



# Astrobiology: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

By David C. Catling

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Astrobiology is an exciting new subject, and one, arguably, more interdisciplinary than any other. Astrobiologists seek to understand the origin and evolution of life on Earth in order to illuminate and guide the search for life on other planets. In this *Very Short Introduction*, David C. Catling introduces the subject through our understanding of the factors that allowed life to arise and persist on our own planet, and for the signs we are looking for in the search for extraterrestrial life.

## About the Series:

Oxford's *Very Short Introductions* series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every *Very Short Introduction* gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the *Very Short Introductions* series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

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### Review

"An engaging and well-written book for those who want to learn more about this emerging scientific field".  
-*The Guardian*

"I particularly enjoyed the chapter on life in our solar system, in which the author gives a longer list of planetary bodies that may carry life than the typical handful, and with compelling reasoning...highly recommended". -*Chemistry World*

"...an excellent short introduction...punctuated by shafts of humor. It provides an accessible presentation of a vast swathe of science relevant to life in the Universe...and is full of interesting insights." -*Contemporary Physics*

"...splendid introduction to the co-evolution of life and the environment...excellent summary of the conditions on Venus, Mars and the icy worlds of the outer Solar System...writing is clear, compact and elegant" -David Morrison, *Reports of the National Center for Science and Education*

"...presents a well-informed and evenly balanced approach throughout..." -- CHOICE Magazine

"His writing is clear, compact, and elegant...It is a book to be savored, not skimmed." -- David Morrison of SETI Institute, *National Center for Science Education*

### From the Inside Flap

How did life originate on Earth? Is it unique to this planet? What should we look for in seeking other inhabited worlds?

These are the central questions of Astrobiology. Space missions have given us intriguing close-up views of planets and moons within the Solar System, and we now know that there are many planets around other stars. We are also learning more about the remarkable range of microbes and finding signs of very early life on Earth. In this *Very Short Introduction*, David C. Catling describes what we know about how life arose on Earth and the habitability of other worlds, and the clues these provide in the search for extraterrestrial life.

### About the Author

David C. Catling, *Department of Earth and Space Sciences and Astrobiology Program, University of Washington, Seattle, USA.*

David Catling is a Professor of Earth and Space Sciences. After a doctorate at the University of Oxford, he worked as a planetary scientist at NASA's Ames Research Center near San Francisco, from 1995-2001. In 2001, he was appointed as one of the world's first astrobiology professors at the University of Washington in Seattle. From 2005-2008, Prof. Catling was European Union Marie Curie Chair in Earth System and Planetary Studies at the University of Bristol, before returning to Seattle in 2009. He has taught astrobiology courses for over a decade and has published over eighty papers and articles in areas ranging from the geology of Mars, to the biochemistry of complex life, to the co-evolution of Earth's atmosphere and biosphere.

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