

How to define intelligent design

Specifically, when defining intelligent design it's important to note that what is most often reported in the media is NOT in any way a definition of ID that we subscribe too. You usually see something along the lines of "life is so complicated it must have been designed by a higher power." That is not at all how the leading proponents of ID describe the theory.

According to the theory of intelligent design, certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.

Scientists who support intelligent design seek evidence of design in nature, and argue that such evidence points to intelligent design, based on our historical knowledge of cause and effect. Intelligent design theorists argue in favor of design theory based on the recognition of things like the digital information in DNA and the complex molecular machines found in cells. They do so because invariably we know from experience that complex systems possessing such features always arise from intelligent causes. For instance, the DNA molecule is embedded with an immense amount of information. In our uniform and repeated experience, information only comes from minds (read: intelligence). So why should we attribute the information in DNA to a mindless process like natural selection? ID scientists think we should not. Obviously, ID is an inference from the evidence, not from religious scriptures or practices.

So, intelligent design theory is not an argument based on what we don't know, but rather an argument from what we do know.

Creationism on the other hand is usually defined by these tenets:

- The universe, energy and life were created from nothing.
- Mutations and natural selection cannot bring about the development of all living things from a single organism.
- The earth is young, in the range of 6,000 to 10,000 years.
- Earth's geology can be explained by catastrophic events, primarily a worldwide flood.

Defining what biological evolution is

There are three simple, but very different definitions of biological evolution. When speaking with people about the issue it is important to ask them which definition of evolution they are using.

- 1) Change over time (even billions of years, most leading ID proponents believe the universe is billions of years old)
- 2) Common ancestry, all forms of life evolved from a single original life form
- 3) Natural selection acting on random mutation is the primary mechanism by which life forms have evolved.

ID scientists do not have a problem with definition #1. There is some debate over definition #2, but it is not incompatible with ID. Definition #3, commonly referred to as Darwinian Evolution, is a specific part of evolution that ID challenges and is the heart of Darwin's theory. Be sure you know what people mean when they say "evolution."

More accurate descriptions of intelligent design theory.

"Intelligent design 'says some features of the natural world, because of their well-ordered complexity, are best explained by an intelligent cause.'" (Associated Press, John Hanna, "[Evolution debate turns into debate over intelligent design](#)")

"Intelligent-design theory states that certain features of the natural world are of such complexity that the most plausible explanation is that they are products of an intelligent cause rather than random mutation and natural selection." (National Geographic, "[Does Intelligent Design Threaten The Definition of Science?](#)")