

**0:00 The world we live in feels normal, ordinary.**

0:03 It feels like this is just how humans exist and always existed.

0:09 But, it's not.

0:11 Never before have we humans lived in a world as sophisticated and engineered to our needs as today.

0:18 Giving us the luxury to forget about ourselves and not worry about survival.

0:24 Food, shelter, security – all of this is, more or less, taken for granted.

0:29 But we're a special few; for more than 99.99% of human history, life was completely different.

0:36 And there's no such thing as just one human history.

0:49 Our story begins 6 million years ago, when the tribe of hominini split and our relationship with the apes ended.

0:56 2.8 million years ago, the genus of homo, the first humans, emerged.

1:02 We like to think about ourselves as the only humans, but this is far from the truth.

1:07 When we, homo sapiens sapiens, came into existence 200,000 years ago, there were at least six other human species around.

1:15 Cousins of comparable intelligence and ability, which must have been incredibly scary, kind of like living with aliens.

1:23 Some of them were very successful.

1:26 Homo erectus, for example, survived for 2 million years.

1:30 Ten times longer than modern humans have existed.

1:33 The last of the other humans disappeared around 10,000 years ago.

1:38 We don't know what caused them to die out.

1:41 Modern humans have at least a few percent of neanderthal and other human DNA, so there was some mixing,

1:46 but certainly not enough to be a merger between species.

1:50 So we don't know if our cousins went away because they lost the battle over resources, or because of a series of minor genocides.

1:56 Either way, only we remain.

2:00 Back to the beginnings of humanity.

2:02 2.8 million years ago, early humans used tools, but did not make a lot of progress for nearly 2 million years.

2:09 Until they learned to control fire.

2:12 Fire meant cooking, which made food more nutritious, which contributed to the development of our brain.

2:19 It also produced light and warmth, which made days longer and winters less gruesome.

2:24 On top of that, it not only scared predators away, it could also be used for hunting.

2:29 A torched wood or grassland provided small animals, nuts and tubers that were pre-roasted.

2:35 From 300,000 years ago, most of the different human species lived in small hunter-gatherer societies.

2:42 They had fire, wood and stone tools, planned for the future, buried their dead, and had cultures of their own.

2:49 But most importantly, they spoke to each other.

2:52 Probably in a kind of proto-language, less complex than ours.

2:56 If we had a time machine, how far would we be able to go back,

3:01 steal a few babies and raise them today without anyone noticing that they're a bit different?

3:07 There is much debate.

3:09 Anatomically, modern humans emerged 200,000 years ago,

3:13 but probably 70,000 years is as far as we could travel back and still snatch a behaviourally modern human.

3:20 Before that, the babies would probably lack a few crucial gene mutations

3:24 Necessary to build a brain with modern language and abstract thinking abilities.

3:29 At some point, around 50,000 years ago, there was an explosion in innovation.

3:34 Tools and weapons became more sophisticated and culture became more complex,  
3:39 because at this point, humans had a multi-purpose brain,  
3:42 and a more advanced language to communicate information with each other effectively,  
3:46 and down to the last detail.  
3:48 This allowed much closer cooperation, and is what really makes us different from any  
other creature on Earth.  
3:55 Not our comparatively weak bodies and inferior senses,  
3:58 but the ability to cooperate flexibly in large groups, unlike, for example, rigid beehives  
4:05 or intimate, but tiny wolf packs.  
4:08 As our brain evolved, we became able to do something, life had been unable to do up to  
this point.  
4:14 One – expand knowledge quickly.  
4:17 Two – preserve the knowledge gained over generations.  
4:21 Three – build on past knowledge, to gain even deeper insight.  
4:26 This seems daft, but until then, information had to be passed on from generation to  
generation,  
4:32 mostly through genetics, which is not efficient.  
4:36 Still, for the next 40,000 years, human life remained more or less the same.  
4:41 There was little to build upon.  
4:43 Our ancestors were only one animal among many.  
4:47 Building a skyscraper without knowing what a house is... is hard.  
4:51 But while it is easy to be arrogant in our attitude to our ancestors, this would be ignorant.  
4:56 Humans 50,000 years ago were survival specialists.  
5:00 They had a detailed mental map of their territory,  
5:03 their senses were fine-tuned to the environment,  
5:05 they knew and memorized a great amount of information about plants and animals.  
5:10 They could make complicated tools that required years of careful training and very fine  
motor skills  
5:17 Their bodies compared to our athletes today just because of their daily routines,  
5:21 and they lived a rich social life within their tribe  
5:24 Survival required so many skills that the average brain volume of early modern humans  
5:30 might even have been bigger than it is today  
5:32 As a group we know more today, but as individuals our ancestors were superior to us  
5:39 But then around 12,000 years ago, in multiple locations, humans developed agriculture.  
5:45 Everything changed very quickly.  
5:47 Before, survival as a hunter and forager required superb physical and mental abilities in  
all fields from everybody  
5:54 With the rise of the agricultural age, individuals could increasingly rely on the skills of  
others for survival.  
6:02 This meant that some of them could specialize.  
6:04 Maybe they worked on better tools, maybe they took time to breed more resistant crops  
or better livestock,  
6:10 Maybe they started inventing things.  
6:13 As farming got more and more efficient, what we call civilization began  
6:18 Agriculture gave us a reliable and predictable food source,  
6:21 which allowed humans to hoard food on a large scale for the first time,  
6:24 which is much easier to do with grains than meat,  
6:27 The food stock required protection, which led to communities living together in tighter  
spaces  
6:33 First, early defense structures were built, the need for organization grew  
6:37 The more organized we got, the faster things became efficient  
6:41 Villages became cities, cities became kingdoms, kingdoms became empires  
6:48 Connections between humans exploded which led to opportunities to exchange  
knowledge  
6:54 Progress became exponential

6:56 About 500 years ago the Scientific Revolution began

7:00 Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Biology, and Chemistry transformed everything we thought we knew

7:07 The Industrial Revolution followed soon after laying the foundation for the modern world

7:13 As our overall efficiency grew exponentially,

7:15 more people could spend their lifetime contributing to the progress of humanity

7:20 Revolutions kept happening.

7:21 The invention of the computer, its evolution into a medium we all use on a daily basis,

7:26 and the rise of the Internet shaped our world

7:30 It's hard to grasp how fast all of that happened

7:33 It's been about 125,000 generations since the emergence of the first human species

7:39 About 7,500 generations since the physiologically modern humans saw the light of day

7:45 500 generations ago, what we call civilization began

7:49 20 generations ago, we learned how to do science

7:53 And the Internet became available to most people only one generation ago

7:57 Today we live in the most prosperous age humanity has ever experienced

8:02 We have transformed this planet, from the composition of its atmosphere to large-scale changes in its landscape

8:08 and also in terms of the other animals in existence.

8:12 We light up the night with artificial stars and put people in a metal box in the sky

8:17 Some have even walked on our Moon

8:19 We put robots on other planets

8:21 We've looked deep into the past of the universe with mechanical eyes

8:25 Our knowledge and our way of acquiring and storing more of it has exploded

8:30 The average high school student today knows more about the universe than a scholar a few centuries ago

8:35 Humans dominate this planet, even if our rule is very fragile

8:41 We are still not that different from our ancestors 70,000 years ago

8:45 But your lifestyle has existed for less than 0.001% of human history

8:51 From here on, there's no saying what the future holds for us

8:56 We're building a skyscraper, but we're not sure if it's standing on a solid foundation

9:00 or if we're building it on quicksand

9:03 Let's leave it with that for now

9:04 The next time you miss your train, your burger is not hot enough, or someone cuts in line

9:09 Remember how special this made-up human world is

9:12 Maybe it's not worth being upset about all those little things.

9:17 This video was supported by [audible.com/nutshell](https://audible.com/nutshell)

9:21 In the making of it, we used the book "Sapiens: a brief history of humankind" as one of the major sources.

9:26 If you want to get to it, or any other for free and support us, go to [audible.com/nutshell](https://audible.com/nutshell) and get a free 30-day trial

9:33 It's so hard to read books when you have the internet, so we can at least listen to them

9:37 In general, we listen to a lot of audiobooks while designing our videos,

9:40 so we can highly recommend audible

9:43 OK, so this was our first take on making a history-related video

9:46 we'd love to make much more of them, but they take even more time than our average video.

9:50 So we might do 3 or 4 a year.

9:52 Your feedback's very welcome here

9:54 Thank you so much for watching, and if you want to support us directly,

9:57 you can do so on Patreon.

9:59 It really helps us out.

10:00 While you think about it, here are more videos, if you need more distraction.