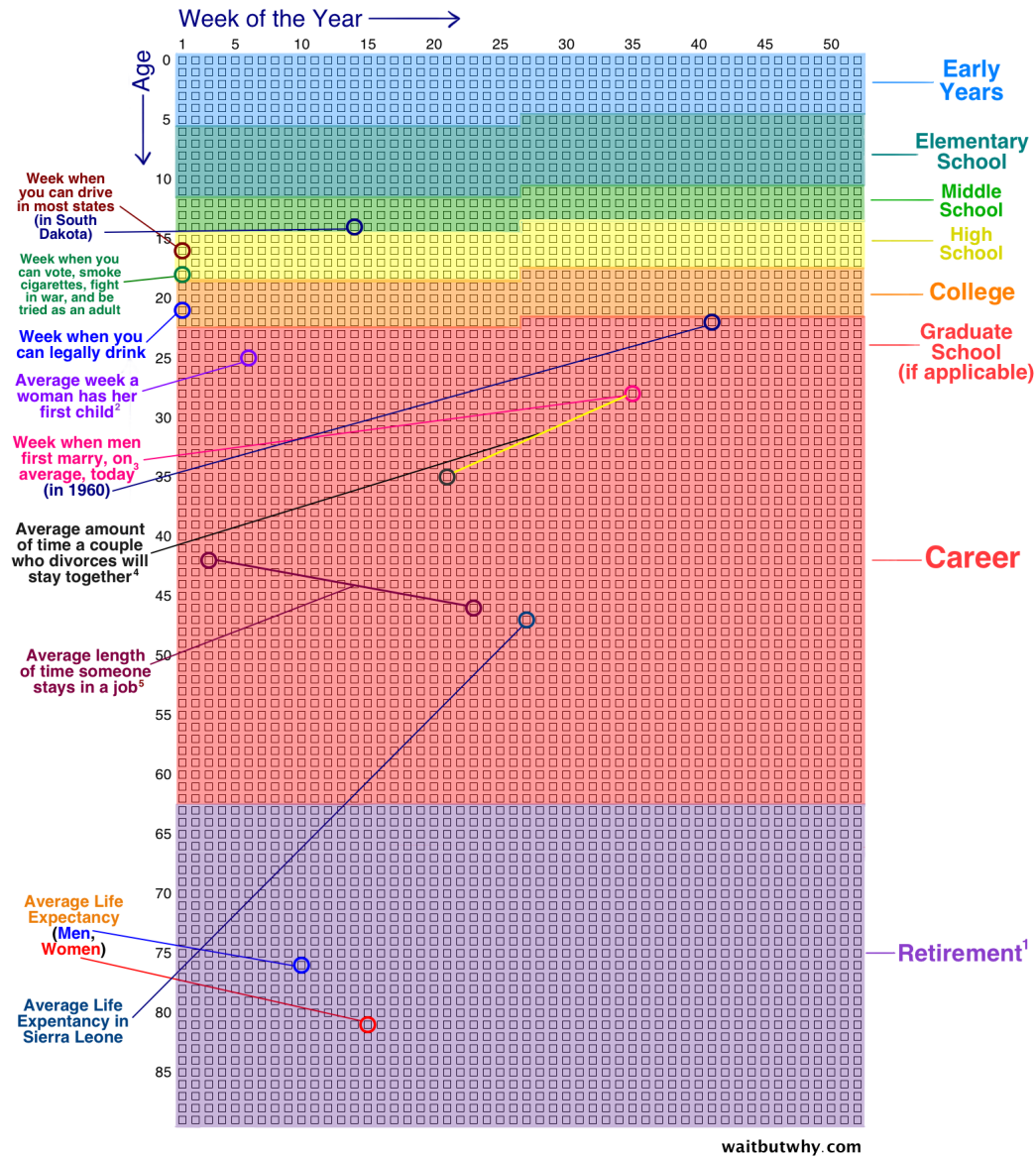


Each row of weeks makes up one year. That's how many weeks it takes to turn a newborn into a 90-year-old.

It kind of feels like our lives are made up of a countless number of weeks. But there they are—fully countable—staring you in the face.

Before we discuss things further, let's look at how a typical American spends their weeks:

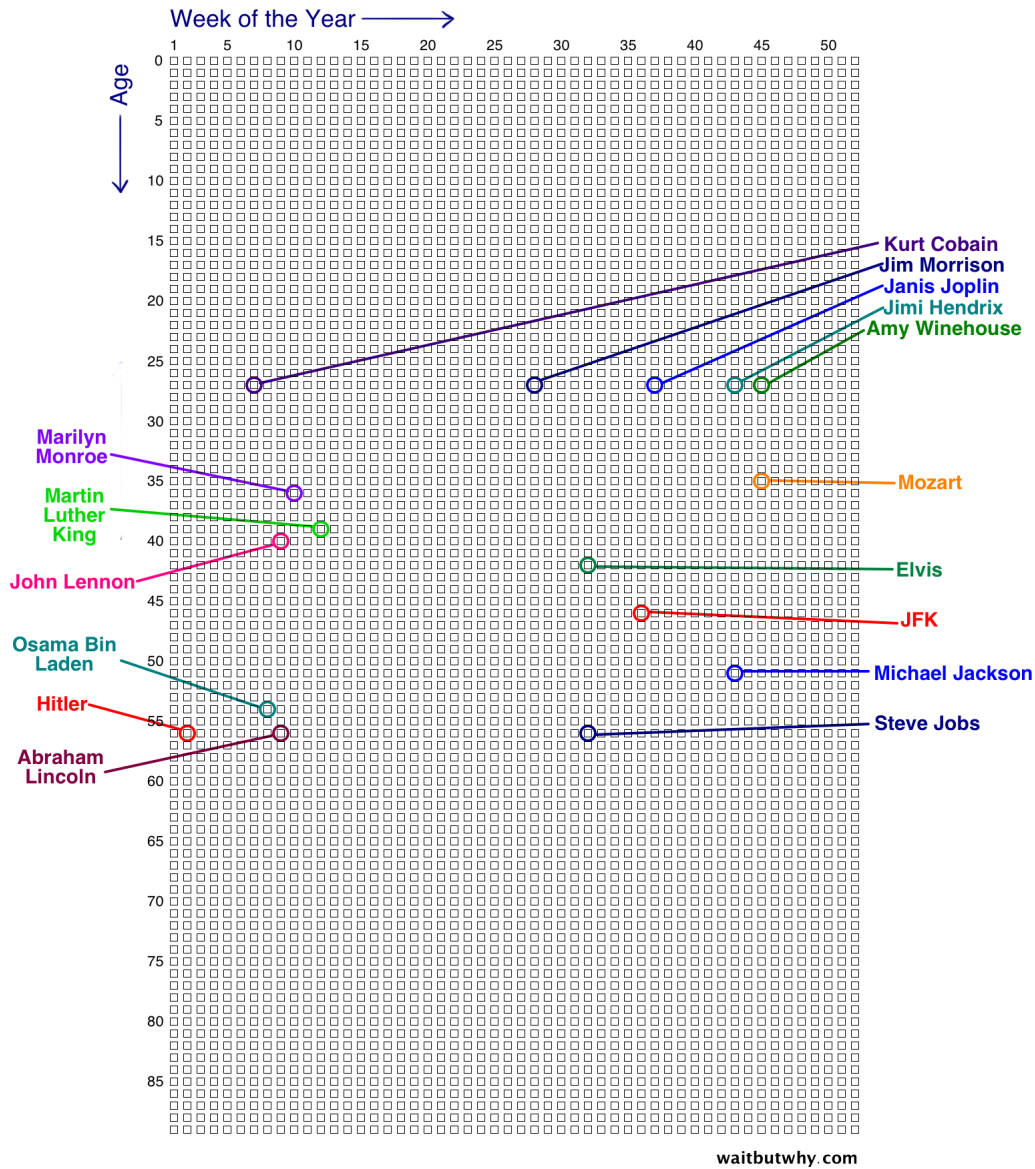
The Life of a Typical American



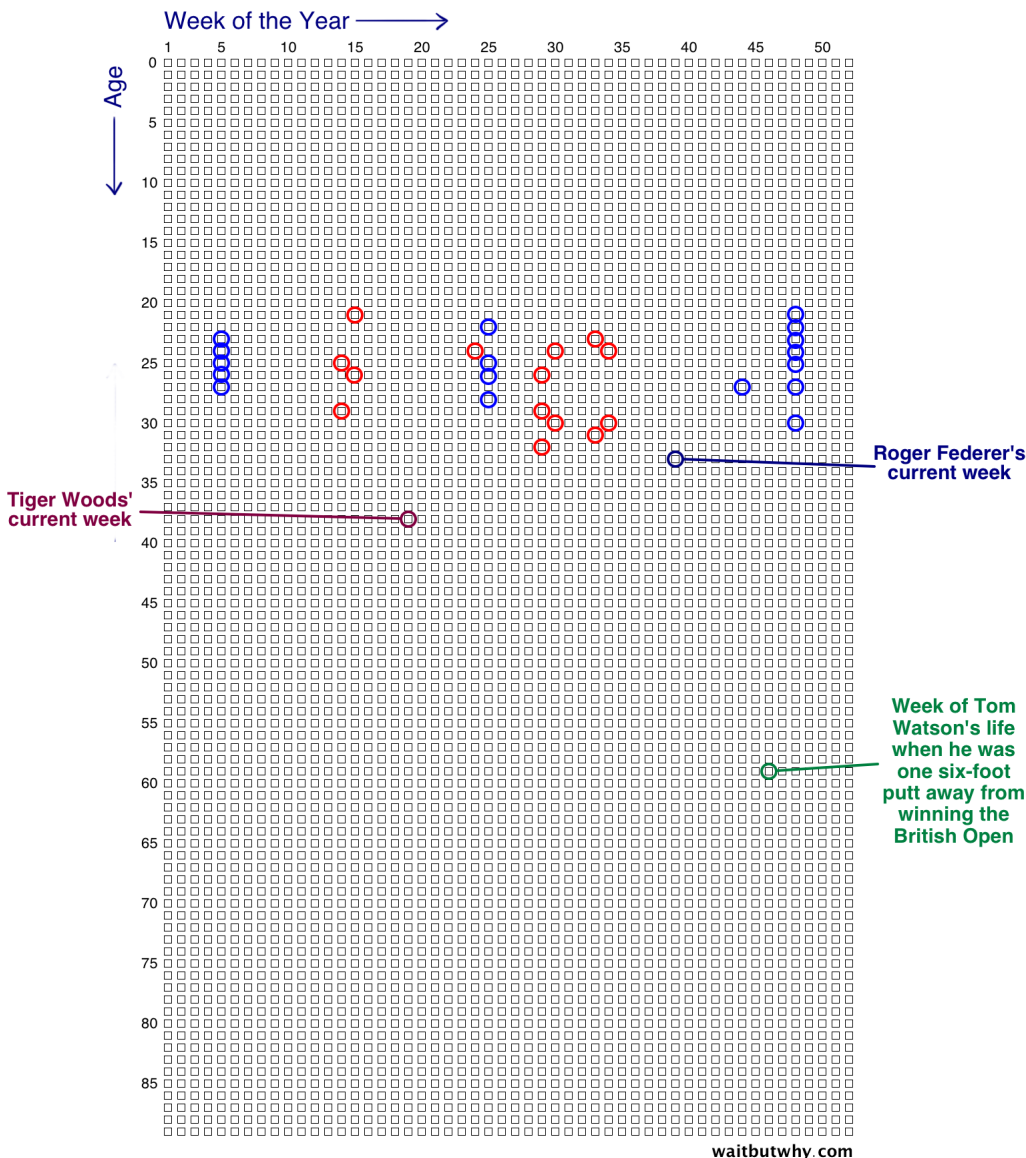
Sources: [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

There are some other interesting ways to use the weeks chart:

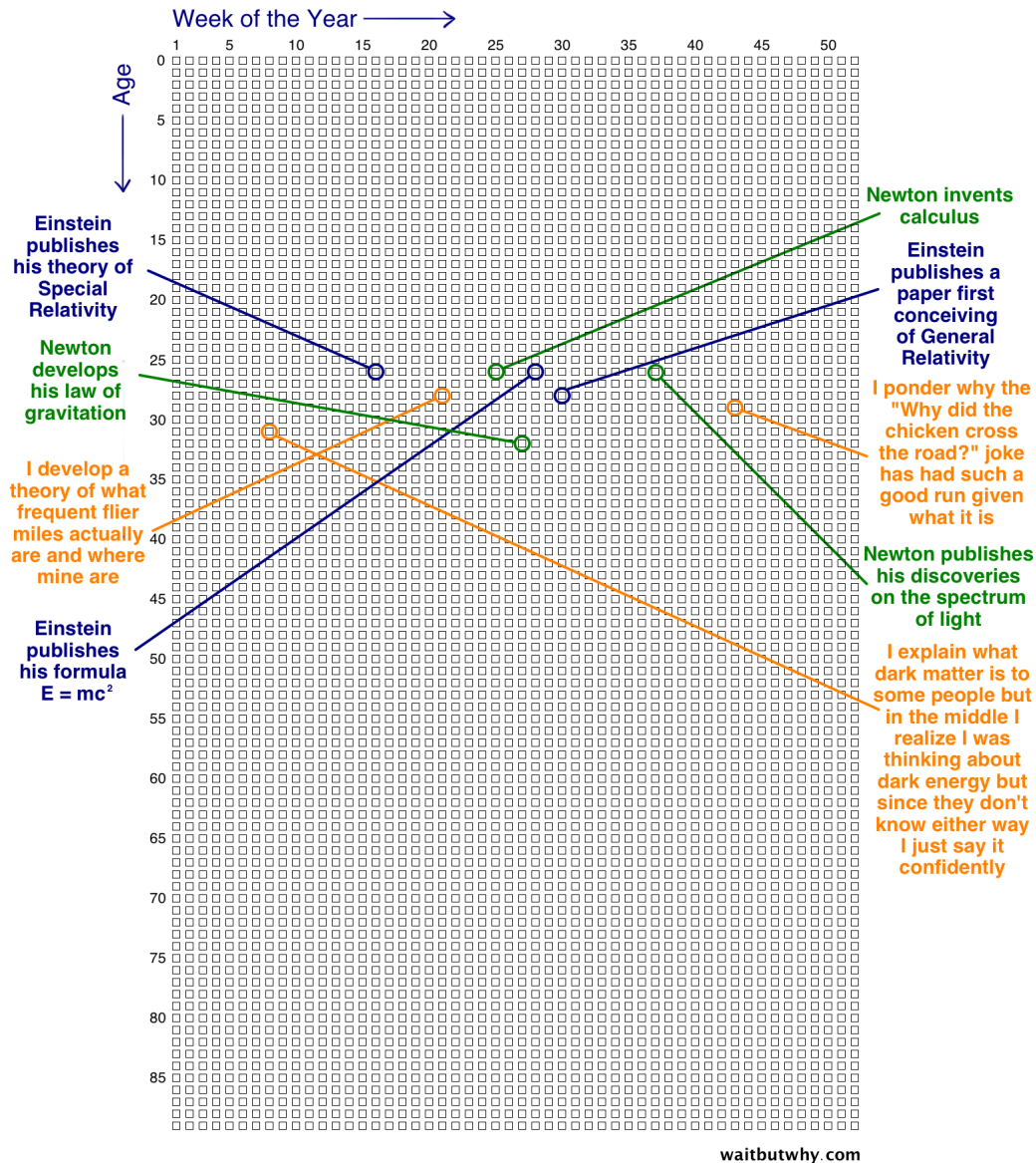
Famous Deaths



Tiger Woods Major Championships (red) and Roger Federer Grand Slam Championships (blue)

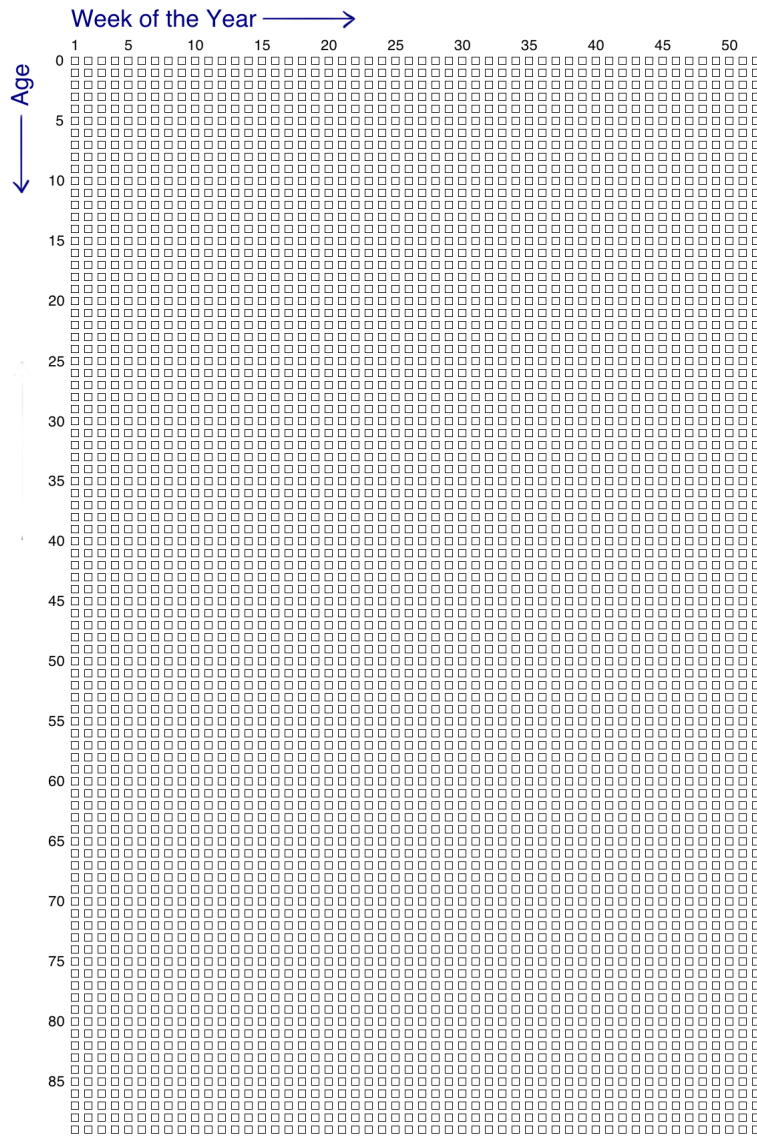


Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton's Early Accomplishments



But how about **your weeks**?

You?



waitbutwhy.com

Sometimes life seems really short, and other times it seems impossibly long. But this chart helps to emphasize that it's most certainly finite. Those are your weeks and they're all you've got.

Given that fact, the only appropriate word to describe your weeks is *precious*. There are trillions upon trillions of weeks in eternity, and those are your tiny handful. Going with the "precious" theme, let's imagine that each of your weeks is a small gem, like a 2mm, .05 carat diamond. Here's one:



If you multiply the volume of a .05 carat diamond by the number of weeks in 90 years (4,680), it adds up to just under a tablespoon.



waitbutwhy.com

Looking at this spoon of diamonds, there's one very clear question to ask: "Are you making the most of your weeks?"

In thinking about my own weeks and how I tend to use them, I decided that there are two good ways to use a diamond:

- 1) Enjoying the diamond
- 2) Building something to make your future diamonds or the diamonds of others more enjoyable

In other words, you have this small spoonful of diamonds and you really want to create a life in which they're making you *happy*. And if a diamond is not making you happy, it should only be because you're using it to make other diamonds go down better—either your own in the future or those of others. In the ideal situation, you're well balanced between #1 and #2 and you're often able to accomplish both simultaneously (like those times when you love your job).

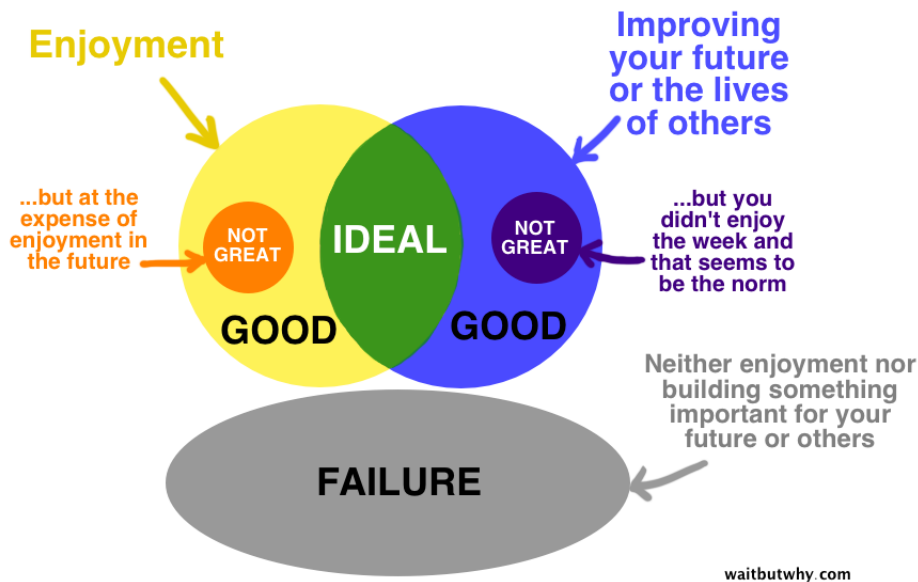
Of course, if a diamond is enjoyable but by enjoying it you're screwing your future diamonds (an [Instant Gratification Monkey](#) specialty), that's not so good. Likewise, if you're using diamond after diamond to build something for your future, but it's not making you happy and seems like a long-term thing with no end in sight, that's not great either.

But the worst possible way to use a diamond is by accomplishing neither #1 nor #2 above. Sometimes "neither" happens when you're in either the wrong career or the wrong relationship, and it's often a symptom of either a shortage of courage, self-discipline, or creativity. Sometimes "neither" happens because of a debilitating problem.

We've all had Neither Weeks and they don't feel good. And when a long string of Neither Weeks happens, you become depressed, frustrated, hopeless, and a bunch of other upsetting adjectives. It's inevitable to have Neither Weeks, and sometimes they're important—it's often a really bad Neither Week that leads you to a life-changing epiphany—but trying to minimize your Neither Weeks is a worthy goal.

It can all be summed up like this:

The Contents of Your Week



The Life Calendar

One of the ways we end up in NeitherLand is by not thinking about things hard enough—so one of the most critical skills is continual reflection and self-awareness. Otherwise, you can fall into an unconscious rut and waste a bunch of precious diamonds.

To help both you and ourselves stay conscious and avoid NeitherLand, we've created a Life Calendar that lays out every week of your life on one sheet of paper. We don't typically bring products into posts, but in this case, they go hand-in-hand.

The calendar is a 24" by 36" poster on high-quality poster paper, made to be written on and last for decades. It costs \$20 and you can buy it [here](#).

Besides the purpose of encouraging regular reflection, we hope the calendar can help you feel more oriented in your life, help you set goals and hold yourself to them, and remind you to be proud of yourself for what you've accomplished and grateful for the diamonds in your spoon.

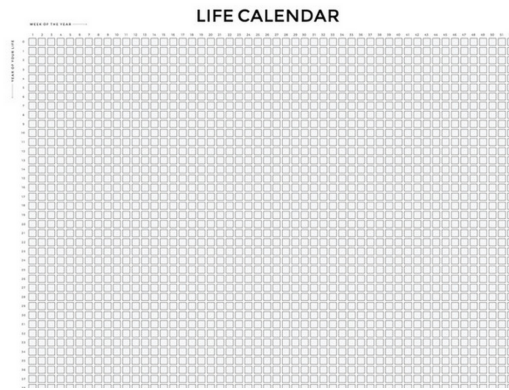
How you use the calendar is totally open for creativity. Some possibilities:

- Highlight the weeks in the past in different colors to segment them into "life chapters"—i.e. High School, College, Job 1, Job 2, New City, Engagement, Marriage, etc., or maybe a whole other conception of what a life chapter means to you. You can also mark special boxes where key turning points happened.
- Write something in each week's box as it goes by—the boxes are large enough to write a few words in with a sharp pencil.
- Plot out goals for the future by making a mark on a future box and visually seeing exactly how many weeks you have to get there.
- If you're a new parent, it might be fun to make one for your child so they can look at it later and have some info on what happened in the first few years of their life.
- Or maybe you'd rather leave it totally untouched.

Both the week chart above and the life calendar are a reminder to me that this grid of empty boxes staring me in the face is *mine*. We tend to feel locked into whatever life we're living, but this pallet of empty boxes can be absolutely whatever we want it to be. Everyone you know, everyone you admire, every hero in history—they did it all with that same grid of empty boxes.

The boxes can also be a reminder that life is forgiving. No matter what happens each week, you get a new fresh box to work with the next week. It makes me want to skip the New Year's Resolutions—they never work anyway—and focus on making New *Week's* Resolutions every Sunday night. Each blank box is an opportunity to crush the week—a good thing to remember.

The Calendar:



If you're into Wait But Why, sign up for the [Wait But Why email list](#) and we'll send you the new posts right when they come out. That's the only thing we use the list for—and since my posting schedule isn't exactly...regular...this is the best way to stay up-to-date with WBW posts.

If you'd like to support Wait But Why, [here's our Patreon](#).

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More ways to put life in perspective:

[Life is a Picture, But You Live in a Pixel](#)

[Putting Time in Perspective](#)

[Your Family: Past, Present, and Future](#)

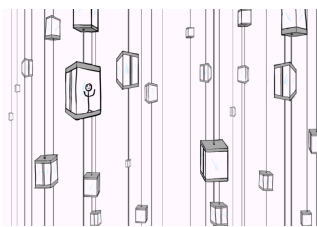
[Taming the Mammoth: Why You Shouldn't Care What Other People Think of You](#)

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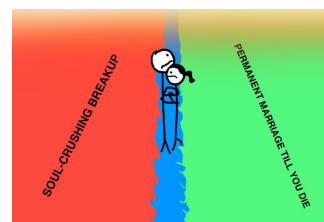
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139 Comments

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James Hornitzky • 2 months ago

Bit late to the party but I built a React app of this as well - <https://jhornitzky.github.i...>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jeff Neet → James Hornitzky • 20 days ago

This is awesome, exactly what I was looking for. It would be nice if the average lifespan were a line, and the expected life span could be entered in. Nice work!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Noor → James Hornitzky • a month ago

35% lived. why i'm not surprised?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

BlueBird → Noor • 11 days ago

same with me

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Sarception • 5 months ago

hey vsauce

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Shal Y • 5 months ago

Hey guys, I wrote the online version of the life weeks calendar, check this out: <http://gaze.life> - if you have any comments or have ideas about how to improve it - feel free to share with me!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Rob → Shal Y • a month ago

Love it! Super flexible.

I see a few other comments here where people built similar calendars. They all display the portion of 90 years that you have lived so far, after inputting the birth date. Have you thought about, or seen any others develop more controls that allows you to fill in your life calendar? For example, input the date range you attended school. Input the date you got married, or other big events for the calendar to display.

I'm not here to ask for more features on something you did in your free time, but would be really neat to see! :)

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jesse Pinkman → Shal Y • 2 months ago

Very cool man. Thank you

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Amr Kafina • 5 months ago

A while back I built an app (<https://lifecal.me>) based on this, and it really blew up! Your articles are a real eye opener Tim. Keep up the good work!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

陈真话 • 6 months ago

how to make this type of chart?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jill Herzig • 6 months ago

Wait, why are Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin and Amy Winehouse the only three women included in these infographics? Mother Theresa, Maya Angelou, Wangari Maathai, Anne Frank and Princess Diana are all notable for their long or short runs. Just off the top of my head. And women athletes deserve to be up there with Woods and Federer--starting with a couple of Williams sisters. Watch the mancentricity, please.

8 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Wolfeyes → Jill Herzig • 12 days ago

Just because .

and where do you just get? you can not please everyone. add someone you want to your calendar

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

midogman → Jill Herzig • 2 months ago

death. the great equalizer.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

chadoh • a year ago

Loved this idea. Made individual life calendars for my immediate family members for Christmas in 2015.

Then I built <https://entire.life> to make it easier for everyone else to make their own.

If you're looking for a quick way to build a life calendar digitally, <https://entire.life> might be your jam. We're still working on making it better, and working towards a business model that will help the website last as long as all of us.

Here's to longevity, meaning, and perspective, friends!

Thanks Wait But Why for the inspiration.

17 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Allegra Skinner** → chadoh • 7 months ago

I am now addicted to your site.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Ms J** → chadoh • 8 months ago

I love entire.life. I was looking for something exactly like that to give my users perspective on life before they use my website.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **chadoh** → Ms J • 8 months ago

Great to hear, Ms J! What is your website?

^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Ms J** → chadoh • 8 months ago

I received a lovely welcome email from you guys, I'll reply there :)

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **J_a_s_o_n** → chadoh • a year ago

Holy... wow! Nicely done!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



This comment is awaiting moderation. [Show comment.](#)

 **Heinz Linz** → shelly.miller • 2 years ago

die

27 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Неужаку Безфамилиарный** → Heinz Linz • 5 months ago

and early

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Melayahm** → Неужаку Безфамилиарный • 2 months ago

Gosh, after seeing my life represented in weeks, this could be exactly what I need, the answer to all my prayers...if I was a moronic sucker.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Amit Kohli** • a year ago

I have a great idea on how to leverage this so people can fill stuff out online.... but I'm procrastinating on it. ;)

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **pres10com** • a year ago

If you plan on filling this out - one helpful hint is to put your birthday into wolframalpha.com - it will display the current number of weeks.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **inspireants** • a year ago

Live long and prosper

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **aeris bueller** • 2 years ago

can't tell if this is supposed to terrify or depress me, but I certainly don't find it inspirational.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **DantheHam** → aeris bueller • a year ago

Yeah, I don't get how this is supposed to be inspirational. It's more depressing than anything. There's nothing inspirational about charting down a fucking lifespan as blocks you can check off. A human life is more than weeks and months you just check off.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Evan** → DantheHam • a year ago

The point of this post was not to reduce all the nuances of a human lifetime into boxes on a

piece of paper, but rather to give a different perspective on the finite nature of our lives. Representing the weeks of our lives as boxes on a finite piece of paper is to remind us to take advantage of the time we have, and to not let the precious few weeks of life we have go to waste.

14 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Garl Boyd Latham** → Evan • a year ago

If that's the ultimate point of this exercise, then it would be far more advantageous - and uplifting - to shut down your computer, pick up your Bible and read the book of Ecclesiastes!

^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Sucinquee** → Garl Boyd Latham • a year ago

wow, thx, learned something new:)

Funny how there are people so opposite to oneself.

I myself dont own a bible, cannot remember ever reading one, am sceptic for various reasons- but found this approach quite interesting(in an inspirational sense.)

So thank you.

Do keep in mind that different people with different memories/upbringings understand different teachings better- for me, the above was intuitivly clear, while I needed wikipedia to explain your way to me.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **DantheHam** → Evan • a year ago

Life on a schedule is no life at all. You can try to rationalize it all you want but it's still stupid. We're not robots, we live as we want the way we want whenever we want.

That's what it means to be human.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Melayahm** → DantheHam • 2 months ago

Glad to hear that you've never wasted any of your life

^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **APM Rental Management** • 2 years ago

This is a real example of how life going on in every person and how each day is important for us. Great and one of the best post. Thank you.

<http://www.apmrental.com.au/>

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Robin Oh** • 2 years ago

My friends and I made a website based on this idea, if you would like to visualize your own life. Check it out at www.lifeinapage.me !

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Heinz Linz** • 2 years ago

wow, rly makes u think nd shit

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Fred** • 2 years ago

Thank you for this

^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Delaram** • 2 years ago

Hi :) here's what i thought after reading the whole article and the newest part of the comments section : as we all might have experienced with pictures of our loved ones on our walls or desks ,, or motivating quotes written in eye-catching fonts and colors stick to EVERY WHERE (including calender or desks or ,, etc) i dont think seeing the calender all the time would benefit us as a trigger since after a month or so , we'll get used to seeing it or might even forget to mark things up ,, so here's a thought ! :

What about a smart phone application that has a reminder for every box there is in the calender and having some added features where we can plan things out and color them by fancy brushes :)

Although i would love it if i was the first person to think about such a thing but would be more than happy to know there is already an app designed to do this ,, let me know if there is such a thing ;)

Btw ,, love you soooo much dear Tim ;) <3

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Brian Palmer** • 2 years ago

I found myself re-reading this series of posts recently, for various reasons. I love the idea not because I want to try to plan out every minute of my life, but because I think it's a great way to remain aware of that all-important question: are you living your life the way you want to?

Reading the post again gave me an idea that tickled me, so I had to implement it. It's a little meter that sits on your MacOS status bar (like the battery meter on a macbook) and tracks how far you are through your expected lifespan. You can grab it here: <https://github.com/codekitc...>

It's pretty silly, of course, since for the typical lifespan it'll change by a little over 1% per year. But I like it because it's a subtle, always-there reminder to ask yourself whether what you're doing is really important to you. I'm going to try it for a while and see if it the effect sticks.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



anonymous → Brian Palmer • 2 years ago

this is really cool but i wouldn't use it not because it sucks, but because i'd have an existential crisis every time i looked at it

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Brian Palmer → anonymous • 2 years ago

Ha yeah, that's how I thought I'd feel too. I didn't think I'd keep it running, but I like that it doesn't feel like a constantly ticking clock, since it only changes once a year or so. It's just a nice subtle reminder to think about how you're spending your time -- I've found myself a couple times about to open up Reddit and kill some time, then I glance over at the LifeMeter and decide to do something else instead.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Laurene • 2 years ago

whYYyy

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Personified • 2 years ago

You are a uniquely amazing person, Tim.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Jason • 2 years ago

I found another website that does this dynamically for you: <http://www.weekti.com>

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Thorsten Happel • 2 years ago

Just stumbled onto this on my 46th birthday ... :) ... Thanks for a very interesting and inspiring post, Tim.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



holden and me • 2 years ago

Great. Well, life is like a box of chocolates...and it's limited.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Dean • 2 years ago

Hey, can someone explain a bit about the behind of helping someone else, I belive in it but I would like to hear more info about the source of it why it's important to take care of other 'random' people life and not just on our own.

Thanks!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



John Merritt → Dean • 2 years ago

Because wouldn't you want some random person to make your life happier? Life is better with people trying to make it better.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Dean → John Merritt • 2 years ago

ok and it goes vice-versa if i'll help will I feel better as well?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Sucinquee → Dean • a year ago

Yes! I think.

There probably are a bunch of psychological reasons to this as well. But generally, helping others may make us fell even more accomplished.

It's like this: Receiving gifts is great- sure.

But giving, giving makes us feel rich and worthwhile.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

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The Elon Musk Post Series

164 comments • a year ago

Ali Hayat — Yeah by the time this comes out the excitement will have turned kinda sour. Things have gone from being 'oh his lack of discipline is cute' to ...

Is it better to be born as a French monarch in 1700 or a regular person today?

236 comments • a year ago

Marthinus Bosman — French Monarch won't experience the pain of waiting for the next WBW post

;D

Which drugs should be legal?

211 comments • a year ago

DrSuess — In a lot of cases, "the drug problem" as we discuss it, isn't a drug problem. It's a social and economic issue. Cyclical poverty, mental health ...

SpaceX's Big Fucking Rocket – The Full Story

613 comments • 2 years ago

Russell Crow — Actually, you can.

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Sonja Taylor

I am 78 1/2 years old and auditing a 3rd year college course. My class instructor suggested this web site to his class. What a great gift to his students. When you are young and so busy in life one can get side tracked easily. This is food for thought to take to heart. Life isn't always ideal, but it is what you make of it. You are in charge.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) ·  9 · 34w



John Tolle

Tim, you're a genius, regardless of your proclivity for procrastination. I would like to thank you for every post you've written, even though I haven't read anywhere near all of them yet. For you and your readers, I decided to create a fun little interactive version of this post. It doesn't contain all your cool data, but it lets the visitor see his or her own life in week-sized blocks. And I was lazy and didn't account for leap years. Sorry, Thomas! 😊

<http://digitolle.net/life>

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) ·  3 · 25w · Edited



Thomas Anderson

I like it... but every couple years you'd get an extra week. a year is 52 weeks plus 1 day, and every four years you get an extra day, so every six years or so you get an extra week.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) ·  2 · 30w



Susie Dickey

May I "borrow" this article for my website, with attribution to you?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) ·  2 · 18w



Sharon Williams

Only 90 years? That's way too finite! (Yes I know that's the point) Guess I'll have to buy 2 so I have an extension. 😊

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 26w



Ruth Fagbenro Akintade

Wow,nice write up! always from Tim...life calendar shows life is really short for us to embark on using time very well

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