

1760 – 1840

Industrial Revolution Timeline

The Industrial Revolution transformed the world from a farming society to a factory society, beginning in Britain and spreading across Europe and America.

1764 — **The Spinning Jenny**

James Hargreaves invents a machine that can spin many threads at once, replacing slow hand-spinning.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Spinning Jenny was one of the first machines to replace human hand work with mechanical power — a crucial first step in the industrial transformation of manufacturing.*

1769 — **Watt's Steam Engine**

James Watt patents a greatly improved steam engine that is efficient enough to power factories and machinery.

> **Why it mattered:** *Watt's steam engine was the driving force of the Industrial Revolution — it freed factories from rivers and waterwheels and made large-scale mechanical production possible almost anywhere.*

1769 — **Arkwright's Water Frame**

Richard Arkwright patents the water frame, a powerful textile machine, and opens one of the world's first factories in Cromford, England.

> **Why it mattered:** *Arkwright's factory model — gathering workers and machines under one roof — became the blueprint for industrial production around the world.*

1785 — **Power Loom**

Edmund Cartwright invents the power loom, mechanizing the weaving of cloth.

> **Why it mattered:** *Weaving, once slow hand work, became fast and mechanical — dramatically lowering the cost of fabric and transforming the textile industry.*

Industrial Revolution Timeline *continued*

1804 — **First Steam Locomotive**

Richard Trevithick builds and runs the world's first steam-powered locomotive on an iron track in Wales.

> **Why it mattered:** *Trevithick's locomotive proved that steam power could move heavy loads on land — setting the stage for the railway revolution that would follow.*

1807 — **Steamboat**

Robert Fulton's Clermont makes the first successful commercial steamboat voyage up the Hudson River in New York.

> **Why it mattered:** *Steam-powered boats transformed river and ocean travel, moving people and goods faster than ever before across North America and Europe.*

1825 — **First Public Railway**

The Stockton and Darlington Railway opens in England as the world's first steam-powered public passenger railway.

> **Why it mattered:** *Regular passenger rail service began here — within decades, railways would crisscross Britain, Europe, and North America, shrinking the world.*

1830s — **Factory Cities Grow**

Millions of workers leave farming villages to take factory jobs; cities like Manchester, Birmingham, and Pittsburgh grow rapidly.

> **Why it mattered:** *The shift from rural to urban life transformed how people worked and lived — creating the modern industrial working class and setting the stage for labor reform movements.*

1833 — **Factory Act**

Britain passes a law limiting child labor in textile factories, banning children under nine from working in mills.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Factory Act was one of the first laws protecting industrial workers — the beginning of a slow movement toward labor rights and workplace safety regulations.*

1840 — **The Railway Age**

A national railway network links British cities, slashing travel times from days to hours and transforming the economy.

> **Why it mattered:** *The railway network unified the nation, allowed factory goods to reach any market quickly, and changed the rhythms of daily life — the world had never moved so fast.*