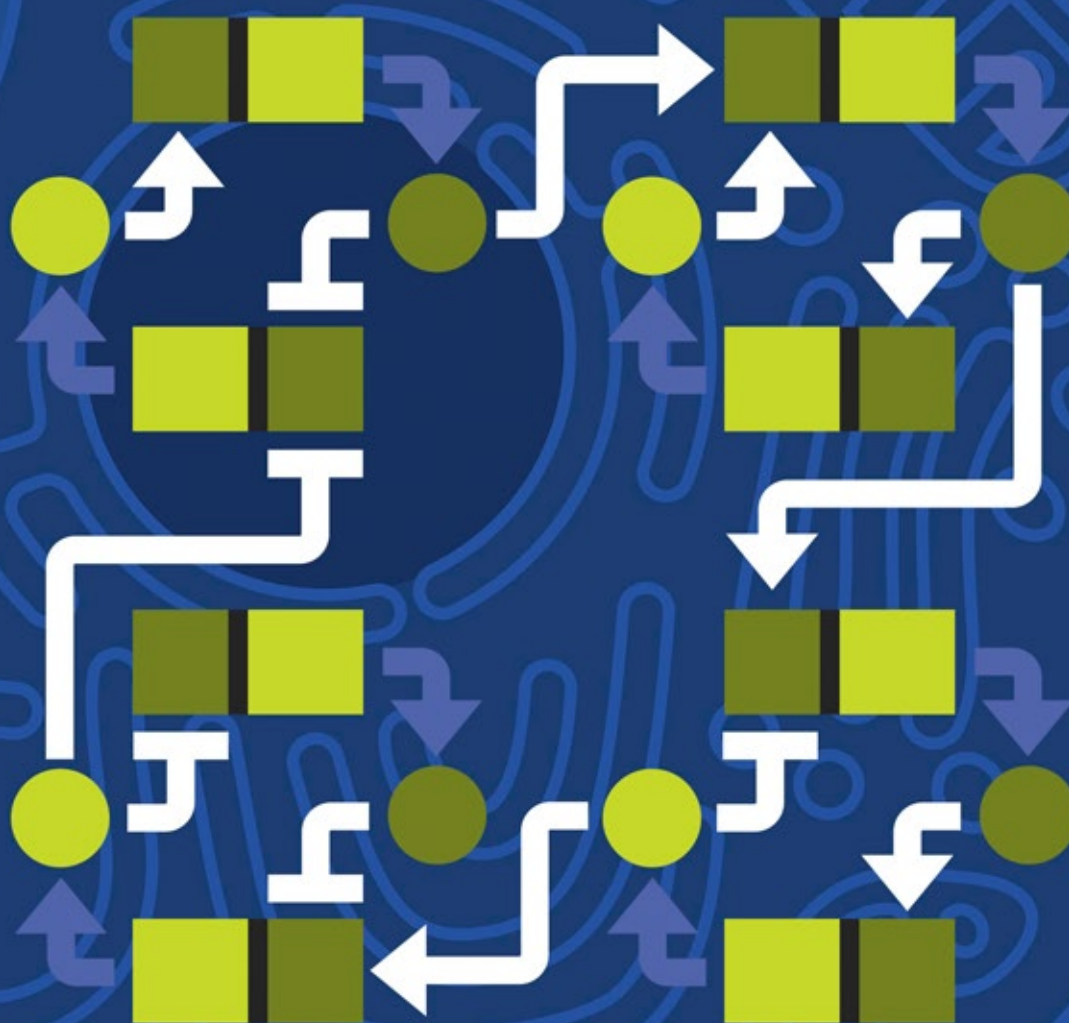


Molecular Biology of THE CELL

Sixth Edition



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Molecular Biology of
THE CELL
Sixth Edition

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Sixth Edition

Bruce Alberts

Alexander Johnson

Julian Lewis

David Morgan

Martin Raff

Keith Roberts

Peter Walter

With problems by

John Wilson

Tim Hunt

Garland Science

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Cover design: Cell biology is not only about the structure and function of the myriad molecules that comprise a cell, but also about how this complex chemistry is controlled. Understanding the cell's elaborate regulatory feedback networks will require quantitative approaches.



Julian Hart Lewis

August 12, 1946—April 30, 2014

Preface

Since the last edition of this book appeared, more than five million scientific papers have been published. There has been a parallel increase in the quantity of digital information: new data on genome sequences, protein interactions, molecular structures, and gene expression—all stored in vast databases. The challenge, for both scientists and textbook writers, is to convert this overwhelming amount of information into an accessible and up-to-date understanding of how cells work.

Help comes from a large increase in the number of review articles that attempt to make raw material easier to digest, although the vast majority of these reviews are still quite narrowly focused. Meanwhile, a rapidly growing collection of online resources tries to convince us that understanding is only a few mouse-clicks away. In some areas this change in the way we access knowledge has been highly successful—in discovering the latest information about our own medical problems, for example. But to understand something of the beauty and complexity of how living cells work, one needs more than just a wiki- this or wiki- that; it is enormously hard to identify the valuable and enduring gems from so much confusing landfill. Much more effective is a carefully wrought narrative that leads logically and progressively through the key ideas, components, and experiments in such a way that readers can build for themselves a memorable, conceptual framework for cell biology—a framework that will allow them to critically evaluate all of the new science and, more importantly, to understand it. That is what we have tried to do in *Molecular Biology of the Cell*.

In preparing this new edition, we have inevitably had to make some difficult decisions. In order to incorporate exciting new discoveries, while at the same time keeping the book portable, much has had to be excised. We have added new sections, such as those on new RNA functions, advances in stem cell biology, new methods for studying proteins and genes and for imaging cells, advances in the genetics and treatment of cancer, and timing, growth control, and morphogenesis in development.

The chemistry of cells is extremely complex, and any list of cell parts and their interactions—no matter how complete—will leave huge gaps in our understanding. We now realize that to produce convincing explanations of cell behavior will require quantitative information about cells that is coupled to sophisticated mathematical/computational approaches—some not yet invented. As a consequence, an emerging goal for cell biologists is to shift their studies more toward quantitative description and mathematical deduction. We highlight this approach and some of its methods in a new section at the end of Chapter 8.

Faced with the immensity of what we have learned about cell biology, it might be tempting for a student to imagine that there is little left to discover. In fact, the more we find out about cells, the more new questions emerge. To emphasize that our understanding of cell biology is incomplete, we have highlighted some of the major gaps in our knowledge by including *What We Don't Know* at the end of each chapter. These brief lists include only a tiny sample of the critical unanswered questions and challenges for the next generation of scientists. We derive great pleasure from the knowledge that some of our readers will provide future answers.

The more than 1500 illustrations have been designed to create a parallel narrative, closely interwoven with the text. We have increased their consistency between chapters, particularly in the use of color and of common icons; membrane pumps and channels are a good example. To avoid interruptions to the text, some material has been moved into new, readily accessible panels. Most of the important protein structures depicted have now been redrawn and consistently colored. In each

case, we now provide the corresponding Protein Data Bank (PDB) code for the protein, which can be used to access online tools that provide more information about it, such as those on the RCSB PDB website (www.rcsb.org). These connections allow readers of the book to explore more fully the proteins that lie at the core of cell biology.

John Wilson and Tim Hunt have again contributed their distinctive and imaginative problems to help students gain a more active understanding of the text. The problems emphasize quantitative approaches and encourage critical thinking about published experiments; they are now present at the end of all chapters. The answers to these problems, plus more than 1800 additional problems and solutions, all appear in the companion volume that John and Tim have written, *Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition: The Problems Book*.

We live in a world that presents us with many complex issues related to cell biology: biodiversity, climate change, food security, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and human disease. We hope that our textbook will help the reader better understand and possibly contribute to meeting these challenges. Knowledge and understanding bring the power to intervene.

We are indebted to a large number of scientists whose generous help we mention separately in the detailed acknowledgments. Here we must mention some particularly significant contributors. For Chapter 8, Hana El-Samad provided the core of the section on Mathematical Analysis of Cell Functions, and Karen Hopkin made valuable contributions to the section on Studying Gene Expression and Function. Werner Kuhlbrandt helped to reorganize and rewrite Chapter 14 (Energy Conversion: Mitochondria and Chloroplasts). Rebecca Heald did the same for Chapter 16 (The Cytoskeleton), as did Alexander Schier for Chapter 21 (Development of Multicellular Organisms), and Matt Welch for Chapter 23 (Pathogens and Infection). Lewis Lanier aided in the writing of Chapter 24 (The Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems). Hossein Amiri generated the enormous online instructor's question bank.

Before starting out on the revision cycle for this edition, we asked a number of scientists who had used the last edition to teach cell biology students to meet with us and suggest improvements. They gave us useful feedback that has helped inform the new edition. We also benefited from the valuable input of groups of students who read most of the chapters in page proofs.

Many people and much effort are needed to convert a long manuscript and a large pile of sketches into a finished textbook. The team at Garland Science that managed this conversion was outstanding. Denise Schanck, directing operations, displayed forbearance, insight, tact, and energy throughout the journey; she guided us all unerringly, ably assisted by Allie Bochicchio and Janette Scobie. Nigel Orme oversaw our revamped illustration program, put all the artwork into its final form, and again enhanced the back cover with his graphics skills. Tiago Barros helped us refresh our presentation of protein structures. Matthew McClements designed the book and its front cover. Emma Jeffcock again laid out the final pages, managing endless rounds of proofs and last-minute changes with remarkable skill and patience; Georgina Lucas provided her with help. Michael Morales, assisted by Leah Christians, produced and assembled the complex web of videos, animations, and other materials that form the core of the online resources that accompany the book. Adam Sendroff provided us with the valuable feedback from book users around the world that informed our revision cycle. Casting expert eyes over the manuscript, Elizabeth Zayatz and Sherry Granum Lewis acted as development editors, Jo Clayton as copyeditor, and Sally Huish as proofreader. Bill Johncocks compiled the index. In London, Emily Preece fed us, while the Garland team's professional help, skills, and energy, together with their friendship, nourished us in every other way throughout the revision, making the whole process a pleasure. The authors are extremely fortunate to be supported so generously.

We thank our spouses, families, friends, and colleagues for their continuing support, which has once again made the writing of this book possible.

Just as we were completing this edition, Julian Lewis, our coauthor, friend, and colleague, finally succumbed to the cancer that he had fought so heroically for ten years. Starting in 1979, Julian made major contributions to all six editions, and, as our most elegant wordsmith, he elevated and enhanced both the style and tone of all the many chapters he touched. Noted for his careful scholarly approach, clarity and simplicity were at the core of his writing. Julian is irreplaceable, and we will all deeply miss his friendship and collaboration. We dedicate this Sixth Edition to his memory.

Note to the Reader

Structure of the Book

Although the chapters of this book can be read independently of one another, they are arranged in a logical sequence of five parts. The first three chapters of Part I cover elementary principles and basic biochemistry. They can serve either as an introduction for those who have not studied biochemistry or as a refresher course for those who have. Part II deals with the storage, expression, and transmission of genetic information. Part III presents the principles of the main experimental methods for investigating and analyzing cells; here, a new section entitled “Mathematical Analysis of Cell Functions” in Chapter 8 provides an extra dimension in our understanding of cell regulation and function. Part IV describes the internal organization of the cell. Part V follows the behavior of cells in multicellular systems, starting with development of multicellular organisms and concluding with chapters on pathogens and infection and on the innate and adaptive immune systems.

End-of-Chapter Problems

A selection of problems, written by John Wilson and Tim Hunt, appears in the text at the end of each chapter. New to this edition are problems for the last four chapters on multicellular organisms. The complete solutions to all of these problems can be found in *Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition: The Problems Book*.

References

A concise list of selected references is included at the end of each chapter. These are arranged in alphabetical order under the main chapter section headings. These references sometimes include the original papers in which important discoveries were first reported.

Glossary Terms

Throughout the book, boldface type has been used to highlight key terms at the point in a chapter where the main discussion occurs. Italic type is used to set off important terms with a lesser degree of emphasis. At the end of the book is an expanded glossary, covering technical terms that are part of the common currency of cell biology; it should be the first resort for a reader who encounters an unfamiliar term. The complete glossary as well as a set of flashcards is available on the Student Website.

Nomenclature for Genes and Proteins

Each species has its own conventions for naming genes; the only common feature is that they are always set in italics. In some species (such as humans), gene names are spelled out all in capital letters; in other species (such as zebrafish), all in lowercase; in yet others (most mouse genes), with the first letter in uppercase and rest in lowercase; or (as in *Drosophila*) with different combinations of uppercase and lowercase, according to whether the first mutant allele to be discovered produced a dominant or recessive phenotype. Conventions for naming protein products are equally varied.

This typographical chaos drives everyone crazy. It is not just tiresome and absurd; it is also unsustainable. We cannot independently define a fresh convention for each of the next few million species whose genes we may wish to study.

Moreover, there are many occasions, especially in a book such as this, where we need to refer to a gene generically—without specifying the mouse version, the human version, the chick version, or the hippopotamus version—because they are all equivalent for the purposes of our discussion. What convention then should we use?

We have decided in this book to cast aside the different conventions that are used in individual species and follow a uniform rule: we write all gene names, like the names of people and places, with the first letter in uppercase and the rest in lowercase, but all in italics, thus: *Apc*, *Bazooka*, *Cdc2*, *Dishevelled*, *Egl1*. The corresponding protein, where it is named after the gene, will be written in the same way, but in roman rather than italic letters: *Apc*, *Bazooka*, *Cdc2*, *Dishevelled*, *Egl1*. When it is necessary to specify the organism, this can be done with a prefix to the gene name.

For completeness, we list a few further details of naming rules that we shall follow. In some instances, an added letter in the gene name is traditionally used to distinguish between genes that are related by function or evolution; for those genes, we put that letter in uppercase if it is usual to do so (*LacZ*, *RecA*, *HoxA4*). We use no hyphen to separate added letters or numbers from the rest of the name. Proteins are more of a problem. Many of them have names in their own right, assigned to them before the gene was named. Such protein names take many forms, although most of them traditionally begin with a lowercase letter (actin, hemoglobin, catalase), like the names of ordinary substances (cheese, nylon), unless they are acronyms (such as GFP, for Green Fluorescent Protein, or BMP4, for Bone Morphogenetic Protein #4). To force all such protein names into a uniform style would do too much violence to established usages, and we shall simply write them in the traditional way (actin, GFP, and so on). For the corresponding gene names in all these cases, we shall nevertheless follow our standard rule: *Actin*, *Hemoglobin*, *Catalase*, *Bmp4*, *Gfp*. Occasionally in our book we need to highlight a protein name by setting it in italics for emphasis; the intention will generally be clear from the context.

For those who wish to know them, the table below shows some of the official conventions for individual species—conventions that we shall mostly violate in this book, in the manner shown.

Organism	Species-Specific Convention		Unified Convention Used in This Book	
	Gene	Protein	Gene	Protein
Mouse	<i>Hoxa4</i>	Hoxa4	<i>HoxA4</i>	HoxA4
	<i>Bmp4</i>	BMP4	<i>Bmp4</i>	BMP4
	<i>integrin α-1</i> , <i>Itga1</i>	integrin α 1	<i>Integrin α1</i> , <i>Itga1</i>	integrin α 1
Human	<i>HOXA4</i>	HOXA4	<i>HoxA4</i>	HoxA4
Zebrafish	<i>cyclops</i> , <i>cyc</i>	Cyclops, Cyc	<i>Cyclops</i> , <i>Cyc</i>	Cyclops, Cyc
<i>Caenorhabditis</i>	<i>unc-6</i>	UNC-6	<i>Unc6</i>	Unc6
<i>Drosophila</i>	<i>sevenless</i> , <i>sev</i> (named after recessive phenotype)	Sevenless, SEV	<i>Sevenless</i> , <i>Sev</i>	Sevenless, Sev
	<i>Deformed</i> , <i>Dfd</i> (named after dominant mutant phenotype)	Deformed, DFD	<i>Deformed</i> , <i>Dfd</i>	Deformed, Dfd
Yeast				
<i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i> (budding yeast)	<i>CDC28</i>	Cdc28, Cdc28p	<i>Cdc28</i>	Cdc28
<i>Schizosaccharomyces pombe</i> (fission yeast)	<i>Cdc2</i>	Cdc2, Cdc2p	<i>Cdc2</i>	Cdc2
<i>Arabidopsis</i>	<i>GAI</i>	GAI	<i>Gai</i>	GAI
<i>E. coli</i>	<i>uvrA</i>	UvrA	<i>UvrA</i>	UvrA

Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition: The Problems Book

by John Wilson and Tim Hunt (ISBN: 978-0-8153-4453-7)

The Problems Book is designed to help students appreciate the ways in which experiments and simple calculations can lead to an understanding of how cells work. It provides problems to accompany Chapters 1–20 of *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. Each chapter of problems is divided into sections that correspond to those of the main textbook and review key terms, test for understanding basic concepts, pose research-based problems, and now include MCAT-style questions which help students to prepare for standardized medical school admission tests. *Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition: The Problems Book* should be useful for homework assignments and as a basis for class discussion. It could even provide ideas for exam questions. Solutions for all of the problems are provided in the book. Solutions for the end-of-chapter problems for Chapters 1–24 in the main textbook are also found in *The Problems Book*.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS

The teaching and learning resources for instructors and students are available online. The instructor's resources are password-protected and available only to adopting instructors. The student resources are available to everyone. We hope these resources will enhance student learning and make it easier for instructors to prepare dynamic lectures and activities for the classroom.

Instructor Resources

Instructor Resources are available on the Garland Science Instructor's Resource Site, located at www.garlandscience.com/instructors. The website provides access not only to the teaching resources for this book but also to all other Garland Science textbooks. Adopting instructors can obtain access to the site from their sales representative or by emailing science@garland.com.

Art of Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition

The images from the book are available in two convenient formats: PowerPoint® and JPEG. They have been optimized for display on a computer. Figures are searchable by figure number, by figure name, or by keywords used in the figure legend from the book.

Figure-Integrated Lecture Outlines

The section headings, concept headings, and figures from the text have been integrated into PowerPoint presentations. These will be useful for instructors who would like a head start creating lectures for their course. Like all of our PowerPoint presentations, the lecture outlines can be customized. For example, the content of these presentations can be combined with videos and questions from the book or Question Bank, in order to create unique lectures that facilitate interactive learning.

Animations and Videos

The 174 animations and videos that are available to students are also available on the Instructor's Website in two formats. The WMV-formatted movies are created for instructors who wish to use the movies in PowerPoint presentations on Windows® computers; the QuickTime-formatted movies are for use in PowerPoint for Apple computers or Keynote® presentations. The movies can easily be downloaded using the "download" button on the movie preview page. The movies are correlated to each chapter and callouts are highlighted in color.

Media Guide

This document provides an overview to the multimedia available for students and instructors and contains the text of the voice-over narration for all of the movies.

Question Bank

Written by Hossein Amiri, University of California, Santa Cruz, this greatly expanded question bank includes a variety of question formats: multiple choice,

short answer, fill-in-the-blank, true-false, and matching. There are 35–60 questions per chapter, and a large number of the multiple-choice questions will be suitable for use with personal response systems (that is, clickers). The Question Bank was created with the philosophy that a good exam should do much more than simply test students' ability to memorize information; it should require them to reflect upon and integrate information as a part of a sound understanding. This resource provides a comprehensive sampling of questions that can be used either directly or as inspiration for instructors to write their own test questions.

Diploma® Test Generator Software

The questions from the Question Bank have been loaded into the Diploma Test Generator software. The software is easy to use and can scramble questions to create multiple tests. Questions are organized by chapter and type and can be additionally categorized by the instructor according to difficulty or subject. Existing questions can be edited and new ones added. The Test Generator is compatible with several course management systems, including Blackboard®.

Medical Topics Guide

This document highlights medically relevant topics covered throughout *Molecular Biology of the Cell* and *The Problems Book*. It will be particularly useful for instructors with a large number of premedical, health science, or nursing students.

Blackboard and Learning Management System (LMS) Integration

The movies, book images, and student assessments that accompany the book can be integrated into Blackboard or other LMSs. These resources are bundled into a "Common Cartridge" or "Upload Package" that facilitates bulk uploading of textbook resources into Blackboard and other LMSs. The LMS Common Cartridge can be obtained on a DVD from your sales representative or by emailing science@garland.com.

Resources for Students

The resources for students are available on the *Molecular Biology of the Cell* Student Website, located at www.garlandscience.com/MBOC6-students.

Animations and Videos

There are 174 movies, covering a wide range of cell biology topics, which review key concepts in the book and illuminate subcellular processes. The movies are correlated to each chapter and callouts are highlighted in color.

Cell Explorer Slides

This application teaches cell morphology through interactive micrographs that highlight important cellular structures.

Flashcards

Each chapter contains a set of flashcards, built into the website, that allow students to review key terms from the text.

Glossary

The complete glossary from the book is available on the website and can be searched and browsed.

Acknowledgments

In writing this book we have benefited greatly from the advice of many biologists and biochemists. We would like to thank the following for their suggestions in preparing this edition, as well as those who helped in preparing the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth editions. (Those who helped on this edition are listed first, those who helped with the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth editions follow.)

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Contents

PART I	INTRODUCTION TO THE CELL	1
Chapter 1	Cells and Genomes	1
Chapter 2	Cell Chemistry and Bioenergetics	43
Chapter 3	Proteins	109
PART II	BASIC GENETIC MECHANISMS	173
Chapter 4	DNA, Chromosomes, and Genomes	173
Chapter 5	DNA Replication, Repair, and Recombination	237
Chapter 6	How Cells Read the Genome: From DNA to Protein	299
Chapter 7	Control of Gene Expression	369
PART III	WAYS OF WORKING WITH CELLS	439
Chapter 8	Analyzing Cells, Molecules, and Systems	439
Chapter 9	Visualizing Cells	529
PART IV	INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CELL	565
Chapter 10	Membrane Structure	565
Chapter 11	Membrane Transport of Small Molecules and the Electrical Properties of Membranes	597
Chapter 12	Intracellular Compartments and Protein Sorting	641
Chapter 13	Intracellular Membrane Traffic	695
Chapter 14	Energy Conversion: Mitochondria and Chloroplasts	753
Chapter 15	Cell Signaling	813
Chapter 16	The Cytoskeleton	889
Chapter 17	The Cell Cycle	963
Chapter 18	Cell Death	1021
PART V	CELLS IN THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT	1035
Chapter 19	Cell Junctions and the Extracellular Matrix	1035
Chapter 20	Cancer	1091
Chapter 21	Development of Multicellular Organisms	1145
Chapter 22	Stem Cells and Tissue Renewal	1217
Chapter 23	Pathogens and Infection	1263
Chapter 24	The Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems	1297
Glossary		G: 1
Index		I: 1
Tables	The Genetic Code, Amino Acids	T: 1

Special Features

TABLE 1–2	Some Model Organisms and Their Genomes	29
TABLE 2–1	Covalent and Noncovalent Chemical Bonds	45
TABLE 2–2	Relationship Between the Standard Free-Energy Change, ΔG° , and the Equilibrium Constant	63
PANEL 2–1	Chemical Bonds and Groups Commonly Encountered in Biological Molecules	90
PANEL 2–2	Water and Its Influence on the Behavior of Biological Molecules	92
PANEL 2–3	The Principal Types of Weak Noncovalent Bonds that Hold Macromolecules Together	94
PANEL 2–4	An Outline of Some of the Types of Sugars Commonly Found in Cells	96
PANEL 2–5	Fatty Acids and Other Lipids	98
PANEL 2–6	A Survey of the Nucleotides	100
PANEL 2–7	Free Energy and Biological Reactions	102
PANEL 2–8	Details of the 10 Steps of Glycolysis	104
PANEL 2–9	The Complete Citric Acid Cycle	106
PANEL 3–1	The 20 Amino Acids Found in Proteins	112
TABLE 3–3	Some Molecules Covalently Attached to Proteins Regulate Protein Function	165
TABLE 4–1	Some Vital Statistics for the Human Genome	184
TABLE 5–4	Three Major Classes of Transposable Elements	288
TABLE 6–1	Principal Types of RNAs Produced in Cells	305
PANEL 7–1	Common Structural Motifs in Transcription Regulators	376
PANEL 8–1	DNA Sequencing Methods	478
PANEL 8–2	Review of Classical Genetics	486
TABLE 11–1	A Comparison of Inorganic Ion Concentrations Inside and Outside a Typical Mammalian Cell	598
PANEL 11–1	The Derivation of the Nernst Equation	616
TABLE 12–1	Relative Volumes Occupied by the Major Intracellular Compartments in a Liver Cell (Hepatocyte)	643
PANEL 14–1	Redox Potentials	765
TABLE 14–1	Product Yields from the Oxidation of Sugars and Fats	775
TABLE 15–3	Four Major Families of Trimeric G Proteins	846
TABLE 15–4	Some Signal Proteins That Act Via RTKs	850
TABLE 15–5	The Ras Superfamily of Monomeric GTPases	854
TABLE 15–6	Some Extracellular Signal Proteins That Act Through Cytokine Receptors and the JAK–STAT Signaling Pathway	864
PANEL 16–2	The Polymerization of Actin and Tubulin	902
TABLE 16–1	Chemical Inhibitors of Actin and Microtubules	904
PANEL 16–3	Actin Filaments	905
PANEL 16–4	Microtubules	933
TABLE 16–2	Major Types of Intermediate Filament Proteins in Vertebrate Cells	944
TABLE 17–1	The Major Cyclins and Cdks of Vertebrates and Budding Yeast	969
TABLE 17–2	Summary of the Major Cell Cycle Regulatory Proteins	973
PANEL 17–1	The Principle Stages of M Phase (Mitosis and Cytokinesis) in an Animal Cell	980
TABLE 19–1	Anchoring Junctions	1037
TABLE 19–2	Some Types of Collagen and Their Properties	1063
TABLE 19–3	Some Types of Integrins	1076
TABLE 22–1	Blood Cells	1241
TABLE 24–2	Properties of the Major Classes of Antibodies in Humans	1318
TABLE 24–3	Properties of Human Class I and Class II MHC Proteins	1330

Detailed Contents

Chapter 1 Cells and Genomes

THE UNIVERSAL FEATURES OF CELLS ON EARTH

All Cells Store Their Hereditary Information in the Same Linear Chemical Code: DNA	1
All Cells Replicate Their Hereditary Information by Templated Polymerization	2
All Cells Transcribe Portions of Their Hereditary Information into the Same Intermediary Form: RNA	3
All Cells Use Proteins as Catalysts	4
All Cells Translate RNA into Protein in the Same Way	5
Each Protein Is Encoded by a Specific Gene	6
Life Requires Free Energy	7
All Cells Function as Biochemical Factories Dealing with the Same Basic Molecular Building Blocks	8
All Cells Are Enclosed in a Plasma Membrane Across Which Nutrients and Waste Materials Must Pass	8
A Living Cell Can Exist with Fewer Than 500 Genes	9
Summary	10

THE DIVERSITY OF GENOMES AND THE TREE OF LIFE

Cells Can Be Powered by a Variety of Free-Energy Sources	10
Some Cells Fix Nitrogen and Carbon Dioxide for Others	10
The Greatest Biochemical Diversity Exists Among Prokaryotic Cells	12
The Tree of Life Has Three Primary Branches: Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukaryotes	12
Some Genes Evolve Rapidly; Others Are Highly Conserved	14
Most Bacteria and Archaea Have 1000–6000 Genes	15
New Genes Are Generated from Preexisting Genes	16
Gene Duplications Give Rise to Families of Related Genes Within a Single Cell	16
Genes Can Be Transferred Between Organisms, Both in the Laboratory and in Nature	17
Sex Results in Horizontal Exchanges of Genetic Information Within a Species	18
The Function of a Gene Can Often Be Deduced from Its Sequence	19
More Than 200 Gene Families Are Common to All Three Primary Branches of the Tree of Life	20
Mutations Reveal the Functions of Genes	20
Molecular Biology Began with a Spotlight on <i>E. coli</i>	21
Summary	22

GENETIC INFORMATION IN EUKARYOTES

Eukaryotic Cells May Have Originated as Predators	23
Modern Eukaryotic Cells Evolved from a Symbiosis	24
Eukaryotes Have Hybrid Genomes	25
Eukaryotic Genomes Are Big	27
Eukaryotic Genomes Are Rich in Regulatory DNA	28
The Genome Defines the Program of Multicellular Development	29
Many Eukaryotes Live as Solitary Cells	29
A Yeast Serves as a Minimal Model Eukaryote	30
The Expression Levels of All the Genes of An Organism Can Be Monitored Simultaneously	30
<i>Arabidopsis</i> Has Been Chosen Out of 300,000 Species As a Model Plant	32
The World of Animal Cells Is Represented By a Worm, a Fly, a Fish, a Mouse, and a Human	32
Studies in <i>Drosophila</i> Provide a Key to Vertebrate Development	33
The Vertebrate Genome Is a Product of Repeated Duplications	34

1	The Frog and the Zebrafish Provide Accessible Models for Vertebrate Development	35
2	The Mouse Is the Predominant Mammalian Model Organism	35
	Humans Report on Their Own Peculiarities	36
2	We Are All Different in Detail	38
	To Understand Cells and Organisms Will Require Mathematics, Computers, and Quantitative Information	38
3	Summary	39
4	Problems	39
5	References	41

Chapter 2 Cell Chemistry and Bioenergetics 43

THE CHEMICAL COMPONENTS OF A CELL 43

Water Is Held Together by Hydrogen Bonds	44
Four Types of Noncovalent Attractions Help Bring Molecules Together in Cells	44
Some Polar Molecules Form Acids and Bases in Water	45
A Cell Is Formed from Carbon Compounds	47
Cells Contain Four Major Families of Small Organic Molecules	47
The Chemistry of Cells Is Dominated by Macromolecules with Remarkable Properties	47
Noncovalent Bonds Specify Both the Precise Shape of a Macromolecule and Its Binding to Other Molecules	49
Summary	50

CATALYSIS AND THE USE OF ENERGY BY CELLS 51

Cell Metabolism Is Organized by Enzymes	51
Biological Order Is Made Possible by the Release of Heat Energy from Cells	52
Cells Obtain Energy by the Oxidation of Organic Molecules	54
Oxidation and Reduction Involve Electron Transfers	55
Enzymes Lower the Activation-Energy Barriers That Block Chemical Reactions	57
Enzymes Can Drive Substrate Molecules Along Specific Reaction Pathways	58
How Enzymes Find Their Substrates: The Enormous Rapidity of Molecular Motions	59
The Free-Energy Change for a Reaction, ΔG , Determines Whether It Can Occur Spontaneously	60
The Concentration of Reactants Influences the Free-Energy Change and a Reaction's Direction	61
The Standard Free-Energy Change, ΔG° , Makes It Possible to Compare the Energetics of Different Reactions	61
The Equilibrium Constant and ΔG° Are Readily Derived from Each Other	62
The Free-Energy Changes of Coupled Reactions Are Additive	63
Activated Carrier Molecules Are Essential for Biosynthesis	63
The Formation of an Activated Carrier Is Coupled to an Energetically Favorable Reaction	64
ATP Is the Most Widely Used Activated Carrier Molecule	65
Energy Stored in ATP Is Often Harnessed to Join Two Molecules Together	65
NADH and NADPH Are Important Electron Carriers	67
There Are Many Other Activated Carrier Molecules in Cells	68
The Synthesis of Biological Polymers Is Driven by ATP Hydrolysis	70
Summary	73
HOW CELLS OBTAIN ENERGY FROM FOOD 73	
Glycolysis Is a Central ATP-Producing Pathway	74
Fermentations Produce ATP in the Absence of Oxygen	75

Glycolysis Illustrates How Enzymes Couple Oxidation to Energy Storage	76	The Regulation of the Src Protein Kinase Reveals How a Protein Can Function as a Microprocessor	155
Organisms Store Food Molecules in Special Reservoirs	78	Proteins That Bind and Hydrolyze GTP Are Ubiquitous Cell Regulators	156
Most Animal Cells Derive Their Energy from Fatty Acids Between Meals	81	Regulatory Proteins GAP and GEF Control the Activity of GTP-Binding Proteins by Determining Whether GTP or GDP Is Bound	157
Sugars and Fats Are Both Degraded to Acetyl CoA in Mitochondria	81	Proteins Can Be Regulated by the Covalent Addition of Other Proteins	157
The Citric Acid Cycle Generates NADH by Oxidizing Acetyl Groups to CO ₂	82	An Elaborate Ubiquitin-Conjugating System Is Used to Mark Proteins	158
Electron Transport Drives the Synthesis of the Majority of the ATP in Most Cells	84	Protein Complexes with Interchangeable Parts Make Efficient Use of Genetic Information	159
Amino Acids and Nucleotides Are Part of the Nitrogen Cycle	85	A GTP-Binding Protein Shows How Large Protein Movements Can Be Generated	160
Metabolism Is Highly Organized and Regulated	87	Motor Proteins Produce Large Movements in Cells	161
Summary	88	Membrane-Bound Transporters Harness Energy to Pump Molecules Through Membranes	163
Problems	88	Proteins Often Form Large Complexes That Function as Protein Machines	164
References	108	Scaffolds Concentrate Sets of Interacting Proteins	164
Chapter 3 Proteins	109	Many Proteins Are Controlled by Covalent Modifications That Direct Them to Specific Sites Inside the Cell	165
THE SHAPE AND STRUCTURE OF PROTEINS	109	A Complex Network of Protein Interactions Underlies Cell Function	166
The Shape of a Protein Is Specified by Its Amino Acid Sequence	109	Summary	169
Proteins Fold into a Conformation of Lowest Energy	114	Problems	170
The α Helix and the β Sheet Are Common Folding Patterns	115	References	172
Protein Domains Are Modular Units from Which Larger Proteins Are Built	117	Chapter 4 DNA, Chromosomes, and Genomes	173
Few of the Many Possible Polypeptide Chains Will Be Useful to Cells	118	THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF DNA	173
Proteins Can Be Classified into Many Families	119	A DNA Molecule Consists of Two Complementary Chains of Nucleotides	175
Some Protein Domains Are Found in Many Different Proteins	121	The Structure of DNA Provides a Mechanism for Heredity	177
Certain Pairs of Domains Are Found Together in Many Proteins	122	In Eukaryotes, DNA Is Enclosed in a Cell Nucleus	178
The Human Genome Encodes a Complex Set of Proteins, Revealing That Much Remains Unknown	122	Summary	179
Larger Protein Molecules Often Contain More Than One Polypeptide Chain	123	CHROMOSOMAL DNA AND ITS PACKAGING IN THE CHROMATIN FIBER	179
Some Globular Proteins Form Long Helical Filaments	123	Eukaryotic DNA Is Packaged into a Set of Chromosomes	180
Many Protein Molecules Have Elongated, Fibrous Shapes	124	Chromosomes Contain Long Strings of Genes	182
Proteins Contain a Surprisingly Large Amount of Intrinsically Disordered Polypeptide Chain	125	The Nucleotide Sequence of the Human Genome Shows How Our Genes Are Arranged	183
Covalent Cross-Linkages Stabilize Extracellular Proteins	127	Each DNA Molecule That Forms a Linear Chromosome Must Contain a Centromere, Two Telomeres, and Replication Origins	185
Protein Molecules Often Serve as Subunits for the Assembly of Large Structures	127	DNA Molecules Are Highly Condensed in Chromosomes	187
Many Structures in Cells Are Capable of Self-Assembly	128	Nucleosomes Are a Basic Unit of Eukaryotic Chromosome Structure	187
Assembly Factors Often Aid the Formation of Complex Biological Structures	130	The Structure of the Nucleosome Core Particle Reveals How DNA Is Packaged	188
Amyloid Fibrils Can Form from Many Proteins	130	Nucleosomes Have a Dynamic Structure, and Are Frequently Subjected to Changes Catalyzed by ATP-Dependent Chromatin Remodeling Complexes	190
Amyloid Structures Can Perform Useful Functions in Cells	132	Nucleosomes Are Usually Packed Together into a Compact Chromatin Fiber	191
Many Proteins Contain Low-complexity Domains that Can Form “Reversible Amyloids”	132	Summary	193
Summary	134	CHROMATIN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION	194
PROTEIN FUNCTION	134	Heterochromatin Is Highly Organized and Restricts Gene Expression	194
All Proteins Bind to Other Molecules	134	The Heterochromatic State Is Self-Propagating	194
The Surface Conformation of a Protein Determines Its Chemistry	135	The Core Histones Are Covalently Modified at Many Different Sites	196
Sequence Comparisons Between Protein Family Members Highlight Crucial Ligand-Binding Sites	136	Chromatin Acquires Additional Variety Through the Site-Specific Insertion of a Small Set of Histone Variants	198
Proteins Bind to Other Proteins Through Several Types of Interfaces	137	Covalent Modifications and Histone Variants Act in Concert to Control Chromosome Functions	198
Antibody Binding Sites Are Especially Versatile	138	A Complex of Reader and Writer Proteins Can Spread Specific Chromatin Modifications Along a Chromosome	199
The Equilibrium Constant Measures Binding Strength	138	Barrier DNA Sequences Block the Spread of Reader–Writer Complexes and thereby Separate Neighboring Chromatin Domains	202
Enzymes Are Powerful and Highly Specific Catalysts	140	The Chromatin in Centromeres Reveals How Histone Variants Can Create Special Structures	203
Substrate Binding Is the First Step in Enzyme Catalysis	141	Some Chromatin Structures Can Be Directly Inherited	204
Enzymes Speed Reactions by Selectively Stabilizing Transition States	141		
Enzymes Can Use Simultaneous Acid and Base Catalysis	144		
Lysozyme Illustrates How an Enzyme Works	144		
Tightly Bound Small Molecules Add Extra Functions to Proteins	146		
Multienzyme Complexes Help to Increase the Rate of Cell Metabolism	148		
The Cell Regulates the Catalytic Activities of Its Enzymes	149		
Allosteric Enzymes Have Two or More Binding Sites That Interact	151		
Two Ligands Whose Binding Sites Are Coupled Must Reciprocally Affect Each Other’s Binding	151		
Symmetric Protein Assemblies Produce Cooperative Allosteric Transitions	152		
Many Changes in Proteins Are Driven by Protein Phosphorylation	153		
A Eukaryotic Cell Contains a Large Collection of Protein Kinases and Protein Phosphatases	154		

Experiments with Frog Embryos Suggest that both Activating and Repressive Chromatin Structures Can Be Inherited Epigenetically	205	The Proteins at a Replication Fork Cooperate to Form a Replication Machine	249
Chromatin Structures Are Important for Eukaryotic Chromosome Function	206	A Strand-Directed Mismatch Repair System Removes Replication Errors That Escape from the Replication Machine	250
Summary	207	DNA Topoisomerases Prevent DNA Tangling During Replication	251
THE GLOBAL STRUCTURE OF CHROMOSOMES	207	DNA Replication Is Fundamentally Similar in Eukaryotes and Bacteria	253
Chromosomes Are Folded into Large Loops of Chromatin	207	Summary	254
Polytene Chromosomes Are Uniquely Useful for Visualizing Chromatin Structures	208	THE INITIATION AND COMPLETION OF DNA REPLICATION IN CHROMOSOMES	254
There Are Multiple Forms of Chromatin	210	DNA Synthesis Begins at Replication Origins	254
Chromatin Loops Decondense When the Genes Within Them Are Expressed	211	Bacterial Chromosomes Typically Have a Single Origin of DNA Replication	255
Chromatin Can Move to Specific Sites Within the Nucleus to Alter Gene Expression	212	Eukaryotic Chromosomes Contain Multiple Origins of Replication	256
Networks of Macromolecules Form a Set of Distinct Biochemical Environments inside the Nucleus	213	In Eukaryotes, DNA Replication Takes Place During Only One Part of the Cell Cycle	258
Mitotic Chromosomes Are Especially Highly Condensed	214	Different Regions on the Same Chromosome Replicate at Distinct Times in S Phase	258
Summary	216	A Large Multisubunit Complex Binds to Eukaryotic Origins of Replication	259
HOW GENOMES EVOLVE	216	Features of the Human Genome That Specify Origins of Replication Remain to Be Discovered	260
Genome Comparisons Reveal Functional DNA Sequences by their Conservation Throughout Evolution	217	New Nucleosomes Are Assembled Behind the Replication Fork	261
Genome Alterations Are Caused by Failures of the Normal Mechanisms for Copying and Maintaining DNA, as well as by Transposable DNA Elements	217	Telomerase Replicates the Ends of Chromosomes	262
The Genome Sequences of Two Species Differ in Proportion to the Length of Time Since They Have Separately Evolved	218	Telomeres Are Packaged Into Specialized Structures That Protect the Ends of Chromosomes	263
Phylogenetic Trees Constructed from a Comparison of DNA Sequences Trace the Relationships of All Organisms	219	Telomere Length Is Regulated by Cells and Organisms	264
A Comparison of Human and Mouse Chromosomes Shows How the Structures of Genomes Diverge	221	Summary	265
The Size of a Vertebrate Genome Reflects the Relative Rates of DNA Addition and DNA Loss in a Lineage	222	DNA REPAIR	266
We Can Infer the Sequence of Some Ancient Genomes	223	Without DNA Repair, Spontaneous DNA Damage Would Rapidly Change DNA Sequences	267
Multispecies Sequence Comparisons Identify Conserved DNA Sequences of Unknown Function	224	The DNA Double Helix Is Readily Repaired	268
Changes in Previously Conserved Sequences Can Help Decipher Critical Steps in Evolution	226	DNA Damage Can Be Removed by More Than One Pathway	269
Mutations in the DNA Sequences That Control Gene Expression Have Driven Many of the Evolutionary Changes in Vertebrates	227	Coupling Nucleotide Excision Repair to Transcription Ensures That the Cell's Most Important DNA Is Efficiently Repaired	271
Gene Duplication Also Provides an Important Source of Genetic Novelty During Evolution	227	The Chemistry of the DNA Bases Facilitates Damage Detection	271
Duplicated Genes Diverge	228	Special Translesion DNA Polymerases Are Used in Emergencies	273
The Evolution of the Globin Gene Family Shows How DNA Duplications Contribute to the Evolution of Organisms	229	Double-Strand Breaks Are Efficiently Repaired	273
Genes Encoding New Proteins Can Be Created by the Recombination of Exons	230	DNA Damage Delays Progression of the Cell Cycle	276
Neutral Mutations Often Spread to Become Fixed in a Population, with a Probability That Depends on Population Size	230	Summary	276
A Great Deal Can Be Learned from Analyses of the Variation Among Humans	232	HOMOLOGOUS RECOMBINATION	276
Summary	234	Homologous Recombination Has Common Features in All Cells	277
Problems	234	DNA Base-Pairing Guides Homologous Recombination	277
References	236	Homologous Recombination Can Flawlessly Repair Double-Strand Breaks in DNA	278
Chapter 5 DNA Replication, Repair, and Recombination	237	Strand Exchange Is Carried Out by the RecA/Rad51 Protein	279
THE MAINTENANCE OF DNA SEQUENCES	237	Homologous Recombination Can Rescue Broken DNA Replication Forks	280
Mutation Rates Are Extremely Low	237	Cells Carefully Regulate the Use of Homologous Recombination in DNA Repair	280
Low Mutation Rates Are Necessary for Life as We Know It	238	Homologous Recombination Is Crucial for Meiosis	282
Summary	239	Meiotic Recombination Begins with a Programmed Double-Strand Break	282
DNA REPLICATION MECHANISMS	239	Holliday Junctions Are Formed During Meiosis	284
Base-Pairing Underlies DNA Replication and DNA Repair	239	Homologous Recombination Produces Both Crossovers and Non-Crossovers During Meiosis	284
The DNA Replication Fork Is Asymmetrical	240	Homologous Recombination Often Results in Gene Conversion	286
The High Fidelity of DNA Replication Requires Several Proofreading Mechanisms	242	Summary	286
Only DNA Replication in the 5'-to-3' Direction Allows Efficient Error Correction	244	TRANSPOSITION AND CONSERVATIVE SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMBINATION	287
A Special Nucleotide-Polymerizing Enzyme Synthesizes Short RNA Primer Molecules on the Lagging Strand	245	Through Transposition, Mobile Genetic Elements Can Insert Into Any DNA Sequence	288
Special Proteins Help to Open Up the DNA Double Helix in Front of the Replication Fork	246	DNA-Only Transposons Can Move by a Cut-and-Paste Mechanism	288
A Sliding Ring Holds a Moving DNA Polymerase Onto the DNA	246	Some Viruses Use a Transposition Mechanism to Move Themselves Into Host-Cell Chromosomes	290
		Retroviral-like Retrotransposons Resemble Retroviruses, but Lack a Protein Coat	291
		A Large Fraction of the Human Genome Is Composed of Nonretroviral Retrotransposons	291
		Different Transposable Elements Predominate in Different Organisms	292
		Genome Sequences Reveal the Approximate Times at Which Transposable Elements Have Moved	292

Conservative Site-Specific Recombination Can Reversibly Rearrange DNA	292	Proteins Are Made on Polyribosomes	349
Conservative Site-Specific Recombination Can Be Used to Turn Genes On or Off	294	There Are Minor Variations in the Standard Genetic Code	349
Bacterial Conservative Site-Specific Recombinases Have Become Powerful Tools for Cell and Developmental Biologists	294	Inhibitors of Prokaryotic Protein Synthesis Are Useful as Antibiotics	351
Summary	295	Quality Control Mechanisms Act to Prevent Translation of Damaged mRNAs	351
Problems	296	Some Proteins Begin to Fold While Still Being Synthesized	353
References	298	Molecular Chaperones Help Guide the Folding of Most Proteins	354
		Cells Utilize Several Types of Chaperones	355
		Exposed Hydrophobic Regions Provide Critical Signals for Protein Quality Control	357
Chapter 6 How Cells Read the Genome: From DNA to Protein	299	The Proteasome Is a Compartmentalized Protease with Sequestered Active Sites	357
FROM DNA TO RNA	301	Many Proteins Are Controlled by Regulated Destruction	359
RNA Molecules Are Single-Stranded	302	There Are Many Steps From DNA to Protein	361
Transcription Produces RNA Complementary to One Strand of DNA	302	Summary	362
RNA Polymerases Carry Out Transcription	303	THE RNA WORLD AND THE ORIGINS OF LIFE	362
Cells Produce Different Categories of RNA Molecules	305	Single-Stranded RNA Molecules Can Fold into Highly Elaborate Structures	363
Signals Encoded in DNA Tell RNA Polymerase Where to Start and Stop	306	RNA Can Both Store Information and Catalyze Chemical Reactions	364
Transcription Start and Stop Signals Are Heterogeneous in Nucleotide Sequence	307	How Did Protein Synthesis Evolve?	365
Transcription Initiation in Eukaryotes Requires Many Proteins	309	All Present-Day Cells Use DNA as Their Hereditary Material	365
RNA Polymerase II Requires a Set of General Transcription Factors	310	Summary	366
Polymerase II Also Requires Activator, Mediator, and Chromatin-Modifying Proteins	312	Problems	366
Transcription Elongation in Eukaryotes Requires Accessory Proteins	313	References	368
Transcription Creates Superhelical Tension	314		
Transcription Elongation in Eukaryotes Is Tightly Coupled to RNA Processing	315	Chapter 7 Control of Gene Expression	369
RNA Capping Is the First Modification of Eukaryotic Pre-mRNAs	316	AN OVERVIEW OF GENE CONTROL	369
RNA Splicing Removes Intron Sequences from Newly Transcribed Pre-mRNAs	317	The Different Cell Types of a Multicellular Organism Contain the Same DNA	369
Nucleotide Sequences Signal Where Splicing Occurs	319	Different Cell Types Synthesize Different Sets of RNAs and Proteins	370
RNA Splicing Is Performed by the Spliceosome	319	External Signals Can Cause a Cell to Change the Expression of Its Genes	372
The Spliceosome Uses ATP Hydrolysis to Produce a Complex Series of RNA-RNA Rearrangements	321	Gene Expression Can Be Regulated at Many of the Steps in the Pathway from DNA to RNA to Protein	372
Other Properties of Pre-mRNA and Its Synthesis Help to Explain the Choice of Proper Splice Sites	321	Summary	373
Chromatin Structure Affects RNA Splicing	323	CONTROL OF TRANSCRIPTION BY SEQUENCE-SPECIFIC DNA-BINDING PROTEINS	373
RNA Splicing Shows Remarkable Plasticity	323	The Sequence of Nucleotides in the DNA Double Helix Can Be Read by Proteins	373
Spliceosome-Catalyzed RNA Splicing Probably Evolved from Self-splicing Mechanisms	324	Transcription Regulators Contain Structural Motifs That Can Read DNA Sequences	374
RNA-Processing Enzymes Generate the 3' End of Eukaryotic mRNAs	324	Dimerization of Transcription Regulators Increases Their Affinity and Specificity for DNA	375
Mature Eukaryotic mRNAs Are Selectively Exported from the Nucleus	325	Transcription Regulators Bind Cooperatively to DNA	378
Noncoding RNAs Are Also Synthesized and Processed in the Nucleus	327	Nucleosome Structure Promotes Cooperative Binding of Transcription Regulators	379
The Nucleolus Is a Ribosome-Producing Factory	329	Summary	380
The Nucleus Contains a Variety of Subnuclear Aggregates	331	TRANSCRIPTION REGULATORS SWITCH GENES ON AND OFF	380
Summary	333	The Tryptophan Repressor Switches Genes Off	380
FROM RNA TO PROTEIN	333	Repressors Turn Genes Off and Activators Turn Them On	381
An mRNA Sequence Is Decoded in Sets of Three Nucleotides	334	An Activator and a Repressor Control the <i>Lac</i> Operon	382
tRNA Molecules Match Amino Acids to Codons in mRNA	334	DNA Looping Can Occur During Bacterial Gene Regulation	383
tRNAs Are Covalently Modified Before They Exit from the Nucleus	336	Complex Switches Control Gene Transcription in Eukaryotes	384
Specific Enzymes Couple Each Amino Acid to Its Appropriate tRNA Molecule	336	A Eukaryotic Gene Control Region Consists of a Promoter Plus Many <i>cis</i> -Regulatory Sequences	384
Editing by tRNA Synthetases Ensures Accuracy	338	Eukaryotic Transcription Regulators Work in Groups	385
Amino Acids Are Added to the C-terminal End of a Growing Polypeptide Chain	339	Activator Proteins Promote the Assembly of RNA Polymerase at the Start Point of Transcription	386
The RNA Message Is Decoded in Ribosomes	340	Eukaryotic Transcription Activators Direct the Modification of Local Chromatin Structure	386
Elongation Factors Drive Translation Forward and Improve Its Accuracy	343	Transcription Activators Can Promote Transcription by Releasing RNA Polymerase from Promoters	388
Many Biological Processes Overcome the Inherent Limitations of Complementary Base-Pairing	345	Transcription Activators Work Synergistically	388
Accuracy in Translation Requires an Expenditure of Free Energy	345	Eukaryotic Transcription Repressors Can Inhibit Transcription in Several Ways	389
The Ribosome Is a Ribozyme	346	Insulator DNA Sequences Prevent Eukaryotic Transcription Regulators from Influencing Distant Genes	391
Nucleotide Sequences in mRNA Signal Where to Start Protein Synthesis	347	Summary	392
Stop Codons Mark the End of Translation	348		

MOLECULAR GENETIC MECHANISMS THAT CREATE AND MAINTAIN SPECIALIZED CELL TYPES	392	Hybridoma Cell Lines Are Factories That Produce Monoclonal Antibodies	444
Complex Genetic Switches That Regulate <i>Drosophila</i> Development Are Built Up from Smaller Molecules	392	Summary	445
The <i>Drosophila Eve</i> Gene Is Regulated by Combinatorial Controls	394	PURIFYING PROTEINS	445
Transcription Regulators Are Brought Into Play by Extracellular Signals	395	Cells Can Be Separated into Their Component Fractions	445
Combinatorial Gene Control Creates Many Different Cell Types	396	Cell Extracts Provide Accessible Systems to Study Cell Functions	447
Specialized Cell Types Can Be Experimentally Reprogrammed to Become Pluripotent Stem Cells	398	Proteins Can Be Separated by Chromatography	448
Combinations of Master Transcription Regulators Specify Cell Types by Controlling the Expression of Many Genes	398	Immunoprecipitation Is a Rapid Affinity Purification Method	449
Specialized Cells Must Rapidly Turn Sets of Genes On and Off	399	Genetically Engineered Tags Provide an Easy Way to Purify Proteins	450
Differentiated Cells Maintain Their Identity	400	Purified Cell-free Systems Are Required for the Precise Dissection of Molecular Functions	451
Transcription Circuits Allow the Cell to Carry Out Logic Operations	402	Summary	451
Summary	404	ANALYZING PROTEINS	452
MECHANISMS THAT REINFORCE CELL MEMORY IN PLANTS AND ANIMALS	404	Proteins Can Be Separated by SDS Polyacrylamide-Gel Electrophoresis	452
Patterns of DNA Methylation Can Be Inherited When Vertebrate Cells Divide	404	Two-Dimensional Gel Electrophoresis Provides Greater Protein Separation	452
CG-Rich Islands Are Associated with Many Genes in Mammals	405	Specific Proteins Can Be Detected by Blotting with Antibodies	454
Genomic Imprinting Is Based on DNA Methylation	407	Hydrodynamic Measurements Reveal the Size and Shape of a Protein Complex	455
Chromosome-Wide Alterations in Chromatin Structure Can Be Inherited	409	Mass Spectrometry Provides a Highly Sensitive Method for Identifying Unknown Proteins	455
Epigenetic Mechanisms Ensure That Stable Patterns of Gene Expression Can Be Transmitted to Daughter Cells	411	Sets of Interacting Proteins Can Be Identified by Biochemical Methods	457
Summary	413	Optical Methods Can Monitor Protein Interactions	458
POST-TRANSCRIPTIONAL CONTROLS	413	Protein Function Can Be Selectively Disrupted With Small Molecules	459
Transcription Attenuation Causes the Premature Termination of Some RNA Molecules	414	Protein Structure Can Be Determined Using X-Ray Diffraction	460
Riboswitches Probably Represent Ancient Forms of Gene Control	414	NMR Can Be Used to Determine Protein Structure in Solution	461
Alternative RNA Splicing Can Produce Different Forms of a Protein from the Same Gene	415	Protein Sequence and Structure Provide Clues About Protein Function	462
The Definition of a Gene Has Been Modified Since the Discovery of Alternative RNA Splicing	416	Summary	463
A Change in the Site of RNA Transcript Cleavage and Poly-A Addition Can Change the C-terminus of a Protein	417	ANALYZING AND MANIPULATING DNA	463
RNA Editing Can Change the Meaning of the RNA Message	418	Restriction Nucleases Cut Large DNA Molecules into Specific Fragments	464
RNA Transport from the Nucleus Can Be Regulated	419	Gel Electrophoresis Separates DNA Molecules of Different Sizes	465
Some mRNAs Are Localized to Specific Regions of the Cytosol	421	Purified DNA Molecules Can Be Specifically Labeled with Radioisotopes or Chemical Markers <i>in vitro</i>	467
The 5' and 3' Untranslated Regions of mRNAs Control Their Translation	422	Genes Can Be Cloned Using Bacteria	467
The Phosphorylation of an Initiation Factor Regulates Protein Synthesis Globally	423	An Entire Genome Can Be Represented in a DNA Library	469
Initiation at AUG Codons Upstream of the Translation Start Can Regulate Eukaryotic Translation Initiation	424	Genomic and cDNA Libraries Have Different Advantages and Drawbacks	471
Internal Ribosome Entry Sites Provide Opportunities for Translational Control	425	Hybridization Provides a Powerful, But Simple Way to Detect Specific Nucleotide Sequences	472
Changes in mRNA Stability Can Regulate Gene Expression	426	Genes Can Be Cloned <i>in vitro</i> Using PCR	473
Regulation of mRNA Stability Involves P-bodies and Stress Granules	427	PCR Is Also Used for Diagnostic and Forensic Applications	474
Summary	428	Both DNA and RNA Can Be Rapidly Sequenced	477
REGULATION OF GENE EXPRESSION BY NONCODING RNAs	429	To Be Useful, Genome Sequences Must Be Annotated	477
Small Noncoding RNA Transcripts Regulate Many Animal and Plant Genes Through RNA Interference	429	DNA Cloning Allows Any Protein to be Produced in Large Amounts	483
miRNAs Regulate mRNA Translation and Stability	429	Summary	484
RNA Interference Is Also Used as a Cell Defense Mechanism	431	STUDYING GENE EXPRESSION AND FUNCTION	485
RNA Interference Can Direct Heterochromatin Formation	432	Classical Genetics Begins by Disrupting a Cell Process by Random Mutagenesis	485
piRNAs Protect the Germ Line from Transposable Elements	433	Genetic Screens Identify Mutants with Specific Abnormalities	488
RNA Interference Has Become a Powerful Experimental Tool	433	Mutations Can Cause Loss or Gain of Protein Function	489
Bacteria Use Small Noncoding RNAs to Protect Themselves from Viruses	433	Complementation Tests Reveal Whether Two Mutations Are in the Same Gene or Different Genes	490
Long Noncoding RNAs Have Diverse Functions in the Cell	435	Gene Products Can Be Ordered in Pathways by Epistasis Analysis	490
Summary	436	Mutations Responsible for a Phenotype Can Be Identified Through DNA Analysis	491
Problems	436	Rapid and Cheap DNA Sequencing Has Revolutionized Human Genetic Studies	491
References	438	Linked Blocks of Polymorphisms Have Been Passed Down from Our Ancestors	492
Chapter 8 Analyzing Cells, Molecules, and Systems	439	Polymorphisms Can Aid the Search for Mutations Associated with Disease	493
ISOLATING CELLS AND GROWING THEM IN CULTURE	440	Genomics Is Accelerating the Discovery of Rare Mutations That Predispose Us to Serious Disease	493
Cells Can Be Isolated from Tissues	440	Reverse Genetics Begins with a Known Gene and Determines Which Cell Processes Require Its Function	494
Cells Can Be Grown in Culture	440	Animals and Plants Can Be Genetically Altered	495
Eukaryotic Cell Lines Are a Widely Used Source of Homogeneous Cells	442		

The Bacterial CRISPR System Has Been Adapted to Edit Genomes in a Wide Variety of Species	497	Superresolution Fluorescence Techniques Can Overcome Diffraction-Limited Resolution	549
Large Collections of Engineered Mutations Provide a Tool for Examining the Function of Every Gene in an Organism	498	Superresolution Can Also be Achieved Using Single-Molecule Localization Methods	551
RNA Interference Is a Simple and Rapid Way to Test Gene Function	499	Summary	554
Reporter Genes Reveal When and Where a Gene Is Expressed	501	LOOKING AT CELLS AND MOLECULES IN THE ELECTRON MICROSCOPE	554
<i>In situ</i> Hybridization Can Reveal the Location of mRNAs and Noncoding RNAs	502	The Electron Microscope Resolves the Fine Structure of the Cell	554
Expression of Individual Genes Can Be Measured Using Quantitative RT-PCR	502	Biological Specimens Require Special Preparation for Electron Microscopy	555
Analysis of mRNAs by Microarray or RNA-seq Provides a Snapshot of Gene Expression	503	Specific Macromolecules Can Be Localized by Immunogold Electron Microscopy	556
Genome-wide Chromatin Immunoprecipitation Identifies Sites on the Genome Occupied by Transcription Regulators	505	Different Views of a Single Object Can Be Combined to Give a Three-Dimensional Reconstruction	557
Ribosome Profiling Reveals Which mRNAs Are Being Translated in the Cell	505	Images of Surfaces Can Be Obtained by Scanning Electron Microscopy	558
Recombinant DNA Methods Have Revolutionized Human Health	506	Negative Staining and Cryoelectron Microscopy Both Allow Macromolecules to Be Viewed at High Resolution	559
Transgenic Plants Are Important for Agriculture	507	Multiple Images Can Be Combined to Increase Resolution	561
Summary	508	Summary	562
MATHEMATICAL ANALYSIS OF CELL FUNCTIONS	509	Problems	563
Regulatory Networks Depend on Molecular Interactions	509	References	564
Differential Equations Help Us Predict Transient Behavior	512		
Both Promoter Activity and Protein Degradation Affect the Rate of Change of Protein Concentration	513	Chapter 10 Membrane Structure	565
The Time Required to Reach Steady State Depends on Protein Lifetime	514	THE LIPID BILAYER	566
Quantitative Methods Are Similar for Transcription Repressors and Activators	514	Phosphoglycerides, Sphingolipids, and Sterols Are the Major Lipids in Cell Membranes	566
Negative Feedback Is a Powerful Strategy in Cell Regulation	515	Phospholipids Spontaneously Form Bilayers	568
Delayed Negative Feedback Can Induce Oscillations	516	The Lipid Bilayer Is a Two-dimensional Fluid	569
DNA Binding by a Repressor or an Activator Can Be Cooperative	516	The Fluidity of a Lipid Bilayer Depends on Its Composition	571
Positive Feedback Is Important for Switchlike Responses and Bistability	518	Despite Their Fluidity, Lipid Bilayers Can Form Domains of Different Compositions	572
Robustness Is an Important Characteristic of Biological Networks	520	Lipid Droplets Are Surrounded by a Phospholipid Monolayer	573
Two Transcription Regulators That Bind to the Same Gene Promoter Can Exert Combinatorial Control	520	The Asymmetry of the Lipid Bilayer Is Functionally Important	573
An Incoherent Feed-forward Interaction Generates Pulses	522	Glycolipids Are Found on the Surface of All Eukaryotic Plasma Membranes	575
A Coherent Feed-forward Interaction Detects Persistent Inputs	522	Summary	576
The Same Network Can Behave Differently in Different Cells Due to Stochastic Effects	523	MEMBRANE PROTEINS	576
Several Computational Approaches Can Be Used to Model the Reactions in Cells	524	Membrane Proteins Can Be Associated with the Lipid Bilayer in Various Ways	576
Statistical Methods Are Critical For the Analysis of Biological Data	524	Lipid Anchors Control the Membrane Localization of Some Signaling Proteins	577
Summary	525	In Most Transmembrane Proteins, the Polypeptide Chain Crosses the Lipid Bilayer in an α -Helical Conformation	579
Problems	525	Transmembrane α Helices Often Interact with One Another	580
References	528	Some β Barrels Form Large Channels	580
		Many Membrane Proteins Are Glycosylated	582
Chapter 9 Visualizing Cells	529	Membrane Proteins Can Be Solubilized and Purified in Detergents	583
LOOKING AT CELLS IN THE LIGHT MICROSCOPE	529	Bacteriorhodopsin Is a Light-driven Proton (H^+) Pump That Traverses the Lipid Bilayer as Seven α Helices	586
The Light Microscope Can Resolve Details 0.2 μ m Apart	530	Membrane Proteins Often Function as Large Complexes	588
Photon Noise Creates Additional Limits to Resolution When Light Levels Are Low	532	Many Membrane Proteins Diffuse in the Plane of the Membrane	588
Living Cells Are Seen Clearly in a Phase-Contrast or a Differential-Interference-Contrast Microscope	533	Cells Can Confine Proteins and Lipids to Specific Domains Within a Membrane	590
Images Can Be Enhanced and Analyzed by Digital Techniques	534	The Cortical Cytoskeleton Gives Membranes Mechanical Strength and Restricts Membrane Protein Diffusion	591
Intact Tissues Are Usually Fixed and Sectioned Before Microscopy	535	Membrane-bending Proteins Deform Bilayers	593
Specific Molecules Can Be Located in Cells by Fluorescence Microscopy	536	Summary	594
Antibodies Can Be Used to Detect Specific Molecules	539	Problems	595
Imaging of Complex Three-Dimensional Objects Is Possible with the Optical Microscope	540	References	596
The Confocal Microscope Produces Optical Sections by Excluding Out-of-Focus Light	540		
Individual Proteins Can Be Fluorescently Tagged in Living Cells and Organisms	542	Chapter 11 Membrane Transport of Small Molecules and the Electrical Properties of Membranes	597
Protein Dynamics Can Be Followed in Living Cells	543	PRINCIPLES OF MEMBRANE TRANSPORT	597
Light-Emitting Indicators Can Measure Rapidly Changing Intracellular Ion Concentrations	546	Protein-Free Lipid Bilayers Are Impermeable to Ions	598
Single Molecules Can Be Visualized by Total Internal Reflection Fluorescence Microscopy	547	There Are Two Main Classes of Membrane Transport Proteins: Transporters and Channels	598
Individual Molecules Can Be Touched, Imaged, and Moved Using Atomic Force Microscopy	548	Active Transport Is Mediated by Transporters Coupled to an Energy Source	599
		Summary	600
		TRANSPORTERS AND ACTIVE MEMBRANE TRANSPORT	600
		Active Transport Can Be Driven by Ion-Concentration Gradients	601

Transporters in the Plasma Membrane Regulate Cytosolic pH	604	Nuclear Import Receptors Bind to Both Nuclear Localization	652
An Asymmetric Distribution of Transporters in Epithelial Cells		Signals and NPC Proteins	652
Underlies the Transcellular Transport of Solutes	605	Nuclear Export Works Like Nuclear Import, But in Reverse	652
There Are Three Classes of ATP-Driven Pumps	606	The Ran GTPase Imposes Directionality on Transport Through	
A P-type ATPase Pumps Ca ²⁺ into the Sarcoplasmic Reticulum		NPCs	653
in Muscle Cells	606	Transport Through NPCs Can Be Regulated by Controlling	
The Plasma Membrane Na ⁺ -K ⁺ Pump Establishes Na ⁺ and K ⁺		Access to the Transport Machinery	654
Gradients Across the Plasma Membrane	607	During Mitosis the Nuclear Envelope Disassembles	656
ABC Transporters Constitute the Largest Family of Membrane		Summary	657
Transport Proteins	609	THE TRANSPORT OF PROTEINS INTO MITOCHONDRIA AND	
Summary	611	CHLOROPLASTS	658
CHANNELS AND THE ELECTRICAL PROPERTIES OF		Translocation into Mitochondria Depends on Signal Sequences	
MEMBRANES	611	and Protein Translocators	659
Aquaporins Are Permeable to Water But Impermeable to Ions	612	Mitochondrial Precursor Proteins Are Imported as Unfolded	
Ion Channels Are Ion-Selective and Fluctuate Between Open		Polypeptide Chains	660
and Closed States	613	ATP Hydrolysis and a Membrane Potential Drive Protein Import	
The Membrane Potential in Animal Cells Depends Mainly on K ⁺		Into the Matrix Space	661
Leak Channels and the K ⁺ Gradient Across the Plasma		Bacteria and Mitochondria Use Similar Mechanisms to Insert	
Membrane	615	Porins into their Outer Membrane	662
The Resting Potential Decays Only Slowly When the Na ⁺ -K ⁺		Transport Into the Inner Mitochondrial Membrane and	
Pump Is Stopped	615	Intermembrane Space Occurs Via Several Routes	663
The Three-Dimensional Structure of a Bacterial K ⁺ Channel		Two Signal Sequences Direct Proteins to the Thylakoid Membrane	
Shows How an Ion Channel Can Work	617	in Chloroplasts	664
Mechanosensitive Channels Protect Bacterial Cells Against		Summary	666
Extreme Osmotic Pressures	619	PEROXISOMES	666
The Function of a Neuron Depends on Its Elongated Structure	620	Peroxisomes Use Molecular Oxygen and Hydrogen Peroxide	
Voltage-Gated Cation Channels Generate Action Potentials in		to Perform Oxidation Reactions	666
Electrically Excitable Cells	621	A Short Signal Sequence Directs the Import of Proteins into	
The Use of Channelrhodopsins Has Revolutionized the Study		Peroxisomes	667
of Neural Circuits	623	Summary	669
Myelination Increases the Speed and Efficiency of Action Potential		THE ENDOPLASMIC RETICULUM	669
Propagation in Nerve Cells	625	The ER Is Structurally and Functionally Diverse	670
Patch-Clamp Recording Indicates That Individual Ion Channels		Signal Sequences Were First Discovered in Proteins Imported	
Open in an All-or-Nothing Fashion	626	into the Rough ER	672
Voltage-Gated Cation Channels Are Evolutionarily and Structurally		A Signal-Recognition Particle (SRP) Directs the ER Signal	
Related	626	Sequence to a Specific Receptor in the Rough ER Membrane	673
Different Neuron Types Display Characteristic Stable Firing		The Polypeptide Chain Passes Through an Aqueous Channel	
Properties	627	in the Translocator	675
Transmitter-Gated Ion Channels Convert Chemical Signals into		Translocation Across the ER Membrane Does Not Always	
Electrical Ones at Chemical Synapses	627	Require Ongoing Polypeptide Chain Elongation	677
Chemical Synapses Can Be Excitatory or Inhibitory	629	In Single-Pass Transmembrane Proteins, a Single Internal ER	
The Acetylcholine Receptors at the Neuromuscular Junction Are		Signal Sequence Remains in the Lipid Bilayer as a Membrane-	
Excitatory Transmitter-Gated Cation Channels	630	spanning α Helix	677
Neurons Contain Many Types of Transmitter-Gated Channels	631	Combinations of Start-Transfer and Stop-Transfer Signals	
Many Psychoactive Drugs Act at Synapses	631	Determine the Topology of Multipass Transmembrane Proteins	679
Neuromuscular Transmission Involves the Sequential Activation		ER Tail-anchored Proteins Are Integrated into the ER Membrane	
of Five Different Sets of Ion Channels	632	by a Special Mechanism	682
Single Neurons Are Complex Computation Devices	633	Translocated Polypeptide Chains Fold and Assemble in the	
Neuronal Computation Requires a Combination of at Least Three		Lumen of the Rough ER	682
Kinds of K ⁺ Channels	634	Most Proteins Synthesized in the Rough ER Are Glycosylated by	
Long-Term Potentiation (LTP) in the Mammalian Hippocampus		the Addition of a Common N-Linked Oligosaccharide	683
Depends on Ca ²⁺ Entry Through NMDA-Receptor Channels	636	Oligosaccharides Are Used as Tags to Mark the State of Protein	
Summary	637	Folding	685
Problems	638	Improperly Folded Proteins Are Exported from the ER and	
References	640	Degraded in the Cytosol	685
		Misfolded Proteins in the ER Activate an Unfolded Protein	
Chapter 12 Intracellular Compartments and	641	Response	686
Protein Sorting		Some Membrane Proteins Acquire a Covalently Attached	
THE COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF CELLS	641	Glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) Anchor	688
All Eukaryotic Cells Have the Same Basic Set of Membrane-		The ER Assembles Most Lipid Bilayers	689
enclosed Organelles	641	Summary	691
Evolutionary Origins May Help Explain the Topological		Problems	692
Relationships of Organelles	643	References	694
Proteins Can Move Between Compartments in Different Ways	645		
Signal Sequences and Sorting Receptors Direct Proteins to the		Chapter 13 Intracellular Membrane Traffic	695
Correct Cell Address	647	THE MOLECULAR MECHANISMS OF MEMBRANE	
Most Organelles Cannot Be Constructed De Novo: They Require		TRANSPORT AND THE MAINTENANCE OF	
Information in the Organelle Itself	648	COMPARTMENTAL DIVERSITY	697
Summary	649	There Are Various Types of Coated Vesicles	697
THE TRANSPORT OF MOLECULES BETWEEN THE		The Assembly of a Clathrin Coat Drives Vesicle Formation	697
NUCLEUS AND THE CYTOSOL	649	Adaptor Proteins Select Cargo into Clathrin-Coated Vesicles	698
Nuclear Pore Complexes Perforate the Nuclear Envelope	649	Phosphoinositides Mark Organelles and Membrane Domains	700
Nuclear Localization Signals Direct Nuclear Proteins to the Nucleus	650		

Membrane-Bending Proteins Help Deform the Membrane During Vesicle Formation	701	Secretory Vesicle Membrane Components Are Quickly Removed from the Plasma Membrane	746
Cytoplasmic Proteins Regulate the Pinching-Off and Uncoating of Coated Vesicles	701	Some Regulated Exocytosis Events Serve to Enlarge the Plasma Membrane	748
Monomeric GTPases Control Coat Assembly	703	Polarized Cells Direct Proteins from the <i>Trans</i> Golgi Network to the Appropriate Domain of the Plasma Membrane	748
Not All Transport Vesicles Are Spherical	704	Summary	750
Rab Proteins Guide Transport Vesicles to Their Target Membrane	705	Problems	750
Rab Cascades Can Change the Identity of an Organelle	707	References	752
SNAREs Mediate Membrane Fusion	708		
Interacting SNAREs Need to Be Pried Apart Before They Can Function Again	709	Chapter 14 Energy Conversion: Mitochondria and Chloroplasts	753
Summary	710		
TRANSPORT FROM THE ER THROUGH THE GOLGI APPARATUS	710	THE MITOCHONDRION	755
Proteins Leave the ER in COPII-Coated Transport Vesicles Only Proteins That Are Properly Folded and Assembled Can Leave the ER	711	The Mitochondrion Has an Outer Membrane and an Inner Membrane	757
Vesicular Tubular Clusters Mediate Transport from the ER to the Golgi Apparatus	712	The Inner Membrane Cristae Contain the Machinery for Electron Transport and ATP Synthesis	758
The Retrieval Pathway to the ER Uses Sorting Signals	712	The Citric Acid Cycle in the Matrix Produces NADH	758
Many Proteins Are Selectively Retained in the Compartments in Which They Function	713	Mitochondria Have Many Essential Roles in Cellular Metabolism	759
The Golgi Apparatus Consists of an Ordered Series of Compartments	714	A Chemiosmotic Process Couples Oxidation Energy to ATP Production	761
Oligosaccharide Chains Are Processed in the Golgi Apparatus	715	The Energy Derived from Oxidation Is Stored as an Electrochemical Gradient	762
Proteoglycans Are Assembled in the Golgi Apparatus	716	Summary	763
What Is the Purpose of Glycosylation?	718	THE PROTON PUMPS OF THE ELECTRON-TRANSPORT CHAIN	763
Transport Through the Golgi Apparatus May Occur by Cisternal Maturation	719	The Redox Potential Is a Measure of Electron Affinities	763
Golgi Matrix Proteins Help Organize the Stack	720	Electron Transfers Release Large Amounts of Energy	764
Summary	721	Transition Metal Ions and Quinones Accept and Release Electrons Readily	764
TRANSPORT FROM THE TRANS GOLGI NETWORK TO LYOSOMES	722	NADH Transfers Its Electrons to Oxygen Through Three Large Enzyme Complexes Embedded in the Inner Membrane	766
Lysosomes Are the Principal Sites of Intracellular Digestion	722	The NADH Dehydrogenase Complex Contains Separate Modules for Electron Transport and Proton Pumping	768
Lysosomes Are Heterogeneous	723	Cytochrome <i>c</i> Reductase Takes Up and Releases Protons on the Opposite Side of the Crista Membrane, Thereby Pumping Protons	768
Plant and Fungal Vacuoles Are Remarkably Versatile Lysosomes	724	The Cytochrome <i>c</i> Oxidase Complex Pumps Protons and Reduces O ₂ Using a Catalytic Iron-Copper Center	770
Multiple Pathways Deliver Materials to Lysosomes	725	The Respiratory Chain Forms a Supercomplex in the Crista Membrane	772
Autophagy Degrades Unwanted Proteins and Organelles	726	Protons Can Move Rapidly Through Proteins Along Predefined Pathways	773
A Mannose 6-Phosphate Receptor Sorts Lysosomal Hydrolases in the <i>Trans</i> Golgi Network	727	Summary	774
Defects in the GlcNAc Phosphotransferase Cause a Lysosomal Storage Disease in Humans	728	ATP PRODUCTION IN MITOCHONDRIA	774
Some Lysosomes and Multivesicular Bodies Undergo Exocytosis	729	The Large Negative Value of ΔG for ATP Hydrolysis Makes ATP Useful to the Cell	774
Summary	729	The ATP Synthase Is a Nanomachine that Produces ATP by Rotary Catalysis	776
TRANSPORT INTO THE CELL FROM THE PLASMA MEMBRANE: ENDOCYTOSIS	730	Proton-driven Turbines Are of Ancient Origin	777
Pinocytotic Vesicles Form from Coated Pits in the Plasma Membrane	731	Mitochondrial Cristae Help to Make ATP Synthesis Efficient	778
Not All Pinocytotic Vesicles Are Clathrin-Coated	731	Special Transport Proteins Exchange ATP and ADP Through the Inner Membrane	779
Cells Use Receptor-Mediated Endocytosis to Import Selected Extracellular Macromolecules	732	Chemiosmotic Mechanisms First Arose in Bacteria	780
Specific Proteins Are Retrieved from Early Endosomes and Returned to the Plasma Membrane	734	Summary	782
Plasma Membrane Signaling Receptors are Down-Regulated by Degradation in Lysosomes	735	CHLOROPLASTS AND PHOTOSYNTHESIS	782
Early Endosomes Mature into Late Endosomes	735	Chloroplasts Resemble Mitochondria But Have a Separate Thylakoid Compartment	782
ESCRT Protein Complexes Mediate the Formation of Intraluminal Vesicles in Multivesicular Bodies	736	Chloroplasts Capture Energy from Sunlight and Use It to Fix Carbon	783
Recycling Endosomes Regulate Plasma Membrane Composition	737	Carbon Fixation Uses ATP and NADPH to Convert CO ₂ into Sugars	784
Specialized Phagocytic Cells Can Ingest Large Particles	738	Sugars Generated by Carbon Fixation Can Be Stored as Starch or Consumed to Produce ATP	785
Summary	740	The Thylakoid Membranes of Chloroplasts Contain the Protein Complexes Required for Photosynthesis and ATP Generation	786
TRANSPORT FROM THE TRANS GOLGI NETWORK TO THE CELL EXTERIOR: EXOCYTOSIS	741	Chlorophyll-Protein Complexes Can Transfer Either Excitation Energy or Electrons	787
Many Proteins and Lipids Are Carried Automatically from the <i>Trans</i> Golgi Network (TGN) to the Cell Surface	741	A Photosystem Consists of an Antenna Complex and a Reaction Center	788
Secretory Vesicles Bud from the <i>Trans</i> Golgi Network	742	The Thylakoid Membrane Contains Two Different Photosystems Working in Series	789
Precursors of Secretory Proteins Are Proteolytically Processed During the Formation of Secretory Vesicles	743		
Secretory Vesicles Wait Near the Plasma Membrane Until Signaled to Release Their Contents	744		
For Rapid Exocytosis, Synaptic Vesicles Are Primed at the Presynaptic Plasma Membrane	744		
Synaptic Vesicles Can Form Directly from Endocytic Vesicles	746		

Photosystem II Uses a Manganese Cluster to Withdraw Electrons From Water	790	Some G Proteins Signal Via Phospholipids	836
The Cytochrome <i>b₆-f</i> Complex Connects Photosystem II to Photosystem I	791	Ca ²⁺ Functions as a Ubiquitous Intracellular Mediator	838
Photosystem I Carries Out the Second Charge-Separation Step in the Z Scheme	792	Feedback Generates Ca ²⁺ Waves and Oscillations	838
The Chloroplast ATP Synthase Uses the Proton Gradient Generated by the Photosynthetic Light Reactions to Produce ATP	793	Ca ²⁺ /Calmodulin-Dependent Protein Kinases Mediate Many Responses to Ca ²⁺ Signals	840
All Photosynthetic Reaction Centers Have Evolved From a Common Ancestor	793	Some G Proteins Directly Regulate Ion Channels	843
The Proton-Motive Force for ATP Production in Mitochondria and Chloroplasts Is Essentially the Same	794	Smell and Vision Depend on GPCRs That Regulate Ion Channels	843
Chemiosmotic Mechanisms Evolved in Stages	794	Nitric Oxide Is a Gaseous Signaling Mediator That Passes Between Cells	846
By Providing an Inexhaustible Source of Reducing Power, Photosynthetic Bacteria Overcame a Major Evolutionary Obstacle	796	Second Messengers and Enzymatic Cascades Amplify Signals	848
The Photosynthetic Electron-Transport Chains of Cyanobacteria Produced Atmospheric Oxygen and Permitted New Life-Forms	796	GPCR Desensitization Depends on Receptor Phosphorylation	848
Summary	798	Summary	849
THE GENETIC SYSTEMS OF MITOCHONDRIA AND CHLOROPLASTS	800	SIGNALING THROUGH ENZYME-COUPLED RECEPTORS	850
The Genetic Systems of Mitochondria and Chloroplasts Resemble Those of Prokaryotes	800	Activated Receptor Tyrosine Kinases (RTKs) Phosphorylate Themselves	850
Over Time, Mitochondria and Chloroplasts Have Exported Most of Their Genes to the Nucleus by Gene Transfer	801	Phosphorylated Tyrosines on RTKs Serve as Docking Sites for Intracellular Signaling Proteins	852
The Fission and Fusion of Mitochondria Are Topologically Complex Processes	802	Proteins with SH2 Domains Bind to Phosphorylated Tyrosines	852
Animal Mitochondria Contain the Simplest Genetic Systems Known	803	The GTPase Ras Mediates Signaling by Most RTKs	854
Mitochondria Have a Relaxed Codon Usage and Can Have a Variant Genetic Code	804	Ras Activates a MAP Kinase Signaling Module	855
Chloroplasts and Bacteria Share Many Striking Similarities	806	Scaffold Proteins Help Prevent Cross-talk Between Parallel MAP Kinase Modules	857
Organelle Genes Are Maternally Inherited in Animals and Plants	807	Rho Family GTPases Functionally Couple Cell-Surface Receptors to the Cytoskeleton	858
Mutations in Mitochondrial DNA Can Cause Severe Inherited Diseases	807	PI 3-Kinase Produces Lipid Docking Sites in the Plasma Membrane	859
The Accumulation of Mitochondrial DNA Mutations Is a Contributor to Aging	808	The PI-3-Kinase–Akt Signaling Pathway Stimulates Animal Cells to Survive and Grow	860
Why Do Mitochondria and Chloroplasts Maintain a Costly Separate System for DNA Transcription and Translation?	808	RTKs and GPCRs Activate Overlapping Signaling Pathways	861
Summary	809	Some Enzyme-Coupled Receptors Associate with Cytoplasmic Tyrosine Kinases	862
Problems	809	Cytokine Receptors Activate the JAK–STAT Signaling Pathway	863
References	811	Protein Tyrosine Phosphatases Reverse Tyrosine Phosphorylations	864
		Signal Proteins of the TGFβ Superfamily Act Through Receptor Serine/Threonine Kinases and Smads	865
Chapter 15 Cell Signaling	813	Summary	866
PRINCIPLES OF CELL SIGNALING	813	ALTERNATIVE SIGNALING ROUTES IN GENE REGULATION	867
Extracellular Signals Can Act Over Short or Long Distances	814	The Receptor Notch Is a Latent Transcription Regulatory Protein	867
Extracellular Signal Molecules Bind to Specific Receptors	815	Wnt Proteins Bind to Frizzled Receptors and Inhibit the Degradation of β-Catenin	868
Each Cell Is Programmed to Respond to Specific Combinations of Extracellular Signals	816	Hedgehog Proteins Bind to Patched, Relieving Its Inhibition of Smoothened	871
There Are Three Major Classes of Cell-Surface Receptor Proteins	818	Many Stressful and Inflammatory Stimuli Act Through an NFκB-Dependent Signaling Pathway	873
Cell-Surface Receptors Relay Signals Via Intracellular Signaling Molecules	819	Nuclear Receptors Are Ligand-Modulated Transcription Regulators	874
Intracellular Signals Must Be Specific and Precise in a Noisy Cytoplasm	820	Circadian Clocks Contain Negative Feedback Loops That Control Gene Expression	876
Intracellular Signaling Complexes Form at Activated Receptors	822	Three Proteins in a Test Tube Can Reconstitute a Cyanobacterial Circadian Clock	878
Modular Interaction Domains Mediate Interactions Between Intracellular Signaling Proteins	822	Summary	879
The Relationship Between Signal and Response Varies in Different Signaling Pathways	824	SIGNALING IN PLANTS	880
The Speed of a Response Depends on the Turnover of Signaling Molecules	825	Multicellularity and Cell Communication Evolved Independently in Plants and Animals	880
Cells Can Respond Abruptly to a Gradually Increasing Signal	827	Receptor Serine/Threonine Kinases Are the Largest Class of Cell-Surface Receptors in Plants	881
Positive Feedback Can Generate an All-or-None Response	828	Ethylene Blocks the Degradation of Specific Transcription Regulatory Proteins in the Nucleus	881
Negative Feedback is a Common Motif in Signaling Systems	829	Regulated Positioning of Auxin Transporters Patterns Plant Growth	882
Cells Can Adjust Their Sensitivity to a Signal	830	Phytochromes Detect Red Light, and Cryptochromes Detect Blue Light	883
Summary	831	Summary	885
SIGNALING THROUGH G-PROTEIN-COUPLED RECEPTORS	832	Problems	886
Trimeric G Proteins Relay Signals From GPCRs	832	References	887
Some G Proteins Regulate the Production of Cyclic AMP	833		
Cyclic-AMP-Dependent Protein Kinase (PKA) Mediates Most of the Effects of Cyclic AMP	834	Chapter 16 The Cytoskeleton	889
		FUNCTION AND ORIGIN OF THE CYTOSKELETON	889
		Cytoskeletal Filaments Adapt to Form Dynamic or Stable Structures	890
		The Cytoskeleton Determines Cellular Organization and Polarity	892
		Filaments Assemble from Protein Subunits That Impart Specific Physical and Dynamic Properties	893

Accessory Proteins and Motors Regulate Cytoskeletal Filaments	894	Cell Polarization Is Controlled by Members of the Rho Protein Family	955
Bacterial Cell Organization and Division Depend on Homologs of Eukaryotic Cytoskeletal Proteins	896	Extracellular Signals Can Activate the Three Rho Protein Family Members	958
Summary	898	External Signals Can Dictate the Direction of Cell Migration	958
ACTIN AND ACTIN-BINDING PROTEINS	898	Communication Among Cytoskeletal Elements Coordinates Whole-Cell Polarization and Locomotion	959
Actin Subunits Assemble Head-to-Tail to Create Flexible, Polar Filaments	898	Summary	960
Nucleation Is the Rate-Limiting Step in the Formation of Actin Filaments	899	Problems	960
Actin Filaments Have Two Distinct Ends That Grow at Different Rates	900	References	962
ATP Hydrolysis Within Actin Filaments Leads to Treadmilling at Steady State	901	Chapter 17 The Cell Cycle	963
The Functions of Actin Filaments Are Inhibited by Both Polymer-stabilizing and Polymer-destabilizing Chemicals	904	OVERVIEW OF THE CELL CYCLE	963
Actin-Binding Proteins Influence Filament Dynamics and Organization	904	The Eukaryotic Cell Cycle Usually Consists of Four Phases	964
Monomer Availability Controls Actin Filament Assembly	906	Cell-Cycle Control Is Similar in All Eukaryotes	965
Actin-Nucleating Factors Accelerate Polymerization and Generate Branched or Straight Filaments	906	Cell-Cycle Progression Can Be Studied in Various Ways	966
Actin-Filament-Binding Proteins Alter Filament Dynamics	907	Summary	967
Severing Proteins Regulate Actin Filament Depolymerization	909	THE CELL-CYCLE CONTROL SYSTEM	967
Higher-Order Actin Filament Arrays Influence Cellular Mechanical Properties and Signaling	911	The Cell-Cycle Control System Triggers the Major Events of the Cell Cycle	967
Bacteria Can Hijack the Host Actin Cytoskeleton	913	The Cell-Cycle Control System Depends on Cyclically Activated Cyclin-Dependent Protein Kinases (Cdks)	968
Summary	914	Cdk Activity Can Be Suppressed By Inhibitory Phosphorylation and Cdk Inhibitor Proteins (CKIs)	970
MYOSIN AND ACTIN	915	Regulated Proteolysis Triggers the Metaphase-to-Anaphase Transition	970
Actin-Based Motor Proteins Are Members of the Myosin Superfamily	915	Cell-Cycle Control Also Depends on Transcriptional Regulation	971
Myosin Generates Force by Coupling ATP Hydrolysis to Conformational Changes	916	The Cell-Cycle Control System Functions as a Network of Biochemical Switches	972
Sliding of Myosin II Along Actin Filaments Causes Muscles to Contract	916	Summary	974
A Sudden Rise in Cytosolic Ca ²⁺ Concentration Initiates Muscle Contraction	920	S PHASE	974
Heart Muscle Is a Precisely Engineered Machine	923	S-Cdk Initiates DNA Replication Once Per Cycle	974
Actin and Myosin Perform a Variety of Functions in Non-Muscle Cells	923	Chromosome Duplication Requires Duplication of Chromatin Structure	975
Summary	925	Cohesins Hold Sister Chromatids Together	977
MICROTUBULES	925	Summary	977
Microtubules Are Hollow Tubes Made of Protofilaments	925	MITOSIS	978
Microtubules Undergo Dynamic Instability	926	M-Cdk Drives Entry Into Mitosis	978
Microtubule Functions Are Inhibited by Both Polymer-stabilizing and Polymer-destabilizing Drugs	927	Dephosphorylation Activates M-Cdk at the Onset of Mitosis	978
A Protein Complex Containing γ -Tubulin Nucleates Microtubules	929	Condensin Helps Configure Duplicated Chromosomes for Separation	979
Microtubules Emanate from the Centrosome in Animal Cells	929	The Mitotic Spindle Is a Microtubule-Based Machine	982
Microtubule-Binding Proteins Modulate Filament Dynamics and Organization	930	Microtubule-Dependent Motor Proteins Govern Spindle Assembly and Function	983
Microtubule Plus-End-Binding Proteins Modulate Microtubule Dynamics and Attachments	932	Multiple Mechanisms Collaborate in the Assembly of a Bipolar Mitotic Spindle	984
Tubulin-Sequestering and Microtubule-Severing Proteins Destabilize Microtubules	932	Centrosome Duplication Occurs Early in the Cell Cycle	984
Two Types of Motor Proteins Move Along Microtubules	935	M-Cdk Initiates Spindle Assembly in Prophase	985
Microtubules and Motors Move Organelles and Vesicles	936	The Completion of Spindle Assembly in Animal Cells Requires Nuclear-Envelope Breakdown	985
Construction of Complex Microtubule Assemblies Requires Microtubule Dynamics and Motor Proteins	938	Microtubule Instability Increases Greatly in Mitosis	986
Motile Cilia and Flagella Are Built from Microtubules and Dyneins	940	Mitotic Chromosomes Promote Bipolar Spindle Assembly	986
Primary Cilia Perform Important Signaling Functions in Animal Cells	941	Kinetochores Attach Sister Chromatids to the Spindle	987
Summary	942	Bi-orientation Is Achieved by Trial and Error	988
INTERMEDIATE FILAMENTS AND SEPTINS	944	Multiple Forces Act on Chromosomes in the Spindle	990
Intermediate Filament Structure Depends on the Lateral Bundling and Twisting of Coiled-Coils	945	The APC/C Triggers Sister-Chromatid Separation and the Completion of Mitosis	992
Intermediate Filaments Impart Mechanical Stability to Animal Cells	946	Unattached Chromosomes Block Sister-Chromatid Separation: The Spindle Assembly Checkpoint	993
Linker Proteins Connect Cytoskeletal Filaments and Bridge the Nuclear Envelope	948	Chromosomes Segregate in Anaphase A and B	994
Septins Form Filaments That Regulate Cell Polarity	949	Segregated Chromosomes Are Packaged in Daughter Nuclei at Telophase	995
Summary	950	Summary	995
CELL POLARIZATION AND MIGRATION	951	CYTOKINESIS	996
Many Cells Can Crawl Across a Solid Substratum	951	Actin and Myosin II in the Contractile Ring Generate the Force for Cytokinesis	996
Actin Polymerization Drives Plasma Membrane Protrusion	951	Local Activation of RhoA Triggers Assembly and Contraction of the Contractile Ring	997
Lamellipodia Contain All of the Machinery Required for Cell Motility	953	The Microtubules of the Mitotic Spindle Determine the Plane of Animal Cell Division	997
Myosin Contraction and Cell Adhesion Allow Cells to Pull Themselves Forward	954	The Phragmoplast Guides Cytokinesis in Higher Plants	1000
		Membrane-Enclosed Organelles Must Be Distributed to Daughter Cells During Cytokinesis	1001

Some Cells Reposition Their Spindle to Divide Asymmetrically	1001	Members of the Immunoglobulin Superfamily Mediate	
Mitosis Can Occur Without Cytokinesis	1002	Ca ²⁺ -Independent Cell–Cell Adhesion	1055
The G ₁ Phase Is a Stable State of Cdk Inactivity	1002	Summary	1056
Summary	1004	THE EXTRACELLULAR MATRIX OF ANIMALS	1057
MEIOSIS	1004	The Extracellular Matrix Is Made and Oriented by the Cells	
Meiosis Includes Two Rounds of Chromosome Segregation	1004	Within It	1057
Duplicated Homologs Pair During Meiotic Prophase	1006	Glycosaminoglycan (GAG) Chains Occupy Large Amounts of	
Homolog Pairing Culminates in the Formation of a Synaptonemal		Space and Form Hydrated Gels	1058
Complex	1006	Hyaluronan Acts as a Space Filler During Tissue Morphogenesis	
Homolog Segregation Depends on Several Unique Features		and Repair	1059
of Meiosis I	1008	Proteoglycans Are Composed of GAG Chains Covalently	
Crossing-Over Is Highly Regulated	1009	Linked to a Core Protein	1059
Meiosis Frequently Goes Wrong	1010	Collagens Are the Major Proteins of the Extracellular Matrix	1061
Summary	1010	Secreted Fibril-Associated Collagens Help Organize the Fibrils	1063
CONTROL OF CELL DIVISION AND CELL GROWTH	1010	Cells Help Organize the Collagen Fibrils They Secrete by	
Mitogens Stimulate Cell Division	1011	Exerting Tension on the Matrix	1064
Cells Can Enter a Specialized Nondividing State	1012	Elastin Gives Tissues Their Elasticity	1065
Mitogens Stimulate G ₁ -Cdk and G ₁ /S-Cdk Activities	1012	Fibronectin and Other Multidomain Glycoproteins Help	
DNA Damage Blocks Cell Division: The DNA Damage Response	1014	Organize the Matrix	1066
Many Human Cells Have a Built-In Limitation on the Number		Fibronectin Binds to Integrins	1067
of Times They Can Divide	1016	Tension Exerted by Cells Regulates the Assembly of	
Abnormal Proliferation Signals Cause Cell-Cycle Arrest or		Fibronectin Fibrils	1068
Apoptosis, Except in Cancer Cells	1016	The Basal Lamina Is a Specialized Form of Extracellular Matrix	1068
Cell Proliferation Is Accompanied by Cell Growth	1016	Laminin and Type IV Collagen Are Major Components of the	
Proliferating Cells Usually Coordinate Their Growth and Division	1018	Basal Lamina	1069
Summary	1018	Basal Laminae Have Diverse Functions	1070
Problems	1019	Cells Have to Be Able to Degrade Matrix, as Well as Make It	1072
References	1020	Matrix Proteoglycans and Glycoproteins Regulate the	
		Activities of Secreted Proteins	1073
Chapter 18 Cell Death	1021	Summary	1074
Apoptosis Eliminates Unwanted Cells	1021	CELL–MATRIX JUNCTIONS	1074
Apoptosis Depends on an Intracellular Proteolytic Cascade		Integrins Are Transmembrane Heterodimers That Link the	
That Is Mediated by Caspases	1022	Extracellular Matrix to the Cytoskeleton	1075
Cell-Surface Death Receptors Activate the Extrinsic Pathway		Integrin Defects Are Responsible for Many Genetic Diseases	1076
of Apoptosis	1024	Integrins Can Switch Between an Active and an Inactive	
The Intrinsic Pathway of Apoptosis Depends on Mitochondria	1025	Conformation	1077
Bcl2 Proteins Regulate the Intrinsic Pathway of Apoptosis	1025	Integrins Cluster to Form Strong Adhesions	1079
IAPs Help Control Caspases	1029	Extracellular Matrix Attachments Act Through Integrins to	
Extracellular Survival Factors Inhibit Apoptosis in Various Ways	1029	Control Cell Proliferation and Survival	1079
Phagocytes Remove the Apoptotic Cell	1030	Integrins Recruit Intracellular Signaling Proteins at Sites of	
Either Excessive or Insufficient Apoptosis Can Contribute to		Cell–Matrix Adhesion	1079
Disease	1031	Cell–Matrix Adhesions Respond to Mechanical Forces	1080
Summary	1032	Summary	1081
Problems	1033	THE PLANT CELL WALL	1081
References	1034	The Composition of the Cell Wall Depends on the Cell Type	1082
		The Tensile Strength of the Cell Wall Allows Plant Cells to	
Chapter 19 Cell Junctions and the Extracellular	1035	Develop Turgor Pressure	1083
Matrix		The Primary Cell Wall Is Built from Cellulose Microfibrils	
CELL–CELL JUNCTIONS	1038	Interwoven with a Network of Pectic Polysaccharides	1083
Cadherins Form a Diverse Family of Adhesion Molecules	1038	Oriented Cell Wall Deposition Controls Plant Cell Growth	1085
Cadherins Mediate Homophilic Adhesion	1038	Microtubules Orient Cell Wall Deposition	1086
Cadherin-Dependent Cell–Cell Adhesion Guides the		Summary	1087
Organization of Developing Tissues	1040	Problems	1087
Epithelial–Mesenchymal Transitions Depend on Control of		References	1089
Cadherins	1042		
Catenins Link Classical Cadherins to the Actin Cytoskeleton	1042	Chapter 20 Cancer	1091
Adherens Junctions Respond to Forces Generated by the Actin		CANCER AS A MICROEVOLUTIONARY PROCESS	1091
Cytoskeleton	1042	Cancer Cells Bypass Normal Proliferation Controls and	
Tissue Remodeling Depends on the Coordination of Actin-		Colonize Other Tissues	1092
Mediated Contraction With Cell–Cell Adhesion	1043	Most Cancers Derive from a Single Abnormal Cell	1093
Desmosomes Give Epithelia Mechanical Strength	1045	Cancer Cells Contain Somatic Mutations	1094
Tight Junctions Form a Seal Between Cells and a Fence		A Single Mutation Is Not Enough to Change a Normal Cell	
Between Plasma Membrane Domains	1047	into a Cancer Cell	1094
Tight Junctions Contain Strands of Transmembrane Adhesion		Cancers Develop Gradually from Increasingly Aberrant Cells	1095
Proteins	1047	Tumor Progression Involves Successive Rounds of Random	
Scaffold Proteins Organize Junctional Protein Complexes	1049	Inherited Change Followed by Natural Selection	1096
Gap Junctions Couple Cells Both Electrically and Metabolically	1050	Human Cancer Cells Are Genetically Unstable	1097
A Gap-Junction Connexon Is Made of Six Transmembrane		Cancer Cells Display an Altered Control of Growth	1098
Connexin Subunits	1051	Cancer Cells Have an Altered Sugar Metabolism	1098
In Plants, Plasmodesmata Perform Many of the Same Functions		Cancer Cells Have an Abnormal Ability to Survive Stress and	
as Gap Junctions	1053	DNA Damage	1099
Selectins Mediate Transient Cell–Cell Adhesions in the		Human Cancer Cells Escape a Built-in Limit to Cell Proliferation	1099
Bloodstream	1054	The Tumor Microenvironment Influences Cancer Development	1100

Cancer Cells Must Survive and Proliferate in a Foreign Environment	1101	Many Cancers May Be Treatable by Enhancing the Immune Response Against the Specific Tumor	1137
Many Properties Typically Contribute to Cancerous Growth	1103	Cancers Evolve Resistance to Therapies	1139
Summary	1103	Combination Therapies May Succeed Where Treatments with One Drug at a Time Fail	1139
CANCER-CRITICAL GENES: HOW THEY ARE FOUND AND WHAT THEY DO	1104	We Now Have the Tools to Devise Combination Therapies Tailored to the Individual Patient	1140
The Identification of Gain-of-Function and Loss-of-Function Cancer Mutations Has Traditionally Required Different Methods	1104	Summary	1141
Retroviruses Can Act as Vectors for Oncogenes That Alter Cell Behavior	1105	Problems	1141
Different Searches for Oncogenes Converged on the Same Gene— <i>Ras</i>	1106	References	1143
Genes Mutated in Cancer Can Be Made Overactive in Many Ways	1106	Chapter 21 Development of Multicellular Organisms	1145
Studies of Rare Hereditary Cancer Syndromes First Identified Tumor Suppressor Genes	1107	OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT	1147
Both Genetic and Epigenetic Mechanisms Can Inactivate Tumor Suppressor Genes	1108	Conserved Mechanisms Establish the Basic Animal Body Plan	1147
Systematic Sequencing of Cancer Cell Genomes Has Transformed Our Understanding of the Disease	1109	The Developmental Potential of Cells Becomes Progressively Restricted	1148
Many Cancers Have an Extraordinarily Disrupted Genome	1111	Cell Memory Underlies Cell Decision-Making	1148
Many Mutations in Tumor Cells are Merely Passengers	1111	Several Model Organisms Have Been Crucial for Understanding Development	1148
About One Percent of the Genes in the Human Genome Are Cancer-Critical	1112	Genes Involved in Cell–Cell Communication and Transcriptional Control Are Especially Important for Animal Development	1149
Disruptions in a Handful of Key Pathways Are Common to Many Cancers	1113	Regulatory DNA Seems Largely Responsible for the Differences Between Animal Species	1149
Mutations in the PI3K/Akt/mTOR Pathway Drive Cancer Cells to Grow	1114	Small Numbers of Conserved Cell–Cell Signaling Pathways Coordinate Spatial Patterning	1150
Mutations in the p53 Pathway Enable Cancer Cells to Survive and Proliferate Despite Stress and DNA Damage	1115	Through Combinatorial Control and Cell Memory, Simple Signals Can Generate Complex Patterns	1150
Genome Instability Takes Different Forms in Different Cancers	1116	Morphogens Are Long-Range Inductive Signals That Exert Graded Effects	1151
Cancers of Specialized Tissues Use Many Different Routes to Target the Common Core Pathways of Cancer	1117	Lateral Inhibition Can Generate Patterns of Different Cell Types	1151
Studies Using Mice Help to Define the Functions of Cancer-Critical Genes	1117	Short-Range Activation and Long-Range Inhibition Can Generate Complex Cellular Patterns	1152
Cancers Become More and More Heterogeneous as They Progress	1118	Asymmetric Cell Division Can Also Generate Diversity	1153
The Changes in Tumor Cells That Lead to Metastasis Are Still Largely a Mystery	1119	Initial Patterns Are Established in Small Fields of Cells and Refined by Sequential Induction as the Embryo Grows	1153
A Small Population of Cancer Stem Cells May Maintain Many Tumors	1120	Developmental Biology Provides Insights into Disease and Tissue Maintenance	1154
The Cancer Stem-Cell Phenomenon Adds to the Difficulty of Curing Cancer	1121	Summary	1154
Colorectal Cancers Evolve Slowly Via a Succession of Visible Changes	1122	MECHANISMS OF PATTERN FORMATION	1155
A Few Key Genetic Lesions Are Common to a Large Fraction of Colorectal Cancers	1123	Different Animals Use Different Mechanisms to Establish Their Primary Axes of Polarization	1155
Some Colorectal Cancers Have Defects in DNA Mismatch Repair	1124	Studies in <i>Drosophila</i> Have Revealed the Genetic Control Mechanisms Underlying Development	1157
The Steps of Tumor Progression Can Often Be Correlated with Specific Mutations	1125	Egg-Polarity Genes Encode Macromolecules Deposited in the Egg to Organize the Axes of the Early <i>Drosophila</i> Embryo	1157
Summary	1126	Three Groups of Genes Control <i>Drosophila</i> Segmentation Along the A-P Axis	1159
CANCER PREVENTION AND TREATMENT: PRESENT AND FUTURE	1127	A Hierarchy of Gene Regulatory Interactions Subdivides the <i>Drosophila</i> Embryo	1159
Epidemiology Reveals That Many Cases of Cancer Are Preventable	1127	Egg-Polarity, Gap, and Pair-Rule Genes Create a Transient Pattern That Is Remembered by Segment-Polarity and <i>Hox</i> Genes	1160
Sensitive Assays Can Detect Those Cancer-Causing Agents that Damage DNA	1127	<i>Hox</i> Genes Permanently Pattern the A-P Axis	1162
Fifty Percent of Cancers Could Be Prevented by Changes in Lifestyle	1128	<i>Hox</i> Proteins Give Each Segment Its Individuality	1163
Viruses and Other Infections Contribute to a Significant Proportion of Human Cancers	1129	<i>Hox</i> Genes Are Expressed According to Their Order in the <i>Hox</i> Complex	1163
Cancers of the Uterine Cervix Can Be Prevented by Vaccination Against Human Papillomavirus	1131	Trithorax and Polycomb Group Proteins Enable the <i>Hox</i> Complexes to Maintain a Permanent Record of Positional Information	1164
Infectious Agents Can Cause Cancer in a Variety of Ways	1132	The D-V Signaling Genes Create a Gradient of the Transcription Regulator Dorsal	1164
The Search for Cancer Cures Is Difficult but Not Hopeless	1132	A Hierarchy of Inductive Interactions Subdivides the Vertebrate Embryo	1166
Traditional Therapies Exploit the Genetic Instability and Loss of Cell-Cycle Checkpoint Responses in Cancer Cells	1132	A Competition Between Secreted Signaling Proteins Patterns the Vertebrate Embryo	1168
New Drugs Can Kill Cancer Cells Selectively by Targeting Specific Mutations	1133	The Insect Dorsoventral Axis Corresponds to the Vertebrate Ventral-Dorsal Axis	1169
PARP Inhibitors Kill Cancer Cells That Have Defects in <i>Brca1</i> or <i>Brca2</i> Genes	1133	<i>Hox</i> Genes Control the Vertebrate A-P Axis	1169
Small Molecules Can Be Designed to Inhibit Specific Oncogenic Proteins	1135	Some Transcription Regulators Can Activate a Program That Defines a Cell Type or Creates an Entire Organ	1170
		Notch-Mediated Lateral Inhibition Refines Cellular Spacing Patterns	1171

Asymmetric Cell Divisions Make Sister Cells Different	1173	Ephrin–Eph Signaling Drives Segregation of the Different Gut Cell Types	1224
Differences in Regulatory DNA Explain Morphological Differences Summary	1174 1175	Notch Signaling Controls Gut Cell Diversification and Helps Maintain the Stem-Cell State	1224
DEVELOPMENTAL TIMING	1176	The Epidermal Stem-Cell System Maintains a Self-Renewing Waterproof Barrier	1225
Molecular Lifetimes Play a Critical Part in Developmental Timing	1176	Tissue Renewal That Does Not Depend on Stem Cells: Insulin-Secreting Cells in the Pancreas and Hepatocytes in the Liver	1226
A Gene-Expression Oscillator Acts as a Clock to Control Vertebrate Segmentation	1177	Some Tissues Lack Stem Cells and Are Not Renewable Summary	1227 1227
Intracellular Developmental Programs Can Help Determine the Time-Course of a Cell’s Development	1179	FIBROBLASTS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATIONS: THE CONNECTIVE-TISSUE CELL FAMILY	1228
Cells Rarely Count Cell Divisions to Time Their Development	1180	Fibroblasts Change Their Character in Response to Chemical and Physical Signals	1228
MicroRNAs Often Regulate Developmental Transitions	1180	Osteoblasts Make Bone Matrix	1229
Hormonal Signals Coordinate the Timing of Developmental Transitions	1182	Bone Is Continually Remodeled by the Cells Within It	1230
Environmental Cues Determine the Time of Flowering Summary	1182 1184	Osteoclasts Are Controlled by Signals From Osteoblasts Summary	1232 1232
MORPHOGENESIS	1184	GENESIS AND REGENERATION OF SKELETAL MUSCLE	1232
Cell Migration Is Guided by Cues in the Cell’s Environment	1185	Myoblasts Fuse to Form New Skeletal Muscle Fibers	1233
The Distribution of Migrant Cells Depends on Survival Factors	1186	Some Myoblasts Persist as Quiescent Stem Cells in the Adult Summary	1234 1235
Changing Patterns of Cell Adhesion Molecules Force Cells Into New Arrangements	1187	BLOOD VESSELS, LYMPHATICS, AND ENDOTHELIAL CELLS	1235
Repulsive Interactions Help Maintain Tissue Boundaries	1188	Endothelial Cells Line All Blood Vessels and Lymphatics	1235
Groups of Similar Cells Can Perform Dramatic Collective Rearrangements	1188	Endothelial Tip Cells Pioneer Angiogenesis	1236
Planar Cell Polarity Helps Orient Cell Structure and Movement in Developing Epithelia	1189	Tissues Requiring a Blood Supply Release VEGF	1237
Interactions Between an Epithelium and Mesenchyme Generate Branching Tubular Structures	1190	Signals from Endothelial Cells Control Recruitment of Pericytes and Smooth Muscle Cells to Form the Vessel Wall Summary	1238 1238
An Epithelium Can Bend During Development to Form a Tube or Vesicle Summary	1192 1193	A HIERARCHICAL STEM-CELL SYSTEM: BLOOD CELL FORMATION	1239
GROWTH	1193	Red Blood Cells Are All Alike; White Blood Cells Can Be Grouped in Three Main Classes	1239
The Proliferation, Death, and Size of Cells Determine Organism Size	1194	The Production of Each Type of Blood Cell in the Bone Marrow Is Individually Controlled	1240
Animals and Organs Can Assess and Regulate Total Cell Mass	1194	Bone Marrow Contains Multipotent Hematopoietic Stem Cells, Able to Give Rise to All Classes of Blood Cells	1242
Extracellular Signals Stimulate or Inhibit Growth Summary	1196 1197	Commitment Is a Stepwise Process	1243
NEURAL DEVELOPMENT	1198	Divisions of Committed Progenitor Cells Amplify the Number of Specialized Blood Cells	1243
Neurons Are Assigned Different Characters According to the Time and Place of Their Birth	1199	Stem Cells Depend on Contact Signals From Stromal Cells	1244
The Growth Cone Pilots Axons Along Specific Routes Toward Their Targets	1201	Factors That Regulate Hematopoiesis Can Be Analyzed in Culture	1244
A Variety of Extracellular Cues Guide Axons to their Targets	1202	Erythropoiesis Depends on the Hormone Erythropoietin	1244
The Formation of Orderly Neural Maps Depends on Neuronal Specificity	1204	Multiple CSFs Influence Neutrophil and Macrophage Production	1245
Both Dendrites and Axonal Branches From the Same Neuron Avoid One Another	1206	The Behavior of a Hematopoietic Cell Depends Partly on Chance	1245
Target Tissues Release Neurotrophic Factors That Control Nerve Cell Growth and Survival	1208	Regulation of Cell Survival Is as Important as Regulation of Cell Proliferation Summary	1246 1247
Formation of Synapses Depends on Two-Way Communication Between Neurons and Their Target Cells	1209	REGENERATION AND REPAIR	1247
Synaptic Pruning Depends on Electrical Activity and Synaptic Signaling	1211	Planarian Worms Contain Stem Cells That Can Regenerate a Whole New Body	1247
Neurons That Fire Together Wire Together Summary	1211 1213	Some Vertebrates Can Regenerate Entire Organs	1248
Problems	1213	Stem Cells Can Be Used Artificially to Replace Cells That Are Diseased or Lost: Therapy for Blood and Epidermis	1249
References	1215	Neural Stem Cells Can Be Manipulated in Culture and Used to Repopulate the Central Nervous System Summary	1250 1251
Chapter 22 Stem Cells and Tissue Renewal	1217	CELL REPROGRAMMING AND PLURIPOTENT STEM CELLS	1251
STEM CELLS AND RENEWAL IN EPITHELIAL TISSUES	1217	Nuclei Can Be Reprogrammed by Transplantation into Foreign Cytoplasm	1252
The Lining of the Small Intestine Is Continually Renewed Through Cell Proliferation in the Crypts	1218	Reprogramming of a Transplanted Nucleus Involves Drastic Epigenetic Changes	1252
Stem Cells of the Small Intestine Lie at or Near the Base of Each Crypt	1219	Embryonic Stem (ES) Cells Can Generate Any Part of the Body	1253
The Two Daughters of a Stem Cell Face a Choice	1219	A Core Set of Transcription Regulators Defines and Maintains the ES Cell State	1254
Wnt Signaling Maintains the Gut Stem-Cell Compartment	1220	Fibroblasts Can Be Reprogrammed to Create Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPS Cells)	1254
Stem Cells at the Crypt Base Are Multipotent, Giving Rise to the Full Range of Differentiated Intestinal Cell Types	1220	Reprogramming Involves a Massive Upheaval of the Gene Control System	1255
The Two Daughters of a Stem Cell Do Not Always Have to Become Different	1222	An Experimental Manipulation of Factors that Modify Chromatin Can Increase Reprogramming Efficiencies	1256
Paneth Cells Create the Stem-Cell Niche	1222	ES and iPS Cells Can Be Guided to Generate Specific Adult Cell Types and Even Whole Organs	1256
A Single <i>Lgr5</i> -expressing Cell in Culture Can Generate an Entire Organized Crypt-Villus System	1223		

Cells of One Specialized Type Can Be Forced to Transdifferentiate Directly Into Another	1258	OVERVIEW OF THE ADAPTIVE IMMUNE SYSTEM	1307
ES and iPS Cells Are Useful for Drug Discovery and Analysis of Disease	1258	B Cells Develop in the Bone Marrow, T Cells in the Thymus	1308
Summary	1260	Immunological Memory Depends On Both Clonal Expansion and Lymphocyte Differentiation	1309
Problems	1260	Lymphocytes Continuously Recirculate Through Peripheral Lymphoid Organs	1311
References	1262	Immunological Self-Tolerance Ensures That B and T Cells Do Not Attack Normal Host Cells and Molecules	1313
Chapter 23 Pathogens and Infection	1263	Summary	1315
INTRODUCTION TO PATHOGENS AND THE HUMAN MICROBIOTA	1263	B CELLS AND IMMUNOGLOBULINS	1315
The Human Microbiota Is a Complex Ecological System That Is Important for Our Development and Health	1264	B Cells Make Immunoglobulins (Igs) as Both Cell-Surface Antigen Receptors and Secreted Antibodies	1315
Pathogens Interact with Their Hosts in Different Ways	1264	Mammals Make Five Classes of Igs	1316
Pathogens Can Contribute to Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, and Other Chronic Illnesses	1265	Ig Light and Heavy Chains Consist of Constant and Variable Regions	1318
Pathogens Can Be Viruses, Bacteria, or Eukaryotes	1266	Ig Genes Are Assembled From Separate Gene Segments During B Cell Development	1319
Bacteria Are Diverse and Occupy a Remarkable Variety of Ecological Niches	1267	Antigen-Driven Somatic Hypermutation Fine-Tunes Antibody Responses	1321
Bacterial Pathogens Carry Specialized Virulence Genes	1268	B Cells Can Switch the Class of Ig They Make	1322
Bacterial Virulence Genes Encode Effector Proteins and Secretion Systems to Deliver Effector Proteins to Host Cells	1269	Summary	1323
Fungal and Protozoan Parasites Have Complex Life Cycles Involving Multiple Forms	1271	T CELLS AND MHC PROTEINS	1324
All Aspects of Viral Propagation Depend on Host Cell Machinery	1273	T Cell Receptors (TCRs) Are Ig-like Heterodimers	1325
Summary	1275	Activated Dendritic Cells Activate Naïve T Cells	1326
CELL BIOLOGY OF INFECTION	1276	T Cells Recognize Foreign Peptides Bound to MHC Proteins	1326
Pathogens Overcome Epithelial Barriers to Infect the Host	1276	MHC Proteins Are the Most Polymorphic Human Proteins Known	1330
Pathogens That Colonize an Epithelium Must Overcome Its Protective Mechanisms	1276	CD4 and CD8 Co-receptors on T Cells Bind to Invariant Parts of MHC Proteins	1331
Extracellular Pathogens Disturb Host Cells Without Entering Them	1277	Developing Thymocytes Undergo Negative and Positive Selection	1332
Intracellular Pathogens Have Mechanisms for Both Entering and Leaving Host Cells	1278	Cytotoxic T Cells Induce Infected Target Cells to Kill Themselves	1333
Viruses Bind to Virus Receptors at the Host Cell Surface	1279	Effector Helper T Cells Help Activate Other Cells of the Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems	1335
Viruses Enter Host Cells by Membrane Fusion, Pore Formation, or Membrane Disruption	1280	Naïve Helper T Cells Can Differentiate Into Different Types of Effector T Cells	1335
Bacteria Enter Host Cells by Phagocytosis	1281	Both T and B Cells Require Multiple Extracellular Signals For Activation	1336
Intracellular Eukaryotic Parasites Actively Invade Host Cells	1282	Many Cell-Surface Proteins Belong to the Ig Superfamily	1338
Some Intracellular Pathogens Escape from the Phagosome into the Cytosol	1284	Summary	1339
Many Pathogens Alter Membrane Traffic in the Host Cell to Survive and Replicate	1284	Problems	1340
Viruses and Bacteria Use the Host-Cell Cytoskeleton for Intracellular Movement	1286	References	1342
Viruses Can Take Over the Metabolism of the Host Cell	1288	Glossary	G:1
Pathogens Can Evolve Rapidly by Antigenic Variation	1289	Index	I:1
Error-Prone Replication Dominates Viral Evolution	1291	Tables	T:1
Drug-Resistant Pathogens Are a Growing Problem	1291		
Summary	1294		
Problems	1294		
References	1296		
Chapter 24 The Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems	1297		
THE INNATE IMMUNE SYSTEM	1298		
Epithelial Surfaces Serve as Barriers to Infection	1298		
Pattern Recognition Receptors (PRRs) Recognize Conserved Features of Pathogens	1298		
There Are Multiple Classes of PRRs	1299		
Activated PRRs Trigger an Inflammatory Response at Sites of Infection	1300		
Phagocytic Cells Seek, Engulf, and Destroy Pathogens	1301		
Complement Activation Targets Pathogens for Phagocytosis or Lysis	1302		
Virus-Infected Cells Take Drastic Measures to Prevent Viral Replication	1303		
Natural Killer Cells Induce Virus-Infected Cells to Kill Themselves	1304		
Dendritic Cells Provide the Link Between the Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems	1305		
Summary	1305		



PART

I

II

III

IV

V

INTRODUCTION TO THE CELL

CHAPTER

1

Cells and Genomes

The surface of our planet is populated by living things—curious, intricately organized chemical factories that take in matter from their surroundings and use these raw materials to generate copies of themselves. These living organisms appear extraordinarily diverse. What could be more different than a tiger and a piece of seaweed, or a bacterium and a tree? Yet our ancestors, knowing nothing of cells or DNA, saw that all these things had something in common. They called that something “life,” marveled at it, struggled to define it, and despaired of explaining what it was or how it worked in terms that relate to nonliving matter.

The discoveries of the past century have not diminished the marvel—quite the contrary. But they have removed the central mystery regarding the nature of life. We can now see that all living things are made of cells: small, membrane-enclosed units filled with a concentrated aqueous solution of chemicals and endowed with the extraordinary ability to create copies of themselves by growing and then dividing in two.

Because cells are the fundamental units of life, it is to *cell biology*—the study of the structure, function, and behavior of cells—that we must look for answers to the questions of what life is and how it works. With a deeper understanding of cells and their evolution, we can begin to tackle the grand historical problems of life on Earth: its mysterious origins, its stunning diversity, and its invasion of every conceivable habitat. Indeed, as emphasized long ago by the pioneering cell biologist E. B. Wilson, “the key to every biological problem must finally be sought in the cell; for every living organism is, or at some time has been, a cell.”

Despite their apparent diversity, living things are fundamentally similar inside. The whole of biology is thus a counterpoint between two themes: astonishing variety in individual particulars; astonishing constancy in fundamental mechanisms. In this first chapter, we begin by outlining the universal features common to all life on our planet. We then survey, briefly, the diversity of cells. And we see how, thanks to the common molecular code in which the specifications for all living organisms are written, it is possible to read, measure, and decipher these specifications to help us achieve a coherent understanding of all the forms of life, from the smallest to the greatest.

IN THIS CHAPTER

THE UNIVERSAL FEATURES OF CELLS ON EARTH

THE DIVERSITY OF GENOMES AND THE TREE OF LIFE

GENETIC INFORMATION IN EUKARYOTES

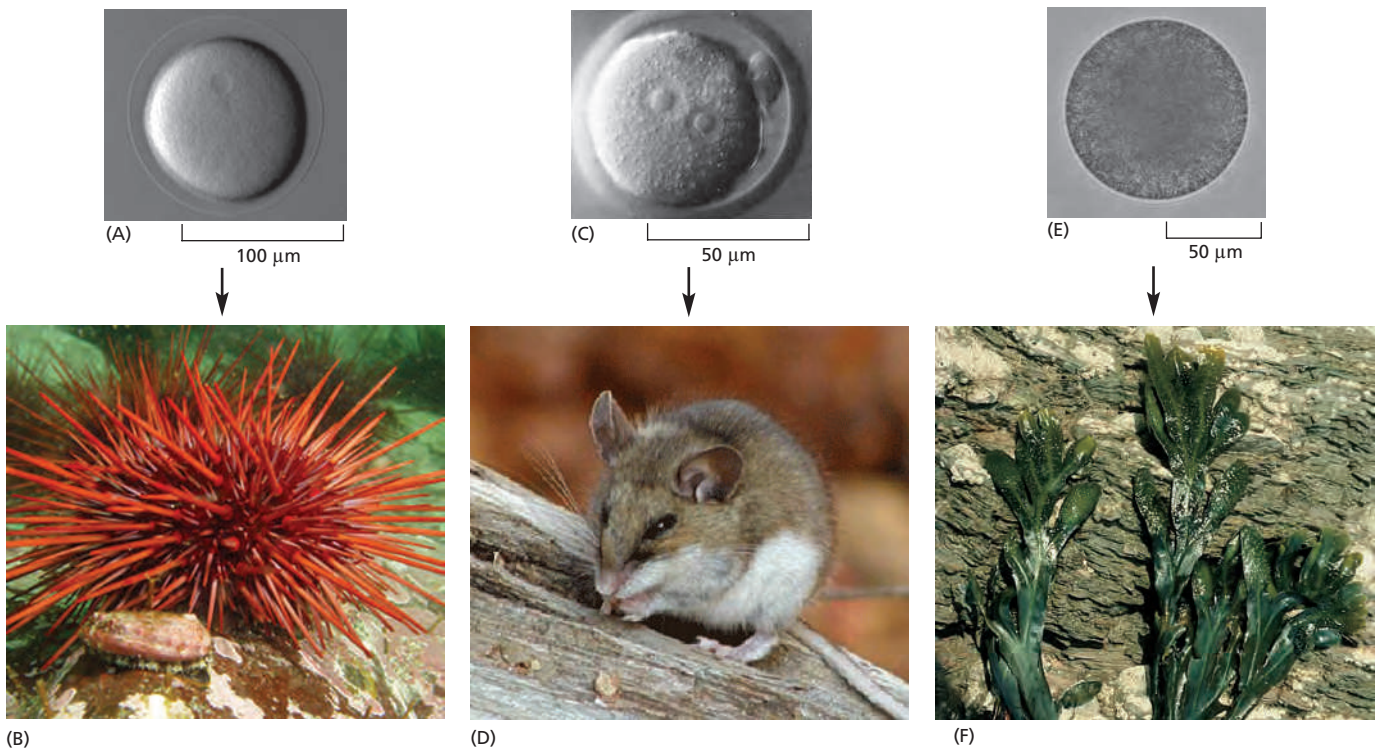


Figure 1-1 The hereditary information in the fertilized egg cell determines the nature of the whole multicellular organism. Although their starting cells look superficially similar, as indicated: a sea urchin egg gives rise to a sea urchin (A and B). A mouse egg gives rise to a mouse (C and D). An egg of the seaweed *Fucus* gives rise to a *Fucus* seaweed (E and F). (A, courtesy of David McClay; B, courtesy of M. Gibbs, Oxford Scientific Films; C, courtesy of Patricia Calarco, from G. Martin, *Science* 209:768–776, 1980. With permission from AAAS; D, courtesy of O. Newman, Oxford Scientific Films; E and F, courtesy of Colin Brownlee.)

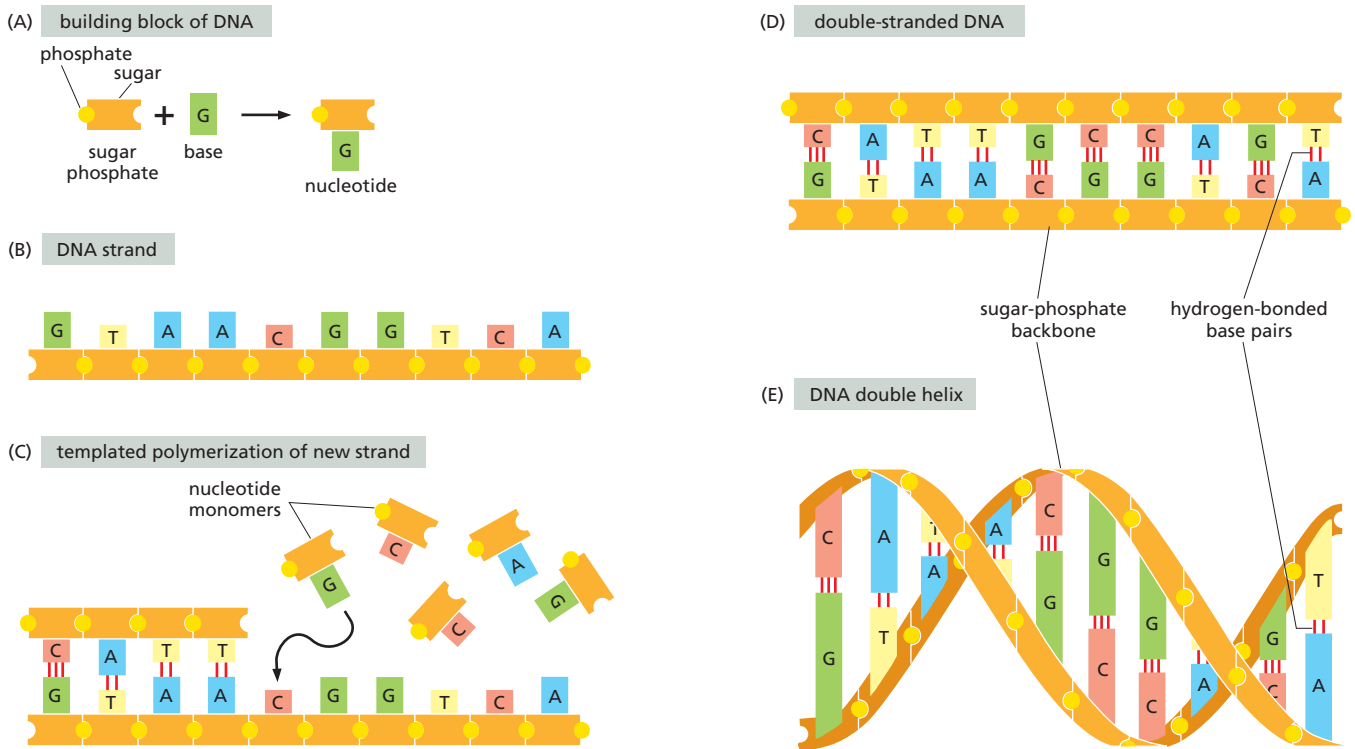
THE UNIVERSAL FEATURES OF CELLS ON EARTH

It is estimated that there are more than 10 million—perhaps 100 million—living species on Earth today. Each species is different, and each reproduces itself faithfully, yielding progeny that belong to the same species: the parent organism hands down information specifying, in extraordinary detail, the characteristics that the offspring shall have. This phenomenon of *heredity* is central to the definition of life: it distinguishes life from other processes, such as the growth of a crystal, or the burning of a candle, or the formation of waves on water, in which orderly structures are generated but without the same type of link between the peculiarities of parents and the peculiarities of offspring. Like the candle flame, the living organism must consume free energy to create and maintain its organization. But life employs the free energy to drive a hugely complex system of chemical processes that are specified by hereditary information.

Most living organisms are single cells. Others, such as ourselves, are vast multicellular cities in which groups of cells perform specialized functions linked by intricate systems of communication. But even for the aggregate of more than 10^{13} cells that form a human body, the whole organism has been generated by cell divisions from a single cell. The single cell, therefore, is the vehicle for all of the hereditary information that defines each species (**Figure 1-1**). This cell includes the machinery to gather raw materials from the environment and to construct from them a new cell in its own image, complete with a new copy of its hereditary information. Each and every cell is truly amazing.

All Cells Store Their Hereditary Information in the Same Linear Chemical Code: DNA

Computers have made us familiar with the concept of information as a measurable quantity—a million bytes (to record a few hundred pages of text or an image from a digital camera), 600 million bytes for the music on a CD, and so on. Computers have also made us well aware that the same information can be recorded in many different physical forms: the discs and tapes that we used 20 years ago for our electronic archives have become unreadable on present-day machines. Living



cells, like computers, store information, and it is estimated that they have been evolving and diversifying for over 3.5 billion years. It is scarcely to be expected that they would all store their information in the same form, or that the archives of one type of cell should be readable by the information-handling machinery of another. And yet it is so. All living cells on Earth store their hereditary information in the form of double-stranded molecules of DNA—long, unbranched, paired *polymer* chains, formed always of the same four types of *monomers*. These monomers, chemical compounds known as nucleotides, have nicknames drawn from a four-letter alphabet—A, T, C, G—and they are strung together in a long linear sequence that encodes the genetic information, just as the sequence of 1s and 0s encodes the information in a computer file. We can take a piece of DNA from a human cell and insert it into a bacterium, or a piece of bacterial DNA and insert it into a human cell, and the information will be successfully read, interpreted, and copied. Using chemical methods, scientists have learned how to read out the complete sequence of monomers in any DNA molecule—extending for many millions of nucleotides—and thereby decipher all of the hereditary information that each organism contains.

All Cells Replicate Their Hereditary Information by Templated Polymerization

The mechanisms that make life possible depend on the structure of the double-stranded DNA molecule. Each monomer in a single DNA strand—that is, each **nucleotide**—consists of two parts: a sugar (deoxyribose) with a phosphate group attached to it, and a *base*, which may be either adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C), or thymine (T) (Figure 1-2). Each sugar is linked to the next via the phosphate group, creating a polymer chain composed of a repetitive sugar-phosphate backbone with a series of bases protruding from it. The DNA polymer is extended by adding monomers at one end. For a single isolated strand, these monomers can, in principle, be added in any order, because each one links to the next in the same way, through the part of the molecule that is the same for all of them. In the living cell, however, DNA is not synthesized as a free strand in isolation, but on a template formed by a preexisting DNA strand. The bases protruding from the

Figure 1-2 DNA and its building blocks. (A) DNA is made from simple subunits, called nucleotides, each consisting of a sugar-phosphate molecule with a nitrogen-containing side group, or base, attached to it. The bases are of four types (adenine, guanine, cytosine, and thymine), corresponding to four distinct nucleotides, labeled A, G, C, and T. (B) A single strand of DNA consists of nucleotides joined together by sugar-phosphate linkages. Note that the individual sugar-phosphate units are asymmetric, giving the backbone of the strand a definite directionality, or polarity. This directionality guides the molecular processes by which the information in DNA is interpreted and copied in cells: the information is always “read” in a consistent order, just as written English text is read from left to right. (C) Through templat polymerization, the sequence of nucleotides in an existing DNA strand controls the sequence in which nucleotides are joined together in a new DNA strand; T in one strand pairs with A in the other, and G in one strand with C in the other. The new strand has a nucleotide sequence *complementary* to that of the old strand, and a backbone with opposite directionality: corresponding to the GTAA... of the original strand, it has ...TTAC. (D) A normal DNA molecule consists of two such complementary strands. The nucleotides within each strand are linked by strong (covalent) chemical bonds; the complementary nucleotides on opposite strands are held together more weakly, by hydrogen bonds. (E) The two strands twist around each other to form a double helix—a robust structure that can accommodate any sequence of nucleotides without altering its basic structure (see Movie 4.1).

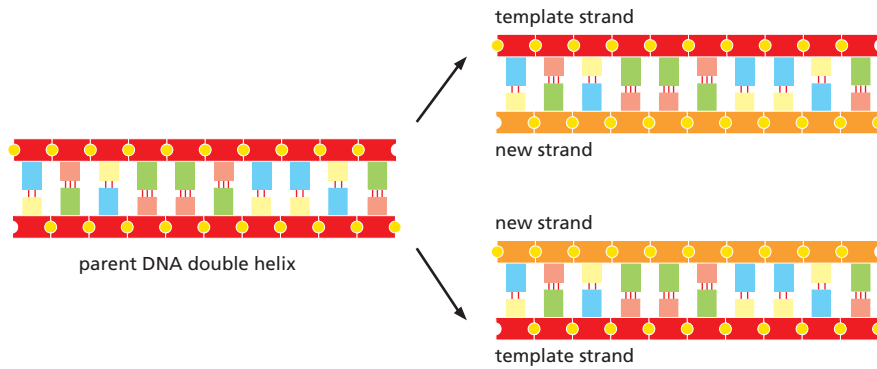


Figure 1-3 The copying of genetic information by DNA replication. In this process, the two strands of a DNA double helix are pulled apart, and each serves as a template for synthesis of a new complementary strand.

existing strand bind to bases of the strand being synthesized, according to a strict rule defined by the complementary structures of the bases: A binds to T, and C binds to G. This base-pairing holds fresh monomers in place and thereby controls the selection of which one of the four monomers shall be added to the growing strand next. In this way, a double-stranded structure is created, consisting of two exactly complementary sequences of As, Cs, Ts, and Gs. The two strands twist around each other, forming a DNA double helix (Figure 1-2E).

The bonds between the base pairs are weak compared with the sugar-phosphate links, and this allows the two DNA strands to be pulled apart without breakage of their backbones. Each strand then can serve as a template, in the way just described, for the synthesis of a fresh DNA strand complementary to itself—a fresh copy, that is, of the hereditary information (Figure 1-3). In different types of cells, this process of **DNA replication** occurs at different rates, with different controls to start it or stop it, and different auxiliary molecules to help it along. But the basics are universal: DNA is the information store for heredity, and *templated polymerization* is the way in which this information is copied throughout the living world.

All Cells Transcribe Portions of Their Hereditary Information into the Same Intermediary Form: RNA

To carry out its information-bearing function, DNA must do more than copy itself. It must also *express* its information, by letting the information guide the synthesis of other molecules in the cell. This expression occurs by a mechanism that is the same in all living organisms, leading first and foremost to the production of two other key classes of polymers: RNAs and proteins. The process (discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7) begins with a templated polymerization called **transcription**, in which segments of the DNA sequence are used as templates for the synthesis of shorter molecules of the closely related polymer **ribonucleic acid**, or **RNA**. Later, in the more complex process of **translation**, many of these RNA molecules direct the synthesis of polymers of a radically different chemical class—the *proteins* (Figure 1-4).

In RNA, the backbone is formed of a slightly different sugar from that of DNA—ribose instead of deoxyribose—and one of the four bases is slightly different—uracil (U) in place of thymine (T). But the other three bases—A, C, and G—are the same, and all four bases pair with their complementary counterparts in DNA—the A, U, C, and G of RNA with the T, A, G, and C of DNA. During transcription, the RNA monomers are lined up and selected for polymerization on a template strand of DNA, just as DNA monomers are selected during replication. The outcome is a polymer molecule whose sequence of nucleotides faithfully represents a portion of the cell's genetic information, even though it is written in a slightly different alphabet—consisting of RNA monomers instead of DNA monomers.

The same segment of DNA can be used repeatedly to guide the synthesis of many identical RNA molecules. Thus, whereas the cell's archive of genetic information in the form of DNA is fixed and sacrosanct, these *RNA transcripts* are

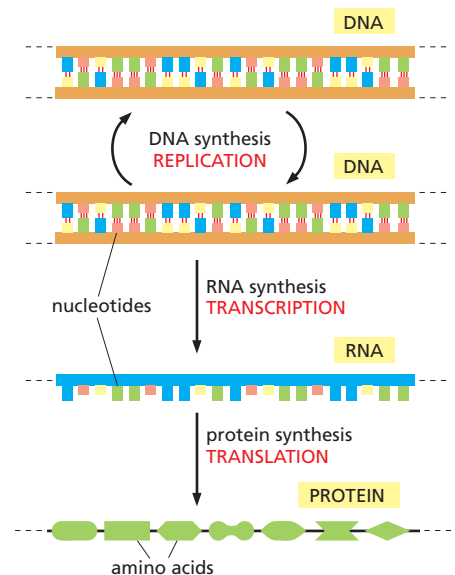


Figure 1-4 From DNA to protein.

Genetic information is read out and put to use through a two-step process. First, in *transcription*, segments of the DNA sequence are used to guide the synthesis of molecules of RNA. Then, in *translation*, the RNA molecules are used to guide the synthesis of molecules of protein.

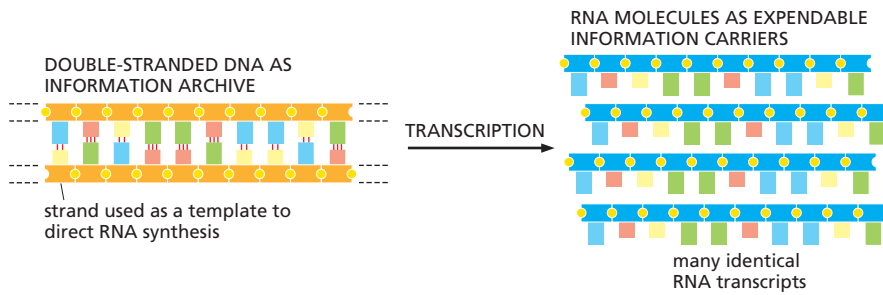


Figure 1–5 How genetic information is broadcast for use inside the cell.

Each cell contains a fixed set of DNA molecules—its archive of genetic information. A given segment of this DNA guides the synthesis of many identical RNA transcripts, which serve as working copies of the information stored in the archive. Many different sets of RNA molecules can be made by transcribing different parts of a cell's DNA sequences, allowing different types of cells to use the same information store differently.

mass-produced and disposable (**Figure 1–5**). As we shall see, these transcripts function as intermediates in the transfer of genetic information. Most notably, they serve as **messenger RNA (mRNA)** molecules that guide the synthesis of proteins according to the genetic instructions stored in the DNA.

RNA molecules have distinctive structures that can also give them other specialized chemical capabilities. Being single-stranded, their backbone is flexible, so that the polymer chain can bend back on itself to allow one part of the molecule to form weak bonds with another part of the same molecule. This occurs when segments of the sequence are locally complementary: a ...GGGG... segment, for example, will tend to associate with a ...CCCC... segment. These types of internal associations can cause an RNA chain to fold up into a specific shape that is dictated by its sequence (**Figure 1–6**). The shape of the RNA molecule, in turn, may enable it to recognize other molecules by binding to them selectively—and even, in certain cases, to catalyze chemical changes in the molecules that are bound. In fact, some chemical reactions catalyzed by RNA molecules are crucial for several of the most ancient and fundamental processes in living cells, and it has been suggested that an extensive catalysis by RNA played a central part in the early evolution of life (discussed in Chapter 6).

All Cells Use Proteins as Catalysts

Protein molecules, like DNA and RNA molecules, are long unbranched polymer chains, formed by stringing together monomeric building blocks drawn from a standard repertoire that is the same for all living cells. Like DNA and RNA, proteins carry information in the form of a linear sequence of symbols, in the same way as a human message written in an alphabetic script. There are many different protein molecules in each cell, and—leaving out the water—they form most of the cell's mass.

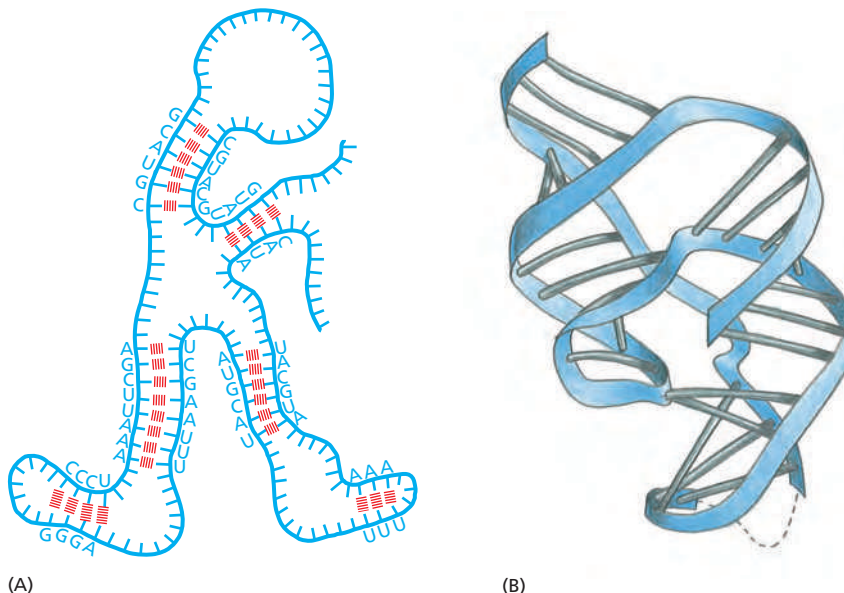


Figure 1–6 The conformation of an RNA molecule. (A) Nucleotide pairing between different regions of the same RNA polymer chain causes the molecule to adopt a distinctive shape. (B) The three-dimensional structure of an actual RNA molecule produced by hepatitis delta virus; this RNA can catalyze RNA strand cleavage. The *blue* ribbon represents the sugar-phosphate backbone and the bars represent base pairs (see Movie 6.1). (B, based on A.R. Ferré-D'Amaré, K. Zhou, and J.A. Doudna, *Nature* 395:567–574, 1998. With permission from Macmillan Publishers Ltd.)

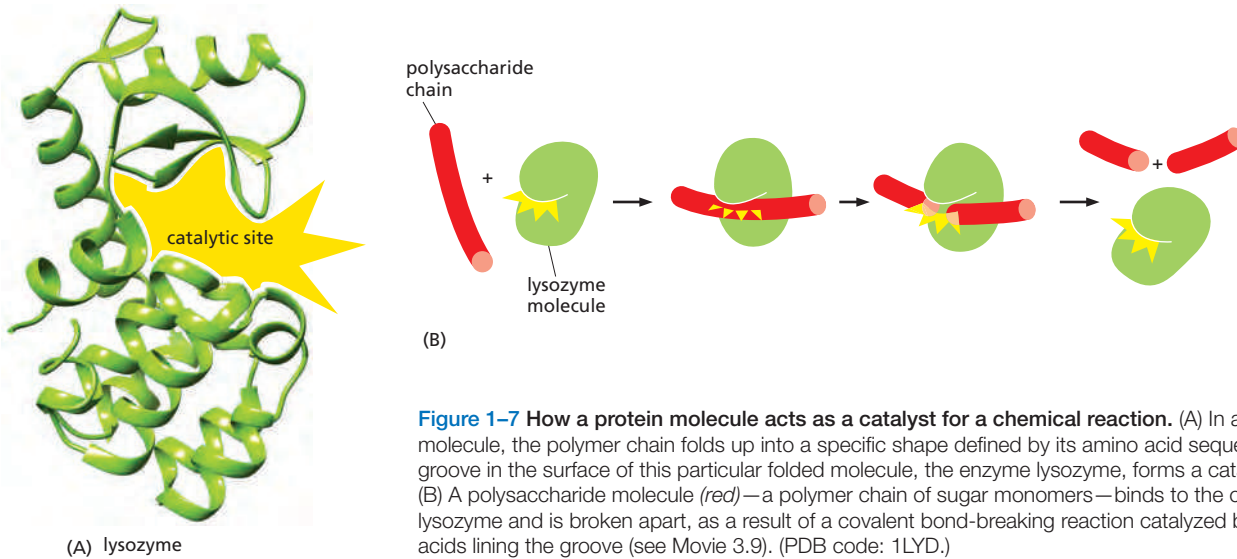


Figure 1-7 How a protein molecule acts as a catalyst for a chemical reaction. (A) In a protein molecule, the polymer chain folds up into a specific shape defined by its amino acid sequence. A groove in the surface of this particular folded molecule, the enzyme lysozyme, forms a catalytic site. (B) A polysaccharide molecule (*red*)—a polymer chain of sugar monomers—binds to the catalytic site of lysozyme and is broken apart, as a result of a covalent bond-breaking reaction catalyzed by the amino acids lining the groove (see Movie 3.9). (PDB code: 1LYD.)

The monomers of protein, the **amino acids**, are quite different from those of DNA and RNA, and there are 20 types instead of 4. Each amino acid is built around the same core structure through which it can be linked in a standard way to any other amino acid in the set; attached to this core is a side group that gives each amino acid a distinctive chemical character. Each of the protein molecules is a **polypeptide**, created by joining its amino acids in a particular sequence. Through billions of years of evolution, this sequence has been selected to give the protein a useful function. Thus, by folding into a precise three-dimensional form with reactive sites on its surface (**Figure 1-7A**), these amino-acid polymers can bind with high specificity to other molecules and can act as **enzymes** to catalyze reactions that make or break covalent bonds. In this way they direct the vast majority of chemical processes in the cell (**Figure 1-7B**).

Proteins have many other functions as well—maintaining structures, generating movements, sensing signals, and so on—each protein molecule performing a specific function according to its own genetically specified sequence of amino acids. Proteins, above all, are the main molecules that put the cell's genetic information into action.

Thus, polynucleotides specify the amino acid sequences of proteins. Proteins, in turn, catalyze many chemical reactions, including those by which new DNA molecules are synthesized. From the most fundamental point of view, a living cell is a self-replicating collection of catalysts that takes in food, processes this food to derive both the building blocks and energy needed to make more catalysts, and discards the materials left over as waste (**Figure 1-8A**). A feedback loop that connects proteins and polynucleotides forms the basis for this autocatalytic, self-reproducing behavior of living organisms (**Figure 1-8B**).

All Cells Translate RNA into Protein in the Same Way

How the information in DNA specifies the production of proteins was a complete mystery in the 1950s when the double-stranded structure of DNA was first revealed as the basis of heredity. But in the intervening years, scientists have discovered the elegant mechanisms involved. The translation of genetic information from the 4-letter alphabet of polynucleotides into the 20-letter alphabet of proteins is a complex process. The rules of this translation seem in some respects neat and rational but in other respects strangely arbitrary, given that they are (with minor exceptions) identical in all living things. These arbitrary features, it is thought, reflect frozen accidents in the early history of life. They stem from the chance properties of the earliest organisms that were passed on by heredity and have become so deeply embedded in the constitution of all living cells that they cannot be changed without disastrous effects.

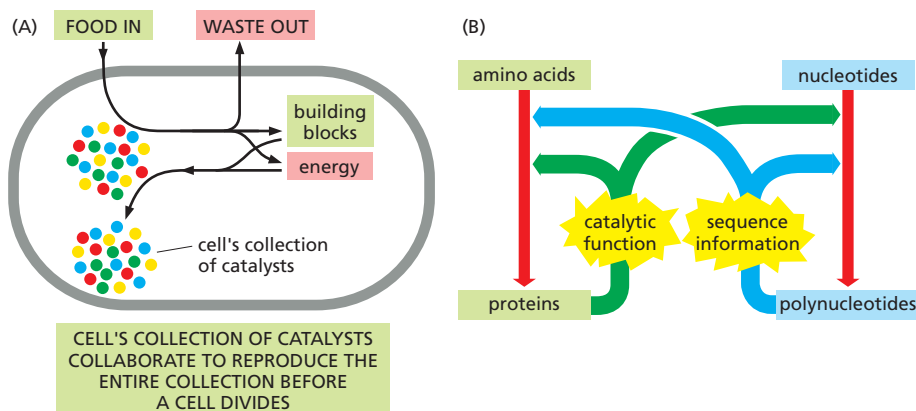


Figure 1–8 Life as an autocatalytic process. (A) The cell as a self-replicating collection of catalysts. (B) Polynucleotides (the nucleic acids DNA and RNA, which are nucleotide polymers) provide the sequence information, while proteins (amino acid polymers) provide most of the catalytic functions that serve—through a complex set of chemical reactions—to bring about the synthesis of more polynucleotides and proteins of the same types.

It turns out that the information in the sequence of a messenger RNA molecule is read out in groups of three nucleotides at a time: each triplet of nucleotides, or *codon*, specifies (codes for) a single amino acid in a corresponding protein. Since the number of distinct triplets that can be formed from four nucleotides is 4^3 , there are 64 possible codons, all of which occur in nature. However, there are only 20 naturally occurring amino acids. That means there are necessarily many cases in which several codons correspond to the same amino acid. This *genetic code* is read out by a special class of small RNA molecules, the *transfer RNAs* (*tRNAs*). Each type of tRNA becomes attached at one end to a specific amino acid, and displays at its other end a specific sequence of three nucleotides—an *anticodon*—that enables it to recognize, through base-pairing, a particular codon or subset of codons in mRNA. The intricate chemistry that enables these tRNAs to translate a specific sequence of A, C, G, and U nucleotides in an mRNA molecule into a specific sequence of amino acids in a protein molecule occurs on the *ribosome*, a large multimolecular machine composed of both protein and *ribosomal RNA*. All of these processes are described in detail in Chapter 6.

Each Protein Is Encoded by a Specific Gene

DNA molecules as a rule are very large, containing the specifications for thousands of proteins. Special sequences in the DNA serve as punctuation, defining where the information for each protein begins and ends. And individual segments of the long DNA sequence are transcribed into separate mRNA molecules, coding for different proteins. Each such DNA segment represents one **gene**. A complication is that RNA molecules transcribed from the same DNA segment can often be processed in more than one way, so as to give rise to a set of alternative versions of a protein, especially in more complex cells such as those of plants and animals. In addition, some DNA segments—a smaller number—are transcribed into RNA molecules that are not translated but have catalytic, regulatory, or structural functions; such DNA segments also count as genes. A gene therefore is defined as the segment of DNA sequence corresponding to a single protein or set of alternative protein variants or to a single catalytic, regulatory, or structural RNA molecule.

In all cells, the *expression* of individual genes is regulated: instead of manufacturing its full repertoire of possible proteins at full tilt all the time, the cell adjusts the rate of transcription and translation of different genes independently, according to need. Stretches of *regulatory DNA* are interspersed among the segments that code for protein, and these noncoding regions bind to special protein molecules that control the local rate of transcription. The quantity and organization of the regulatory DNA vary widely from one class of organisms to another, but the basic strategy is universal. In this way, the **genome** of the cell—that is, the totality of its genetic information as embodied in its complete DNA sequence—dictates not only the nature of the cell's proteins, but also when and where they are to be made.

Life Requires Free Energy

A living cell is a dynamic chemical system, operating far from chemical equilibrium. For a cell to grow or to make a new cell in its own image, it must take in free energy from the environment, as well as raw materials, to drive the necessary synthetic reactions. This consumption of free energy is fundamental to life. When it stops, a cell decays toward chemical equilibrium and soon dies.

Genetic information is also fundamental to life, and free energy is required for the propagation of this information. For example, to specify one bit of information—that is, one yes/no choice between two equally probable alternatives—costs a defined amount of free energy that can be calculated. The quantitative relationship involves some deep reasoning and depends on a precise definition of the term “free energy,” as explained in Chapter 2. The basic idea, however, is not difficult to understand intuitively.

Picture the molecules in a cell as a swarm of objects endowed with thermal energy, moving around violently at random, buffeted by collisions with one another. To specify genetic information—in the form of a DNA sequence, for example—molecules from this wild crowd must be captured, arranged in a specific order defined by some preexisting template, and linked together in a fixed relationship. The bonds that hold the molecules in their proper places on the template and join them together must be strong enough to resist the disordering effect of thermal motion. The process is driven forward by consumption of free energy, which is needed to ensure that the correct bonds are made, and made robustly. In the simplest case, the molecules can be compared with spring-loaded traps, ready to snap into a more stable, lower-energy attached state when they meet their proper partners; as they snap together into the bonded arrangement, their available stored energy—their free energy—like the energy of the spring in the trap, is released and dissipated as heat. In a cell, the chemical processes underlying information transfer are more complex, but the same basic principle applies: free energy has to be spent on the creation of order.

To replicate its genetic information faithfully, and indeed to make all its complex molecules according to the correct specifications, the cell therefore requires free energy, which has to be imported somehow from the surroundings. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the free energy required by animal cells is derived from chemical bonds in food molecules that the animals eat, while plants get their free energy from sunlight.

All Cells Function as Biochemical Factories Dealing with the Same Basic Molecular Building Blocks

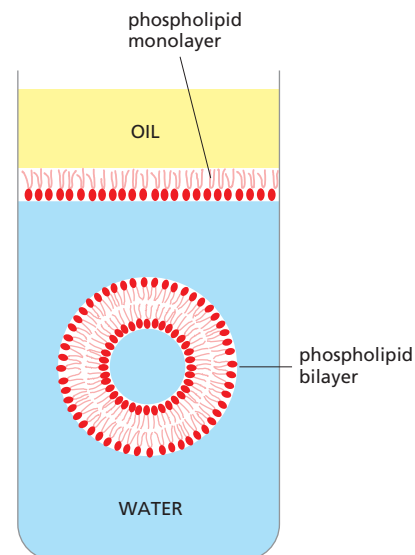
Because all cells make DNA, RNA, and protein, all cells have to contain and manipulate a similar collection of small molecules, including simple sugars, nucleotides, and amino acids, as well as other substances that are universally required. All cells, for example, require the phosphorylated nucleotide *ATP* (*adenosine triphosphate*), not only as a building block for the synthesis of DNA and RNA, but also as a carrier of the free energy that is needed to drive a huge number of chemical reactions in the cell.

Although all cells function as biochemical factories of a broadly similar type, many of the details of their small-molecule transactions differ. Some organisms, such as plants, require only the simplest of nutrients and harness the energy of sunlight to make all their own small organic molecules. Other organisms, such as animals, feed on living things and must obtain many of their organic molecules ready-made. We return to this point later.

All Cells Are Enclosed in a Plasma Membrane Across Which Nutrients and Waste Materials Must Pass

Another universal feature is that each cell is enclosed by a membrane—the **plasma membrane**. This container acts as a selective barrier that enables the cell to concentrate nutrients gathered from its environment and retain the products it

Figure 1-9 Formation of a membrane by amphiphilic phospholipid molecules. Phospholipids have a hydrophilic (water-loving, phosphate) head group and a hydrophobic (water-avoiding, hydrocarbon) tail. At an interface between oil and water, they arrange themselves as a single sheet with their head groups facing the water and their tail groups facing the oil. But when immersed in water, they aggregate to form bilayers enclosing aqueous compartments, as indicated.



synthesizes for its own use, while excreting its waste products. Without a plasma membrane, the cell could not maintain its integrity as a coordinated chemical system.

The molecules that form a membrane have the simple physicochemical property of being *amphiphilic*—that is, consisting of one part that is hydrophobic (water-insoluble) and another part that is hydrophilic (water-soluble). Such molecules placed in water aggregate spontaneously, arranging their hydrophobic portions to be as much in contact with one another as possible to hide them from the water, while keeping their hydrophilic portions exposed. Amphiphilic molecules of appropriate shape, such as the phospholipid molecules that comprise most of the plasma membrane, spontaneously aggregate in water to create a *bilayer* that forms small closed vesicles (Figure 1-9). The phenomenon can be demonstrated in a test tube by simply mixing phospholipids and water together; under appropriate conditions, small vesicles form whose aqueous contents are isolated from the external medium.

Although the chemical details vary, the hydrophobic tails of the predominant membrane molecules in all cells are hydrocarbon polymers ($-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}_2-$), and their spontaneous assembly into a bilayered vesicle is but one of many examples of an important general principle: cells produce molecules whose chemical properties cause them to *self-assemble* into the structures that a cell needs.

The cell boundary cannot be totally impermeable. If a cell is to grow and reproduce, it must be able to import raw materials and export waste across its plasma membrane. All cells therefore have specialized proteins embedded in their membrane that transport specific molecules from one side to the other. Some of these *membrane transport proteins*, like some of the proteins that catalyze the fundamental small-molecule reactions inside the cell, have been so well preserved over the course of evolution that we can recognize the family resemblances between them in comparisons of even the most distantly related groups of living organisms.

The transport proteins in the membrane largely determine which molecules enter the cell, and the catalytic proteins inside the cell determine the reactions that those molecules undergo. Thus, by specifying the proteins that the cell is to manufacture, the genetic information recorded in the DNA sequence dictates the entire chemistry of the cell; and not only its chemistry, but also its form and its behavior, for these too are chiefly constructed and controlled by the cell's proteins.

A Living Cell Can Exist with Fewer Than 500 Genes

The basic principles of biological information transfer are simple enough, but how complex are real living cells? In particular, what are the minimum requirements? We can get a rough indication by considering a species that has one of the smallest known genomes—the bacterium *Mycoplasma genitalium* (Figure 1-10). This organism lives as a parasite in mammals, and its environment provides it with many of its small molecules ready-made. Nevertheless, it still has to make all the large molecules—DNA, RNAs, and proteins—required for the basic processes of heredity. It has about 530 genes, about 400 of which are essential. Its genome of 580,070 nucleotide pairs represents 145,018 bytes of information—about as much as it takes to record the text of one chapter of this book. Cell biology may be complicated, but it is not impossibly so.

The minimum number of genes for a viable cell in today's environments is probably not less than 300, although there are only about 60 genes in the core set that is shared by all living species.