
Preface

Biology is one of the most dynamic and fast-moving fields in all science, with vital and growing importance in technological, economic, social, and political spheres. It is hoped that anyone interested in biology, whether student, academic, or layperson, will find this dictionary informative and helpful for their understanding of biological terms and concepts.

This dictionary was originally derived from the *Concise Science Dictionary*, first published by Oxford University Press in 1984 (seventh edition, 2017, retitled *A Dictionary of Science*). It was published in 1985 and consisted of all the entries relating to biology and biochemistry in the *Science Dictionary*, together with relevant entries relating to palaeontology, soil science, physics, and chemistry that are required for an understanding of the physical and chemical aspects of biology (including laboratory techniques for analysing biological material). It also included a selection of terms used in medicine and palaeoanthropology. Subsequent editions saw the addition of more terms relating to human biology, environmental science, biotechnology and genetic engineering, and food technology (among other fields); as well as several chronologies tracing the history of some key areas in biology, and a number of longer feature articles on selected topics.

For this edition many entries have been substantially updated and around 150 new entries have been added in all the major fields. The extensive revisions reflect advances in areas such as molecular systematics, genomics, bioinformatics, and cell biology, as well as the unprecedented challenges for the natural environment and human societies posed by global warming and climate change. There is a new appendix on anatomical terms. Many entries throughout the work have web links to selected sites that provide further information on the topic.

Using the dictionary

An asterisk placed before a word used in an entry indicates that this word can be looked up in the dictionary and will provide further explanation or clarification. However, not every word that appears in the dictionary has an asterisk placed before it. Some entries simply refer the reader to another entry, indicating either that they are synonyms or abbreviations or that they are most conveniently explained in one of the dictionary's longer articles or features. Synonyms and abbreviations are usually placed within brackets immediately after the headword, as are irregular plural forms. Terms that are explained within an entry are highlighted by being printed in bold type.

The more chemical aspects of biochemistry and the chemistry itself will be found in *A Dictionary of Chemistry*; this and *A Dictionary of Physics* are companion volumes to this dictionary.

SI units are used throughout this book and its companion volumes.

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