June 28, 1914 Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophia are killed by Serbian nationalists.

July 26, 1914 Austria declares war on Serbia. Russia, an ally of Serbia, prepares to enter the war.

July 29, 1914 Austria invades Serbia.

August 1, 1914 Germany declares war on Russia.

August 3, 1914 Germany declares war on France.

August 4, 1914 German army invades neutral Belgium on its way to attack France. Great Britain declares war on Germany

August 6, 1914 Austria declares war on Russia.

August 12, 1914 France and Britain declare war on Austria.

**First Battle of the Marne, Sept 6–10, 1914**  
Germany’s Schlieffen Plan to bypass French border fortifications by passing through Belgium and Luxembourg and swiftly defeating the French Army worked well initially. German soldiers were within 50 miles (80 km) of Paris. Their commander in chief, General Helmuth von Moltke, then changed the Schlieffen Plan; instead of going west of Paris to encircle the French capital, he sent his forces east to meet what he thought was a nearly defeated army head-on., giving the French and a British Expeditionary Force (Britain entered the war after Germany invaded Belgium.) to strike the Germans’ western flank in the Valley of the Marne. Both sides suffered heavy casualties and began digging the trenches that would define warfare in the Great War.  
**Allied casualties: 263,000  
German casualties: Estimated to be about the same as Allied**

October – November 1914 First Battle of Ypres, France. Germany fails to reach the English Channel.

**1914 – 1917 Deadlock and growing death tolls The two huge armies are deadlocked along a 600-mile front of trenches in Belgium and France. For four years, there is little change. Attack after attack fails to cross enemy lines, and the toll in human lives grows rapidly. Both sides seek help from other allies. By 1917, every continent and all the oceans of the world are involved in this war.**

1915 The Second Battle of Ypres. Germans use poison gas and break a hole through the long line of Allied trenches. Death tolls are rising steadily into the millions.

May 1915 Italy declares war on Austria.

August 1915 Italy declares war on Germany.

**Battle of Verdun, Feb–Dec 1916**  
German offensive against French fortifications anchored at the town of Verdun and stretching to the Swiss border. Three forts were captured, but not the fortifications at Verdun, where the French commander, General Henri Philippe Petain, had declared, “They shall not pass!” The Germans opened the offensive by firing 2 million shells against a front of just eight miles. A British attack on the Somme Front and a Russian offensive on the Eastern Front forced the Germans to pull troops away from Verdun, and the final German offensive there took place July 21. During autumn, having gained artillery superiority, the French began counterattacks. By December 15 they had regained all the ground previously lost, leaving the lines as they had been before the German attacks began.  
**Allied casualties: 400,000  
German casualties: 340,000**

**Battle of the Somme, Jul–Nov 1916**  
British offensive to break through German lines near the Somme River in northeastern France and relieve pressure on Verdun to the south, it was intended to be “the big push” that would end the war. A week of bombardments sent 1.6 million shells screaming into the German lines, but their damage was insignificant. When British troops attacked on July 1, they suffered the greatest single-day loss in all of Britain’s history: 60,000 casualties, one-third of which were killed. As the offensive dragged on, French troops came to reinforce the British. When the battles ended in mid-November, the Allies had won just five miles (eight km) of ground, but attrition was high among the German defenders, including a large number of junior officers and NCOs, which would affect their army’s effectiveness during the remaining years of the war.  
**Allied casualties: 615,000, approximately two-thirds of them British  
German casualties: 650,000**

February 1917 Germany begins all-out submarine warfare to control the North Atlantic.

April 1917 The United States declares war on Germany.

June 1917 American troops begin landing in France.

**Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), Jul–Nov 1917**  
The area around Ypres, Belgium, had already witnessed two bloody struggles during the war, one of which saw the Germans’ first use of poison gas. Before launching the July 1917 offensive, British guns hurled 4.5 million artillery shells against the Germans’ position, but fortifications protected the defenders effectively. The first waves of attacking British were mowed down. The months of August and October saw some of the heaviest rains in 30 years, which turned the battlefield into a quagmire. Attacking soldiers at times found themselves in knee-deep mud as enemy machine-gun bullets whistled toward them; some men and animals literally drowned in the mud of the fields that had been churned up by the extensive artillery barrage and soaked with rain. The offensive gained just five miles (eight km), including the village of Passchendaele.  
**Allied casualties: 325,000  
German casualties: 260,000**

December 1917 Americans declare war on Austria.

**Spring Offensive (Ludendorff Offensive, Kaiser’s Battle), Mar–Apr 1918**  
German offensive on the Western Front intended to win the war before the American troops that had begun arriving in France could fully deploy. Planned by General Paul von Hindenburg’s Chief of Staff Erich Ludendorff, the main offensive was to be against the British forces on the Somme Front, accompanied by three diversionary attacks. Initially, the offensive sent the Allied troops reeling back, but the Germans advanced so quickly their supplies could not keep up in the muddy terrain pockmarked with shell craters. The attack fizzled with the Germans in a weak defensive position, but they had inflicted severe losses that were only made up by the arrival of American troops.  
**Allied casualties: 850,000  
German casualties, 650,000**

August 4, 1918 to November 11, 1918 The Allied forces advance steadily on the Western Front. This period has come to be known as "The Last Hundred Days,” in which US troops played an important role.

**Hundred Days Offensive Jul–Nov 1918**  
Allied (American, British, French) offensive on the Western Front against German Second Army. Includes the battles of Amiens, Second Somme, Second Noyons, Second Arras, Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Pushed Germans back to the Hindenburg Line of fortifications protecting Germany. The offensive continued, broke through the Hindenburg Line, and resulted in Germany’s surrender, ending the war.  
**Allied casualties: 1,070,000  
German casualties: 786,000**

November 3, 1918 Austria signs an armistice (peace agreement).

November 11, 1918 Germany signs an armistice agreement. When peace finally came, there was an underlying sadness to the celebrations. In the end, Belgium had been freed but at the cost of wiping out an entire generation of young men.