



Human Evolution ^[1]

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Human evolution is a key theory in anthropology, particularly within the sub-fields of biological anthropology and archaeology.

The theory of evolution describes the process of a gradual change in traits in a species over time. Human evolution describes the slow process that led to the rise of anatomically modern humans—who we are today. During this process, traits were altered in order to adapt to environmental situations and needs. The name of our species is *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

Out of Africa

Evolution posits that our human ancestors moved out of Africa thousands and thousands of years ago. This theory is widely accepted by academics, though there is extensive disagreement regarding the specifics of the theory. For example, anthropologists debate whether there was one single migration out of Africa or several, as well as the reasons that our human ancestors undertook this migration. In Europe and Asia, these archaic *Homo sapiens* would have encountered other members of the *Homo* genus, including Neanderthals. Eventually, these non-human populations were wiped out with only *Homo sapiens* remaining.

Anatomical Changes

During human evolution, our human ancestors and other species of *Homo* underwent numerous biological and anatomical changes. For example, our ancestors became bipedal. Instead of moving on four limbs, we adapted to move on just two feet. Bipedalism is the term for humans standing upright, and led to numerous anatomical changes, particularly changes in bone structure.

Besides bipedalism, another well-known change that occurred during human evolution is encephalization. Encephalization describes the evolution into larger brain sizes, which is usually measured in cranial capacity (cc). Encephalization is a complex concept, but it resulted in the ability of our species to gain higher mental functions, including language and symbolic thought.

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