

# Functions and Prototypes

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## Abstract

Bioinformatics has long recognized that it needs (1) a definition of ‘function’ and (2) a way to represent degrees of functioning and malfunctioning. A major obstacle to (1) is that the term ‘function’ currently refers to myriad notions, many of which are incompatible; the term must be disambiguated by identifying and defining each of these notions individually. An obstacle to (2) is that there is no clear standard by which degrees of functioning can be measured. This paper presents a framework within which both of these problems can be addressed. It will address (1) by offering a means of disambiguating each of the notions conflated within the term ‘function’; it will address (2) by offering a theory of *prototypes* as the metaphysical basis for a standard according to which degrees of functioning of each kind can be measured objectively.