

# Francis Crick

- Together with colleagues developed an accurate model of DNA
- Worked with James Watson

Francis Crick was born on June 8, 1916, in Northampton, England. He attended school in London and stayed in London to study physics at University College where he obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1937. He started to work on a Ph.D., but his research was interrupted by World War II. During the war he did research on magnetic and acoustic mines for the British Admiralty.

Crick was not well versed in biology or organic chemistry, but, beginning in the late 1940s, he brought his expertise as a physicist to the Cavendish Lab, Cambridge. There he collaborated with other scientists to work out the general theory of X-ray diffraction patterns in organic helix molecules. He was in his mid-thirties, still working on his Ph. D., when James Watson, 12 years younger than Crick, came to the same research lab. Crick collaborated with Watson and Maurice Wilkins to develop the correct model of DNA and discover the role of the molecule in transferring genetic traits in 1953. One year later Crick was finally awarded his Ph.D. Then, in 1962, Crick, Watson, and Wilkins received the Nobel Prize for their work.



While Crick was quick to engage with the young Watson, and their work was very productive, the two did not always agree. When Watson wrote his personal account of the DNA discovery, Crick was not pleased with how he was represented in Watson's book.

Crick's career continued to focus on identifying the structure of tiny organic organisms. Toward the end of his life, he began research on how the brain works, attempting to make the link between the physical brain and the sense of consciousness of the mind. Crick spent his later years as a non-resident Fellow at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California, and lived in a La Jolla house appropriately called "The Golden Helix." He died in July 2004 at the age of 88.

## Resources

Nobel Lectures, Physiology or Medicine 1942–1962. Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1964

Salk Institute Obituary retrieved from: <http://www.salk.edu/news/releases/details.php?id=103>