
Preface

This dictionary was originally derived from the *Concise Science Dictionary*, first published by Oxford University Press in 1984 (fourth edition, 1999, retitled *A Dictionary of Science*). It consisted of all the entries relating to biology and biochemistry in this dictionary, together with those entries relating to geology that are required for an understanding of palaeontology and soil science and a few entries relating to 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 the words 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 a number of short biographical entries on the biologists and other scientists who have been responsible for the development of the subject, the inclusion of several chronologies tracing the history of some key areas in biology, and a few two-page feature articles on selected topics. For this edition many entries have been substantially updated and over 300 new entries have been added in all the major fields. The coverage of cell biology and molecular genetics, in particular, has been greatly expanded, reflecting recent advances in these rapidly developing areas, and two new Appendices have been included.

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. Terms that are explained within an entry are highlighted by being printed in *italic 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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