

# Personal History Timeline - User Guide

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Version 2.0 - Modular Edition

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AppID: io.personal.timeline

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## Getting Started

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### What is Personal History Timeline?

Personal History Timeline is a powerful desktop application designed to help you create, organize, and visualize the important events in your life. Whether you're documenting family history, tracking personal milestones, or organizing historical research, this application provides an intuitive interface for managing chronological data.

### Key Features

- **Visual Timeline Display** - See your events laid out chronologically
- **Flexible Event Management** - Add, edit, and delete events with detailed information
- **Advanced Search** - Find events quickly with comprehensive search tools
- **Batch Operations** - Edit multiple events simultaneously

- **Import/Export** - Work with CSV files for data exchange
- **Customizable Themes** - Personalize your interface
- **Categorization** - Organize events by categories and tags

## System Requirements

- **Operating System:** Linux (tested on Linux Mint)
- **Python:** 3.8 or higher
- **Dependencies:** PySide6, SQLite
- **Storage:** Minimal (database grows with your data)

## First Launch

When you first start Personal History Timeline:

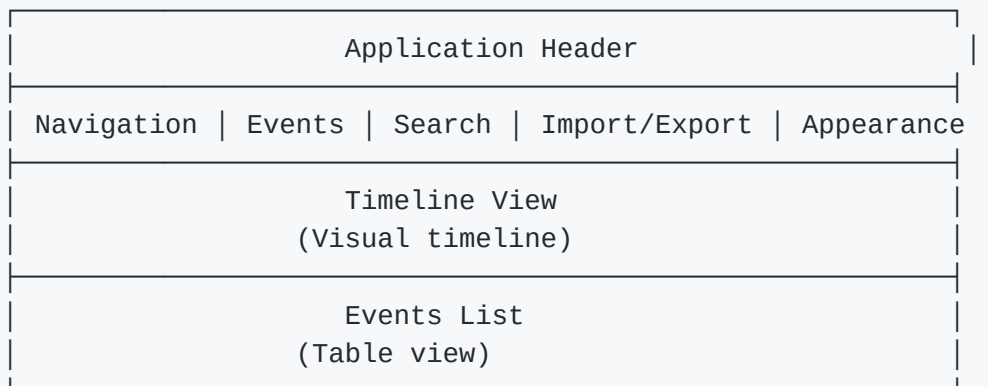
1. The application creates a new database automatically
2. You'll see an empty timeline and events table
3. Use the "Add Event" button to create your first entry
4. The timeline will update to show your events visually

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## Understanding the Interface

Personal History Timeline features a clean, organized interface divided into functional areas:

### Main Window Layout



### Control Panels

The top of the window contains five organized control panels:

## 1. Timeline Navigation

- **Pick Year:** Jump to a specific year
- **Previous/Next Year:** Navigate chronologically
- **User Guide:** Access this documentation
- **About:** View application information

## 2. Event Actions

- **Add Event:** Create new timeline entries
- **Edit Event:** Modify selected events
- **Delete Event:** Remove selected events

## 3. Search and Data Tools

- **Comprehensive Search:** Advanced search interface
- **Scrolling Events:** Quick preview of unique events

## 4. Import/Export

- **Import Records:** Load events from CSV files
- **Export Records:** Save events to CSV files
- **Backup Records:** Create database backups

## 5. Appearance

- **Light/Dark Theme:** Choose your preferred theme
- **Accent Color:** Customize highlight colors

## Timeline View

The visual timeline displays your events chronologically:

- **Timeline Line:** Horizontal line representing time
- **Event Markers:** Circles marking event dates
- **Event Labels:** Date labels for each event
- **Stacked Display:** Events with similar dates stack vertically
- **Selection:** Red highlight shows selected events
- **Tooltips:** Hover for detailed event information

## Events List (Table)

The table provides detailed event information:

- **Date:** When the event occurred
  - **Event:** Brief description
  - **Category:** Organizational grouping
  - **Tags:** Keywords for easy searching
  - **Detail:** Full description and notes
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## Managing Events

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### Adding New Events

1. Click the **"Add Event"** button in the Event Actions panel
2. Fill in the event details:
  - **Date:** When the event occurred (required)
  - **Event:** Brief title or description (required)
  - **Category:** Organizational grouping (optional)
  - **Tags:** Keywords separated by commas (optional)
  - **Detail:** Full description and notes (optional)
3. Click **"Save"** to add the event to your timeline

### Editing Events

#### Method 1: From Table

1. Select an event in the events table
2. Click **"Edit Event"** or double-click the table row
3. Modify the details in the dialog
4. Click **"Save"** to apply changes

#### Method 2: From Timeline

1. Click on an event marker in the timeline
2. Click **"Edit Event"**
3. Modify and save as above

## Deleting Events

1. Select one or more events in the table
2. Click **"Delete Event"**
3. Confirm the deletion when prompted

**Warning:** Deleted events cannot be recovered unless you have a backup.

## Event Field Guidelines

### Date Format

- Use the date picker for accuracy
- Dates can range from historical to future
- The application handles different calendar periods

### Event Descriptions

- Keep brief but descriptive
- Use active voice when possible
- Include key details that help identify the event

### Categories

- Use consistent naming (e.g., "Family", "Career", "Health")
- Categories help organize and filter events
- Consider creating a personal category system

### Tags

- Separate multiple tags with commas
- Use specific keywords that you'll remember
- Tags are excellent for cross-referencing related events

### Details

- Include as much information as you want to preserve
- Consider adding:
  - People involved
  - Locations
  - Outcomes or significance

- Related events or context
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## Timeline Navigation

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### Year-Based Navigation

The timeline navigation system helps you move through your data efficiently:

#### Pick Year Dropdown

- Select any year that contains events
- Instantly jump to that year's events
- Only years with events appear in the list

#### Previous/Next Year Buttons

- Navigate chronologically through years with events
- Buttons are disabled when no previous/next years exist
- Provides smooth temporal browsing

### Timeline Interaction

#### Viewing Events

- **Scroll:** Use mouse wheel or scrollbars to navigate the timeline
- **Zoom:** Timeline adjusts automatically to show events clearly
- **Selection:** Click event markers to select them
- **Tooltips:** Hover over markers for event previews

#### Timeline Features

- **Auto-Stacking:** Events close in time stack vertically
- **Smart Spacing:** Timeline adjusts to prevent overlap
- **Visual Feedback:** Selected events highlight in red
- **Responsive Layout:** Adapts to window size changes

### Coordinated Views

The timeline and table views work together:

- Selecting an event in one view highlights it in the other
  - Year navigation affects both views simultaneously
  - Changes made in one view immediately update the other
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## Search and Filtering

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### Comprehensive Search

Click "**Comprehensive Search**" to open the advanced search interface:

#### Search Options

##### Text Search

- Enter keywords to search for
- Choose which fields to search: All Fields, Event, Detail, Category, or Tags
- Options:
  - **Exact Match**: Find exact text only
  - **Whole Word**: Match complete words only
  - **Case Sensitive**: Respect uppercase/lowercase

##### Date Range Filtering

- Enable "Use date range" checkbox
- Set start and end dates using date pickers
- Leave either field empty for open-ended ranges

##### Category and Tag Filtering

- Select specific categories from dropdown
- Filter by individual tags
- Combine with text search for precise results

##### Search Controls

- **Search**: Execute the search with current criteria
- **Show All**: Clear filters and show all events
- **Clear Table**: Empty the results table

## Working with Results

The search results appear in a dedicated table with full event management capabilities:

- **Edit Events:** Double-click or use Edit button
- **Delete Events:** Select and delete multiple events
- **Batch Processing:** Modify multiple events simultaneously
- **Export Results:** Save search results to CSV

## Quick Search Tips

- **Find by Year:** Use date range with the same start/end year
- **Find by Person:** Search in Detail field for names
- **Find Related Events:** Use tag filtering for themed searches
- **Recent Events:** Sort by date and scroll to bottom

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## Batch Operations

### Accessing Batch Operations

Batch operations are available through the Comprehensive Search interface:

1. Open **Comprehensive Search**
2. Search for or display the events you want to modify
3. Select multiple events in the results table
4. Click "**Batch Processing**"

## Bulk Editing Features

The Batch Processing dialog provides powerful tools for editing multiple events:

### Update Fields

- **Date:** Change the date for all selected events
- **Event:** Modify event descriptions
- **Category:** Assign a new category to multiple events
- **Tags:** Add, remove, or replace tags
- **Detail:** Update detailed descriptions



## Selection Management

- **Select All:** Choose all events in the current view
- **Clear Selection:** Deselect all events
- **Individual Selection:** Click specific events to toggle selection

## Preview Changes

- **Live Preview:** See exactly what changes will be applied
- **Highlighting:** Changed fields appear highlighted
- **Validation:** Errors are shown before applying changes

## Apply Changes

- **Selective Updates:** Only fields with new values are changed
- **Batch Validation:** All changes are validated before applying
- **Undo Support:** Changes are applied atomically

## Common Batch Operations

### Recategorizing Events

1. Search for events with old category
2. Select all relevant events
3. Change category field in batch editor
4. Apply changes

### Adding Tags to Multiple Events

1. Find events that need the same tag
2. Select the events
3. Add the new tag (existing tags are preserved)
4. Apply changes

### Updating Historical Dates

1. Search for events in a date range
2. Select events with incorrect dates
3. Update dates individually or systematically
4. Apply changes

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# Import and Export

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## Importing Data

### CSV Import Format

Personal History Timeline accepts CSV files with these columns:

- **date:** Event date (YYYY-MM-DD format)
- **event:** Event description
- **category:** Event category (optional)
- **tags:** Comma-separated tags (optional)
- **detail:** Detailed description (optional)

### Import Process

1. Click "**Import Records**" in the Import/Export panel
2. Select your CSV file using the file dialog
3. Review the import preview
4. Confirm to add events to your timeline

### Import Tips

- **Date Format:** Use YYYY-MM-DD format for best results
- **Headers:** Include column headers in your CSV file
- **Encoding:** Save CSV files in UTF-8 encoding
- **Special Characters:** Quotes and commas in text should be properly escaped

## Exporting Data

### Full Export

1. Click "**Export Records**" to export all events
2. Choose the destination file location
3. Select CSV format options if available
4. Save the file

### Filtered Export

1. Use Comprehensive Search to filter events
2. Click "**Export Results**" in the search dialog
3. Only the filtered events are exported
4. Choose destination and save

## Export Uses

- **Backup:** Regular exports serve as data backups
- **Sharing:** Send event data to others
- **Analysis:** Import into spreadsheet applications
- **Migration:** Move data between systems

## Backup and Restore

### Creating Backups

1. Click "**Backup Records**" for database backup
2. Choose backup location
3. Include timestamp in filename for version tracking

### Best Practices

- **Regular Backups:** Create backups before major changes
- **Multiple Locations:** Store backups in different locations
- **Test Restores:** Periodically verify backup integrity
- **Export Backups:** Also maintain CSV exports as secondary backups

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## Customization

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### Themes

Personal History Timeline offers flexible theming options:

#### Base Themes

##### Light Theme

- Bright, clean appearance
- High contrast for readability

- Default system colors
- Suitable for well-lit environments

## Dark Theme

- Dark background with light text
- Reduced eye strain in low light
- Modern appearance
- Battery-friendly on some displays

## Accent Colors

1. Click "**Accent Color**" in the Appearance panel
2. Choose from the color picker
3. Preview changes immediately
4. Color affects highlights, selections, and accents

## Interface Preferences

### Column Widths

- Drag column borders in the events table to resize
- Settings are saved automatically
- Reset by restarting the application

### Window Layout

- Resize window sections by dragging splitter bars
- Timeline and table proportions are adjustable
- Layout preferences persist between sessions

## Data Organization

### Category System

Develop a consistent category system:

- **Family:** Births, marriages, reunions
- **Career:** Jobs, promotions, education
- **Health:** Medical events, fitness milestones
- **Travel:** Trips, moves, vacations

- **Personal:** Achievements, relationships, hobbies

## Tagging Strategy

Use tags for cross-cutting themes:

- **People:** Names of important people
  - **Locations:** Cities, countries, venues
  - **Themes:** "milestone", "crisis", "celebration"
  - **Projects:** Long-term endeavors or goals
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## Tips and Tricks

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### Efficient Data Entry

#### Quick Event Creation

- Use keyboard shortcuts when available
- Develop templates for common event types
- Copy similar events and modify details
- Use consistent language and formatting

#### Batch Data Entry

- Prepare data in spreadsheets first
- Use CSV import for large datasets
- Verify dates before importing
- Review and clean data after import

### Navigation Shortcuts

#### Timeline Navigation

- Click and drag to scroll the timeline
- Use the scrolling events list for quick previews
- Bookmark important years in your memory
- Use search to jump to specific events quickly

#### Table Navigation

- Sort by clicking column headers
- Use search to filter large datasets
- Select multiple events with Ctrl+click
- Double-click for quick editing

## **Data Quality**

### **Consistent Formatting**

- Establish date format standards
- Use consistent category names
- Develop a tagging vocabulary
- Regular review and cleanup sessions

### **Avoiding Duplicates**

- Search before adding new events
- Use specific event descriptions
- Include dates in searches to find near-duplicates
- Regular duplicate review sessions

## **Advanced Usage**

### **Cross-Referencing**

- Use tags to link related events
- Include references in detail fields
- Create "milestone" or "summary" events
- Use consistent naming for recurring themes

### **Historical Research**

- Include source information in details
- Use uncertainty indicators for approximate dates
- Tag events by research status
- Maintain separate categories for different research projects

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## **Troubleshooting**

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## Common Issues

### Application Won't Start

**Problem:** Error messages on startup **Solutions:**

- Check that PySide6 is installed: `pip3 install PySide6`
- Verify Python version is 3.8 or higher
- Check file permissions in application directory
- Try running from command line to see error messages

### Import Problems

**Problem:** CSV import fails or imports incorrect data **Solutions:**

- Verify CSV format matches expected columns
- Check date format (use YYYY-MM-DD)
- Ensure UTF-8 encoding
- Remove special characters that might cause parsing issues
- Check for missing headers

### Search Not Working

**Problem:** Search returns no results or incorrect results **Solutions:**

- Verify search terms are spelled correctly
- Check if case-sensitive option is affecting results
- Try broader search terms
- Use "All Fields" search option
- Clear any date range filters

### Performance Issues

**Problem:** Application runs slowly with large datasets **Solutions:**

- Regular database maintenance
- Limit search results using date ranges
- Close and restart application periodically
- Consider archiving very old data

## Database Issues

## **Corruption Recovery**

If database corruption is suspected:

1. Create CSV export of current data
2. Exit application completely
3. Rename existing database file as backup
4. Restart application (creates new database)
5. Import data from CSV export

## **Backup Restoration**

To restore from backup:

1. Exit application
2. Replace database file with backup
3. Restart application
4. Verify data integrity

## **Getting Help**

### **Documentation**

- User Guide (this document)
- Technical Documentation
- About dialog for version information

### **Self-Help Resources**

- Check Recent Changes section for known issues
- Verify system requirements
- Test with minimal data set

### **Reporting Issues**

- Note exact error messages
- Include steps to reproduce problem
- Mention operating system and version
- Include application version information

## **Maintenance**



## Regular Maintenance

- Create backups before major changes
- Periodically export data as secondary backup
- Review and clean up categories and tags
- Update documentation for personal processes

## Performance Optimization

- Restart application after heavy usage
- Keep reasonable amounts of data visible
- Use date filtering for large datasets
- Regular system maintenance (disk cleanup, etc.)

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## Conclusion

Personal History Timeline is designed to grow with your needs, from simple personal timelines to complex historical research projects. The modular architecture provides a solid foundation for managing your chronological data efficiently.

Take time to develop consistent data entry practices and organizational systems that work for your specific needs. Regular backups and exports ensure your valuable historical data is preserved safely.

For additional information about the technical aspects of the application, refer to the Technical Documentation.

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