

Robot working hard to recreate origin of life

A cheap 3D-printed [robot](#) and a PlayStation camera are hard at work trying to find the origins of life. But this life isn't biological, it's chemical. The system has successfully created the first "synthetic cells" that can evolve outside of biology, using a robot to keep them alive. The research could help us understand how life first appeared billions of years ago.

The system is wonderfully simple. Using the RepRap 3D-printing platform a team of chemists at Glasgow University created a robot that can do incredibly precise experiments with no human input. The PlayStation camera then snaps pictures for further analysis.

"Right now, evolution only applies to complex cells with many terabytes of information but the open question is where did the information come from? We have shown that it is possible to evolve very simple chemistries with little information," professor Lee Cronin from the department of chemistry at Glasgow University tells WIRED.co.uk.

Creating life from scratch is hard — and we know little about the origin of life before biology — but the use of simple robots is speeding up our understanding. The robot places four droplets of the same chemical composition into a Petri dish and uses the camera to see what happens. This process is repeated over and over again with randomly different compositions of droplets.

Read full, original article: This 3D-printed robot could help discover the origins of life