

Highly Accurate Protein Structure Prediction with **AlphaFold** Developed by Google DeepMind and EMBL-EBI

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Slide available here.

Something About DeepMind

Central mission: solve fundamental problems with AI

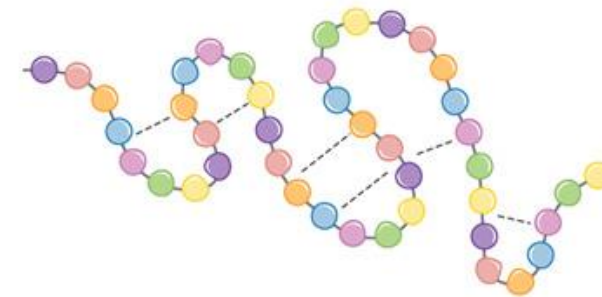
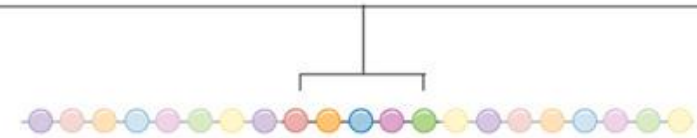
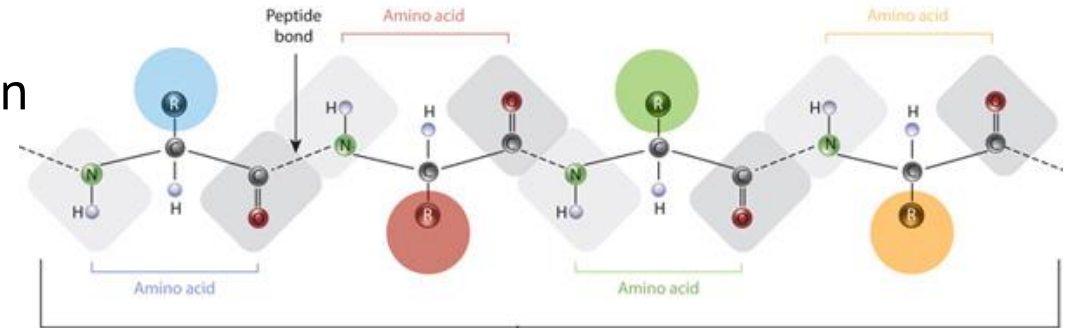
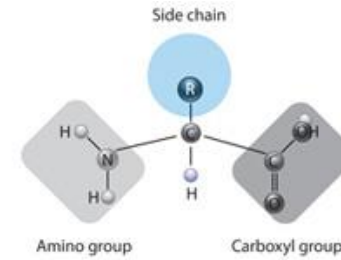
=> Predicting the 3D structure of a protein from its amino acid sequence is one such challenge

What are proteins?

- Molecular machines which are essential to life
- Have many functions, from hair to the immune system
- Consist of *chains of amino acids* that fold into a 3D structure
=> The 3D shape is important for a protein's function

- Protein structures

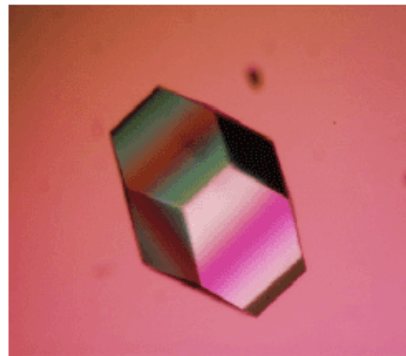
- **Primary structure:** Linear sequence of amino acids.
- **Secondary structure:** Patterns like alpha helices and beta sheets formed by hydrogen bonds.
- **Tertiary structure:** The 3D shape of the protein formed by side-chain interactions.
- **Quaternary structure:** Complexes of multiple polypeptide chains or subunits.



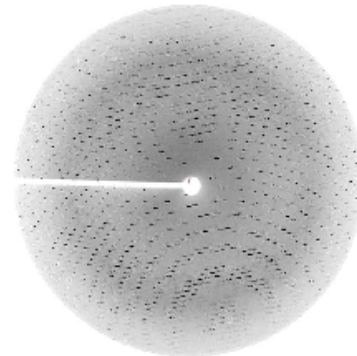
Why and how to predict protein structure?

- Experimental structure determination takes months to years
- Structure prediction can provide actionable information faster

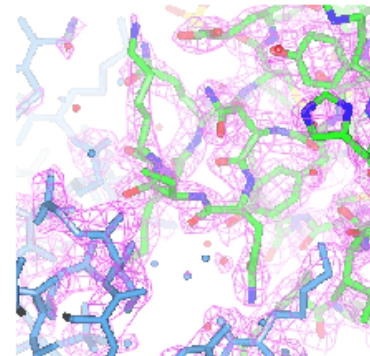
X-ray Crystallography:



Crystal



Diffraction pattern



Electron density map

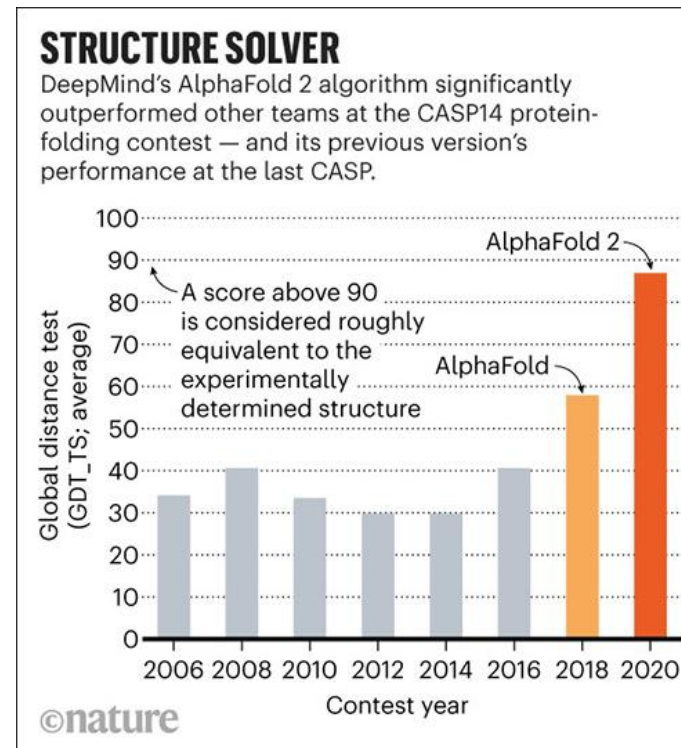
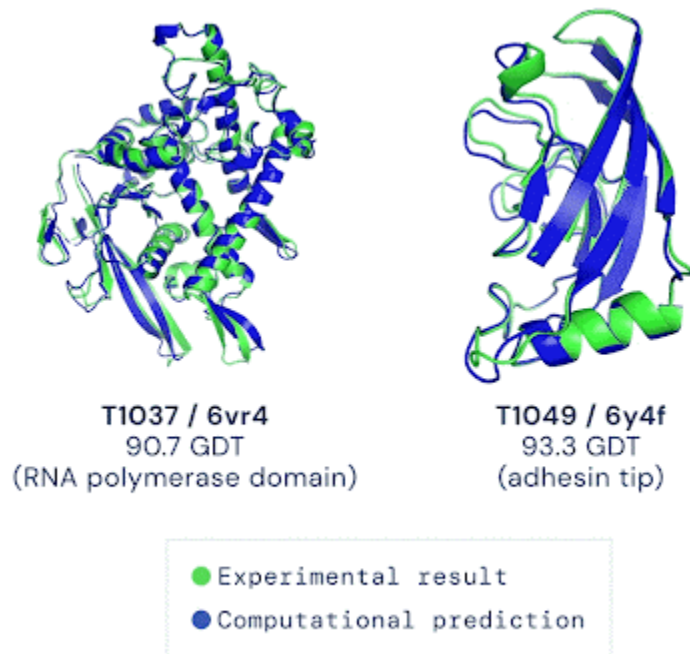


Protein model

Other methods: NMR spectroscopy, Cryo-EM, EM

How well is the prediction by AlphaFold

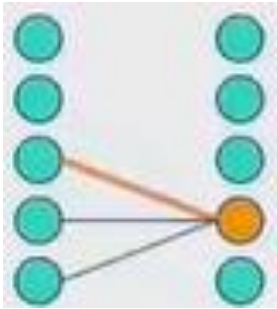
- Protein structure prediction community established CASP (Critical Assessment of Protein Structure Prediction)
- CASP assessment involves the prediction of recently solved structures that are not public
- From CASP 14 (2020), AlphaFold is the top-ranked method achieving consistently high accuracy



How AlphaFold works: INDUCTIVE BIAS FOR DEEP LEARNING MODELS

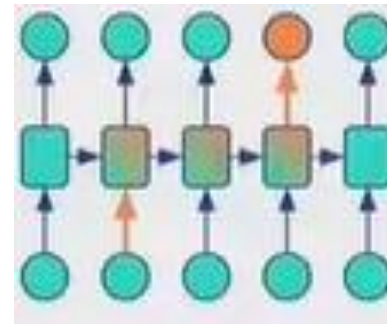
Examples:

卷積神經網路 | Convolutional Networks (CNN)



- Used to process structured data with locality (such as sequence data)
- Extract features from local regions in the protein sequence (interaction between amino acids)
- Local sequence segments creates secondary structures

循環神經網路 | Recurrent Networks (RNN)



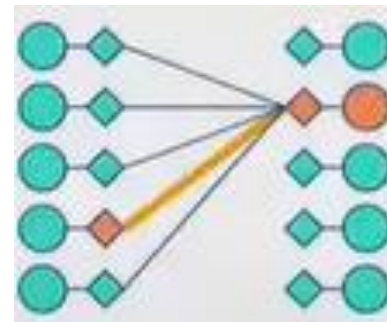
- Used to process sequence data, particular for capturing long-range dependencies.
- Capture interactions between distant amino acid → overall stability and folding
- The 3D structures of a protein is not only determined by adjacent amino acid but also by long-range interactions (hydrogen bonds or hydrophobic interactions).

圖神經網路 | Graph Networks (GNN)



- Used to process graph-structure data.
- Considering amino acids as nodes and edges as their interactions, GNNs help learn the complex relationships between amino acids and convert this into structural information
- Consider global information about the protein structure, not just local fragments.

注意力機制 | Attention Modules

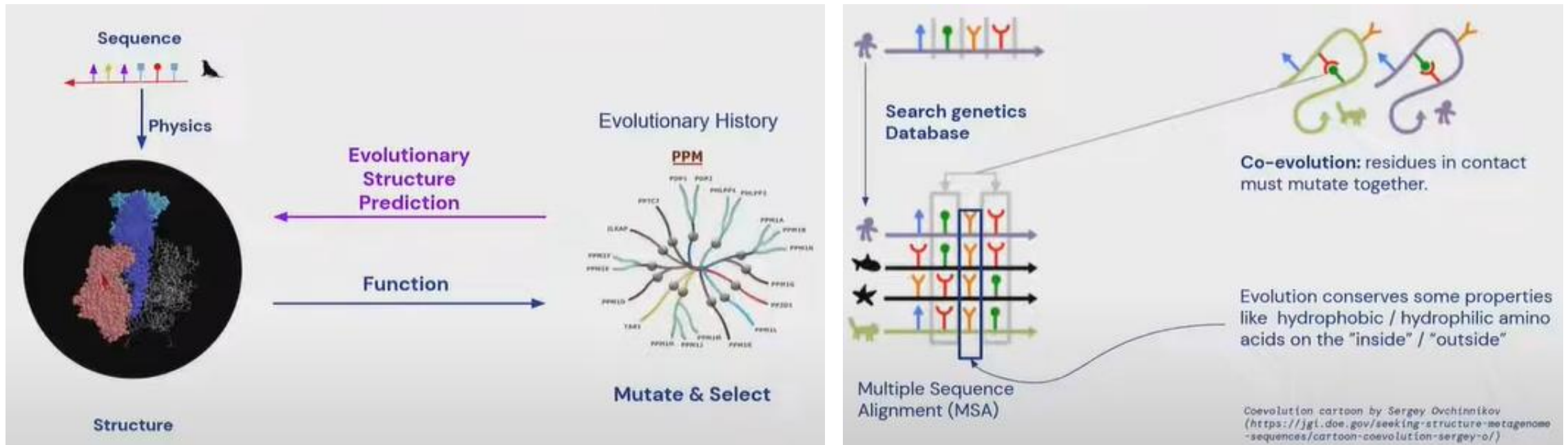


- It allow the model to focus on different part of a sequence based on the importance of each amino acid.
- Certain amino acids are more crucial than others, especially in forming structural cores or functional regions.
- Enable model to flexibly focus more attention on these important amino acids.

Putting protein knowledge into the model

- Physical and geometric insights are built into the network structure, not just a process around it.
- Inductive biases reflect our knowledge of protein physics and geometry
 - De-emphasized sequential order of amino acids
(any amino acid can talk to any amino acid in that protein)
 - Instead, residues that are close in space need to communicate
 - Iteratively learning a graph of which residuals are close while reasoning over this implicit graph as it is being built

Determining structure from evolution

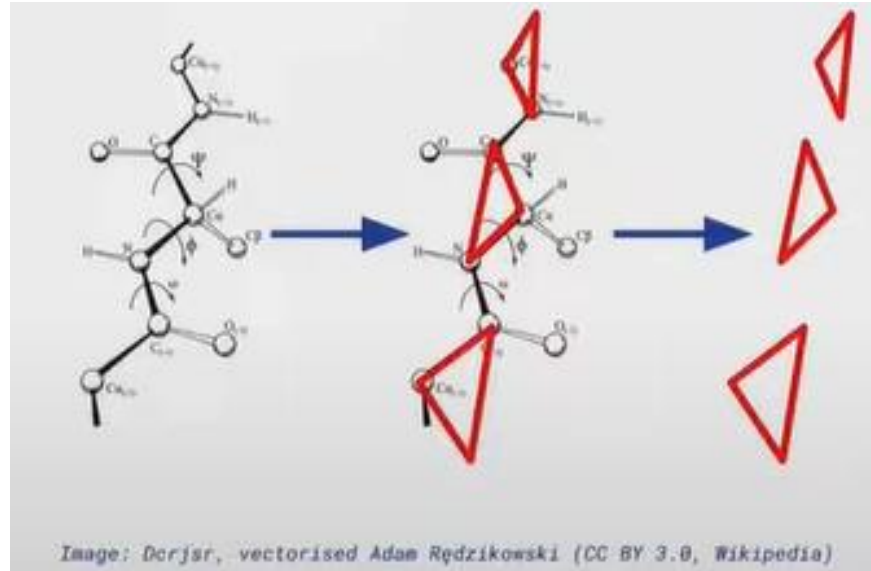


The structure needs to be similar to carry out the same function.

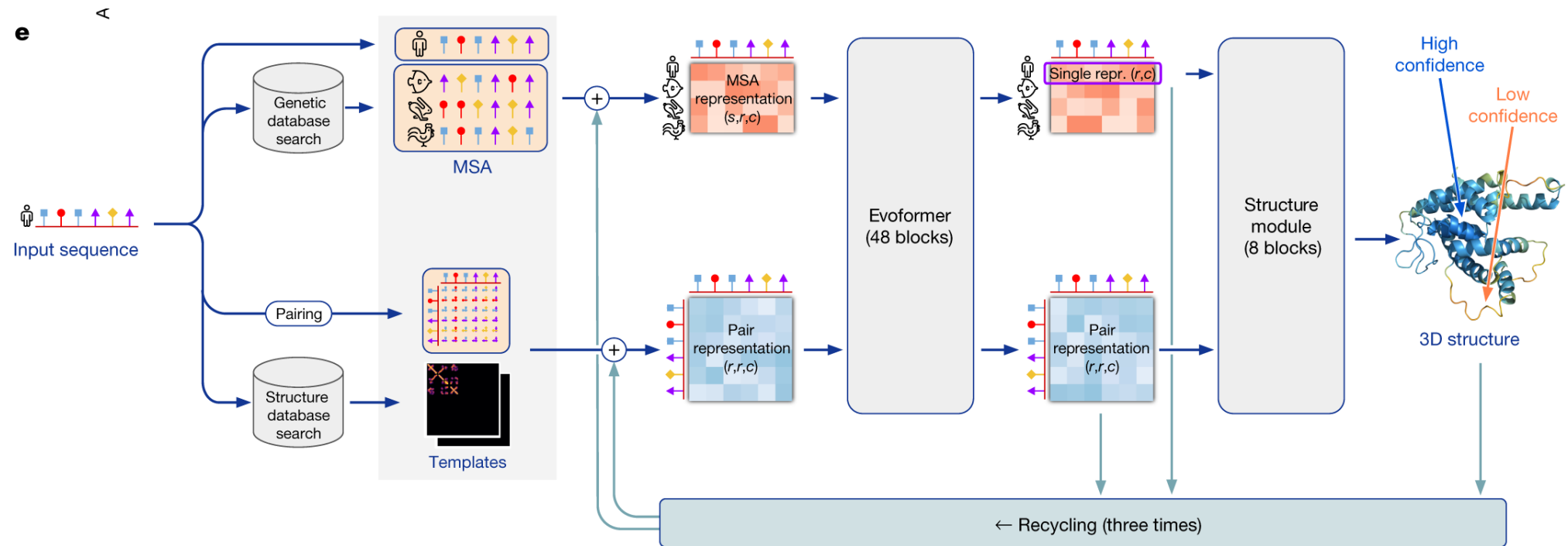
→ Given an evolutionally related sequence, we can try to computationally infer the structure.

Considering other important factors

- Structure module
 - End-to-end folding instead of gradient descent
- Noisy student distillation (bootstrapping oneself for a better performance)
 - Make use of unlabeled sequences (didn't have a known experimental structure)
 - Train AlphaFold on just PDB data → Predict structure on a large set of unlabeled sequences → Train second model where training set is enriched by confidently predicted structure of first model



Overview

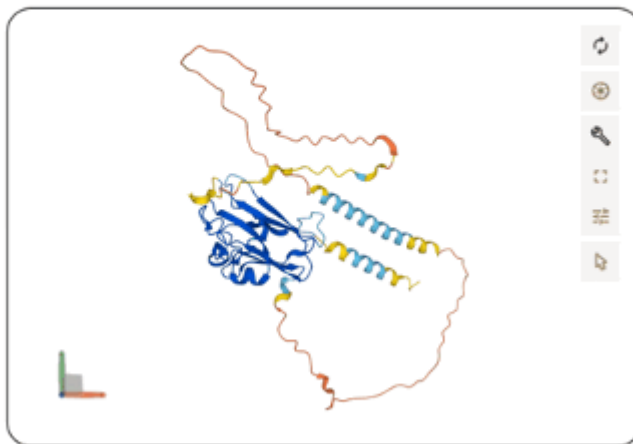


How to interpret predictions?

Predicted LDDT (local distance difference test)

- A metric used to assess the accuracy of predicted protein structures by comparing them to the true (experimental) structures
- Specifically, it measures how well the predicted atomic distance, both in backbone and side chains, matches the actual distance in the native structure
- **Ranging 0~100. The higher, the better.**
- Compared with the old criteria RMSD (root mean square deviation), which focuses on the overall alignment, LDDT emphasized the accuracy of local regions within the protein structure.

Ephrin-B2



Model Confidence

Very high (pLDDT > 90)

High (90 > pLDDT > 70)

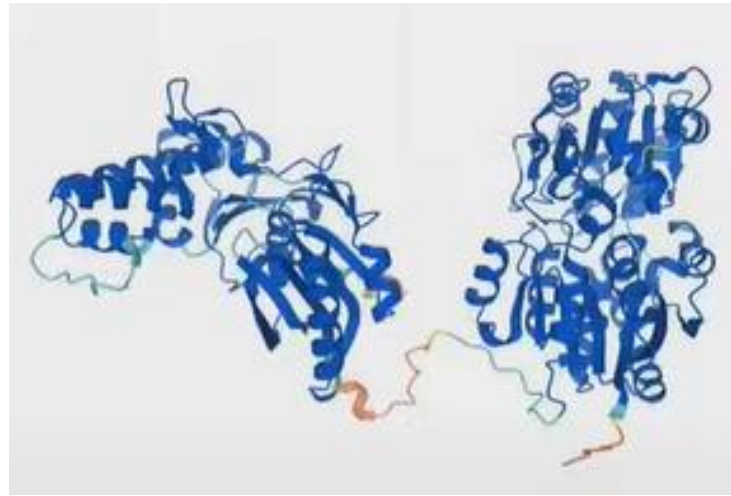
Low (70 > pLDDT > 50)

Very low (pLDDT < 50)

- pLDDT < 50: don't trust the structure or not taking any structure
- pLDDT > 70: May work with the backbone predictions but may not want to trust the side chains in the area
- pLDDT > 90: Reasonable to investigate side chains / active site details

Pitfalls of pLDDT

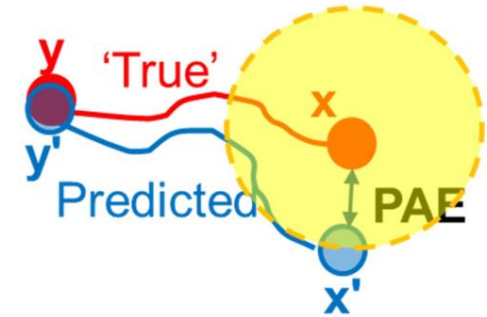
High pLDDT on all domains does **NOT** imply AlphaFold is confident of their relative positions



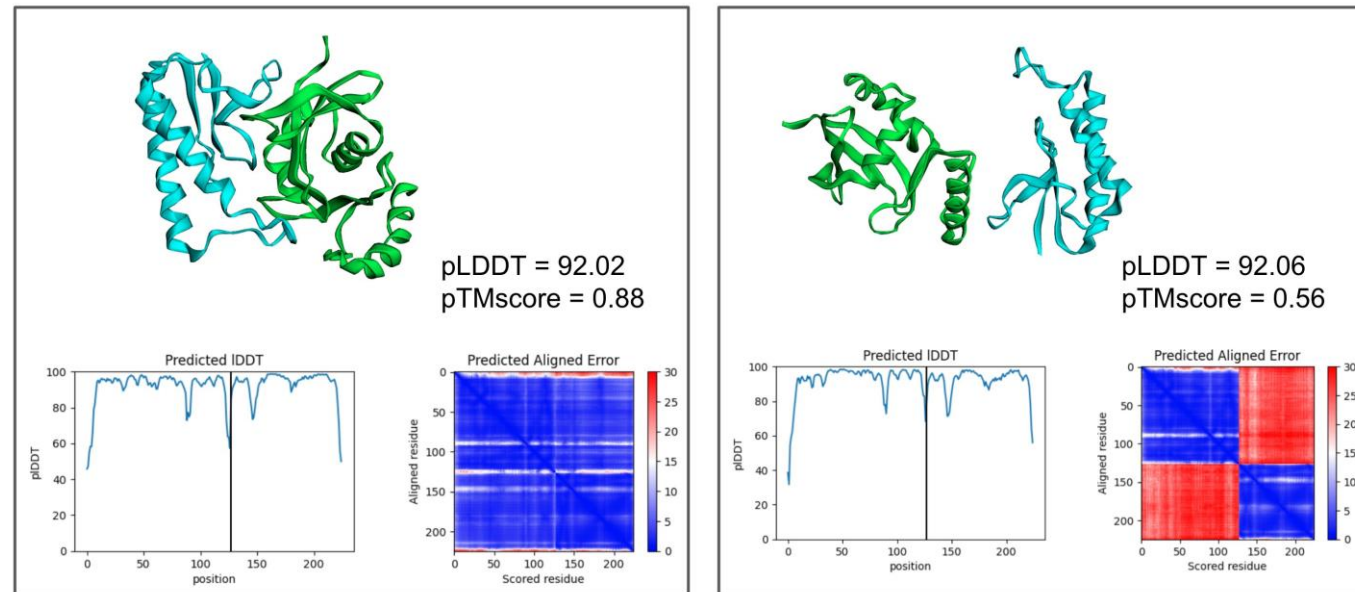
Assessing inter-domain confidence requires a different metric

Predicted aligned error (PAE)

- PAE measures how well AlphaFold predicts the distance between two residues (amino acids) in the protein, along with the uncertainty in the alignment of those residues
- PAE score:
 - values often range from 0 to 30 Å (Ångströms; 10^{-10} m) or more
 - Lower PAE score: high confidence in the relative position between those residues
 - Higher PAE score: greater uncertainty in their relative positioning



casp:H1065 - pdb:7M5F



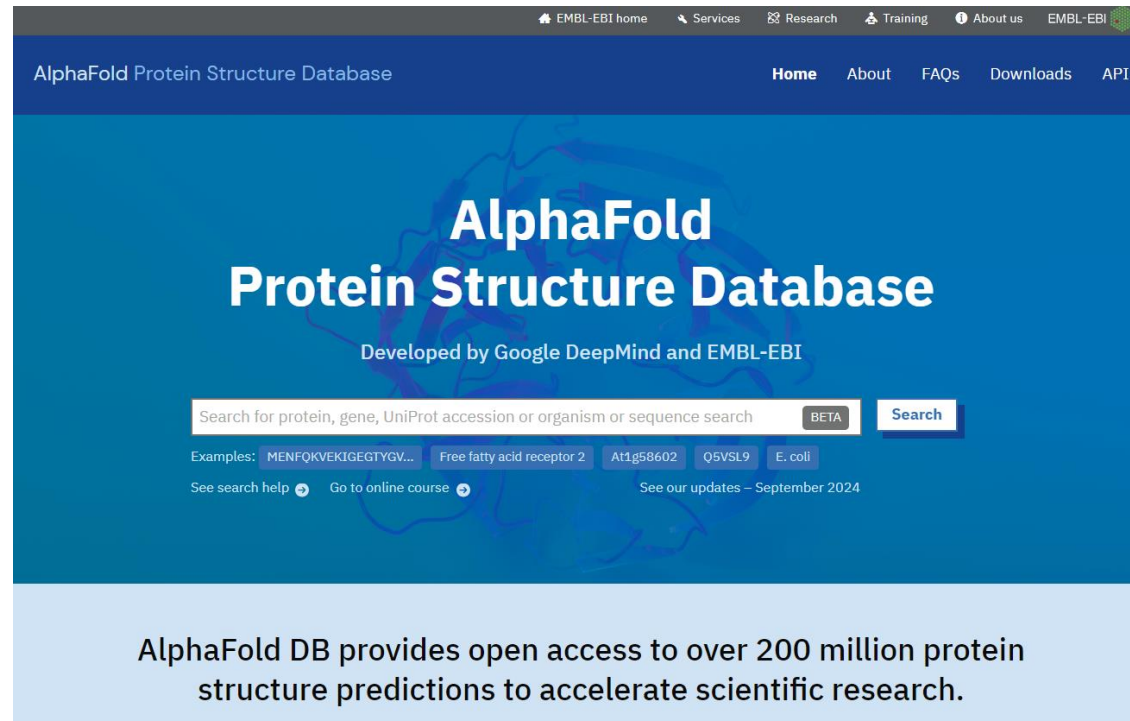
Don't trust how AlphaFold positions these two domains!

Limitations of AlphaFold

- Only accepts the 20 standard amino acids in its input
- (By default) predicts 5 models per run:
 - However, models are generally very similar
 - Usually cannot predict conformational variability in a protein
- AlphaFold was not trained for
 - Predict assemblies (AlphaFold-Multimer was trying to do this)
 - Predict the effects of mutations (What AlphaMissense is trying to do)
 - Predict the binding of ligand molecules (some recent research is trying to achieve this using AlphaFold as the basic)
 - Predict nucleic acid structures

AlphaFold protein structure database

- Website developed and hosted by EMBL-EBI



The screenshot shows the homepage of the AlphaFold Protein Structure Database. The page has a dark blue header with navigation links: EMBL-EBI home, Services, Research, Training, About us, and EMBL-EBI. Below the header, the title "AlphaFold Protein Structure Database" is displayed in white text on a blue background. The text "Developed by Google DeepMind and EMBL-EBI" is centered below the title. A search bar is present with the placeholder text "Search for protein, gene, UniProt accession or organism or sequence search" and a "BETA" label. A "Search" button is to the right of the search bar. Below the search bar, there are examples of search terms: "MENFOKVEKIGEGTYGV...", "Free fatty acid receptor 2", "At1g58602", "Q5VSL9", and "E. coli". There are also links for "See search help", "Go to online course", and "See our updates - September 2024". At the bottom of the page, a light blue banner contains the text: "AlphaFold DB provides open access to over 200 million protein structure predictions to accelerate scientific research."

<https://alphafold.ebi.ac.uk/>

An example

Sodium/potassium-transporting ATPase subunit alpha-3

AF-P13637-F1-v4

Download

PDB file

mmCIF file

Predicted aligned error

PDB (protein data bank)





mmCIF (macromolecular crystallographic information file)

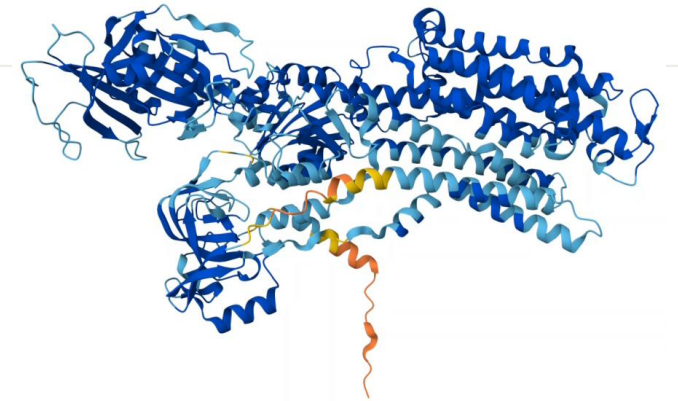
Share your feedback on structure with Google DeepMind

Looks great

Could be improved

Information

Protein	Sodium/potassium-transporting ATPase subunit alpha-3
Gene	ATP1A3
Source organism	Homo sapiens (Human) go to search 
UniProt	P13637 go to UniProt 
Experimental structures	5 structures in PDB for P13637 go to PDBe-KB 
Biological function	This is the catalytic component of the active enzyme, which catalyzes the hydrolysis of ATP coupled with the exchange of sodium and potassium ions across the plasma membrane. This action creates the electrochemical gradient of sodium and potassium ions, providing the energy for active transport of various nutrients. go to UniProt 



<https://alphafold.ebi.ac.uk/entry/P13637>

Structure viewer

Sequence of AF-P13637-F1 Chain 1: Sodium/pot... A

MGDKKDDKDSFKRNGHERRDLDDLKKKEVAMTEHKMSVEEVCRRKNTDCVGLTHSKAQEILARDGPNALTFFPTPEWVKFCRQLFGGFSILLWIGAILCFLAYGIQAGTEDDPSGDNLYLGVLAAVIITGCFYQQEAKSSKIMESFKMVFQALVIREGEKMQVNAEEVWVDLVEIKGGDRVPADLRISAHGCKVDNSSLTGESEFPQTR
SPDCIHDNPLETRNITFFSTNCVETARGVVAIGDRIVMGRIATLASGLEVGKTPIAIEIEHFQILITGVAVFLGVFFILSLILGYTLEAVIFLIGIVANVPEGLLATIVICLTLAKRMRKNCVNLVLEAVETLGSSTLCSDKTGTITQNRMTVAHMVFDNQIHEADTTEDQSGTSEFDKSSHTWALSHIAGLCNRAVFKGGQDNIPVLK
RDVAGDASESALLKCIELSSGVKLMRERKGVAEIPFNSTNKYQLSIHETEDPNDNRVLLVMKGAPERILDRCSITILLQKQEPLOEEMKEAFQNAVLELGLGERVLFCHYVLPPEQFPKGFADDCDDVNFITDNLCFVGLMSMIDPPRAAVDAVGRKRSAGIKVIMVTDGHPITAKAIAGVGIISEGNETVEDIARLNI FVSVQVNFPRDAK

Structure Tools

Structure

AF-P13637-F1

Type Model

Nothing Focused

Quick Styles

Default Illustrative Stylize Current

Components AF-P13637-F1

Preset + Add

Polymer Cartoon

Measurements

+ Add

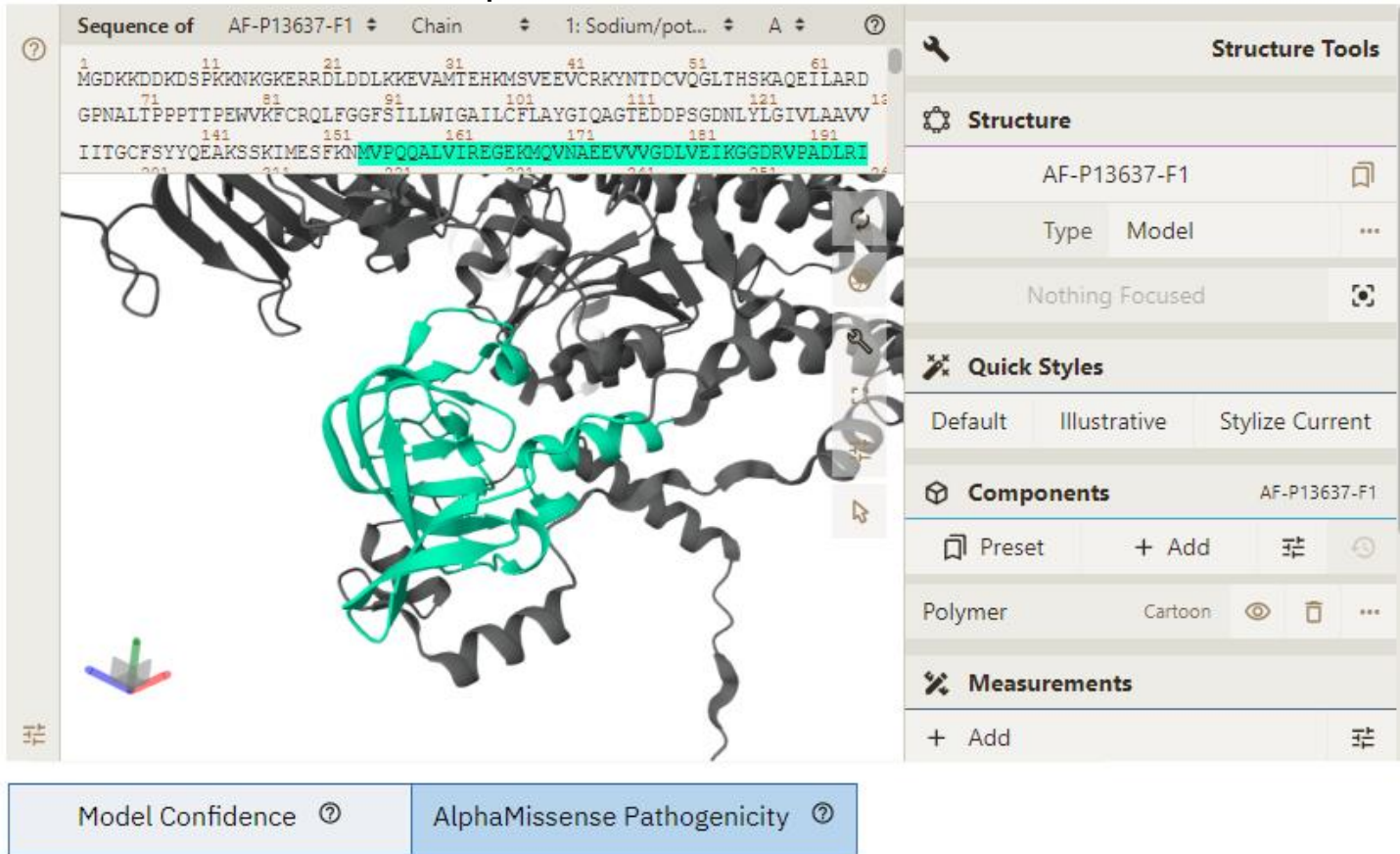
Export Animation

Export Geometry

Sodium/potassium-transporting ATPase subunit alpha-3
AF-P13637-F1 | Model 1 | Instance 1_555 | A | PHE 979
UNP P13637 979 F
pLDDT Score (1 Residue): 96.08 (Very high)

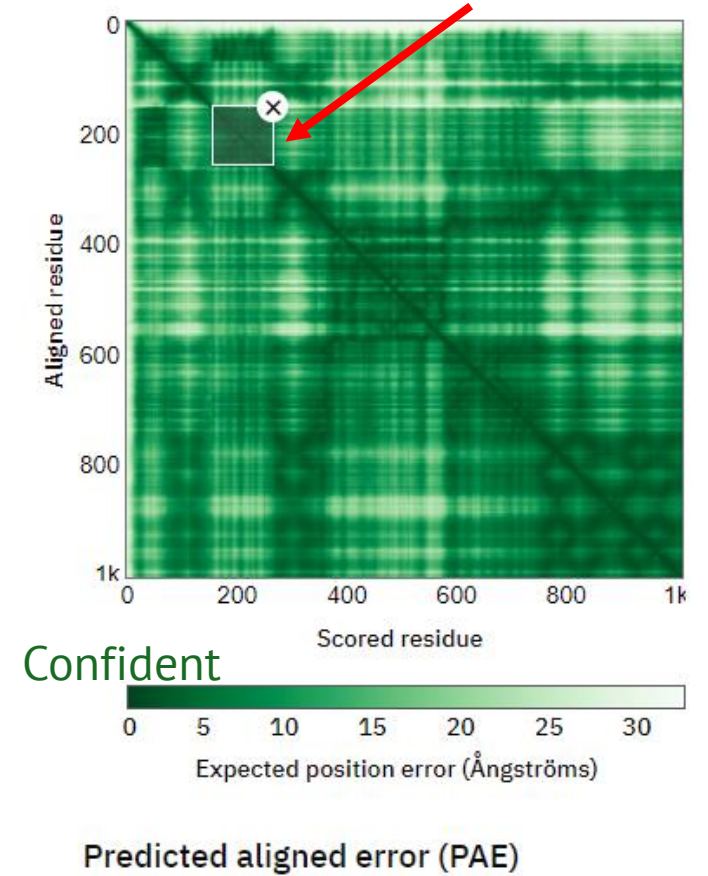
Predicted aligned error (PAE)

Assess relative domain positions.



The screenshot shows a protein structure visualization interface. The top panel displays the amino acid sequence of AF-P13637-F1, with a segment highlighted in cyan: `MVPOQALVIREGEEKMQVNAEEVVVGDIVEIKGGDRVPADLR`. Below the sequence is a ribbon diagram of the protein structure, with the corresponding domain highlighted in cyan. The right sidebar contains 'Structure Tools' and 'Quick Styles' sections. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Model Confidence' and 'AlphaMissense Pathogenicity'.

The heatmap on the website is interactive!

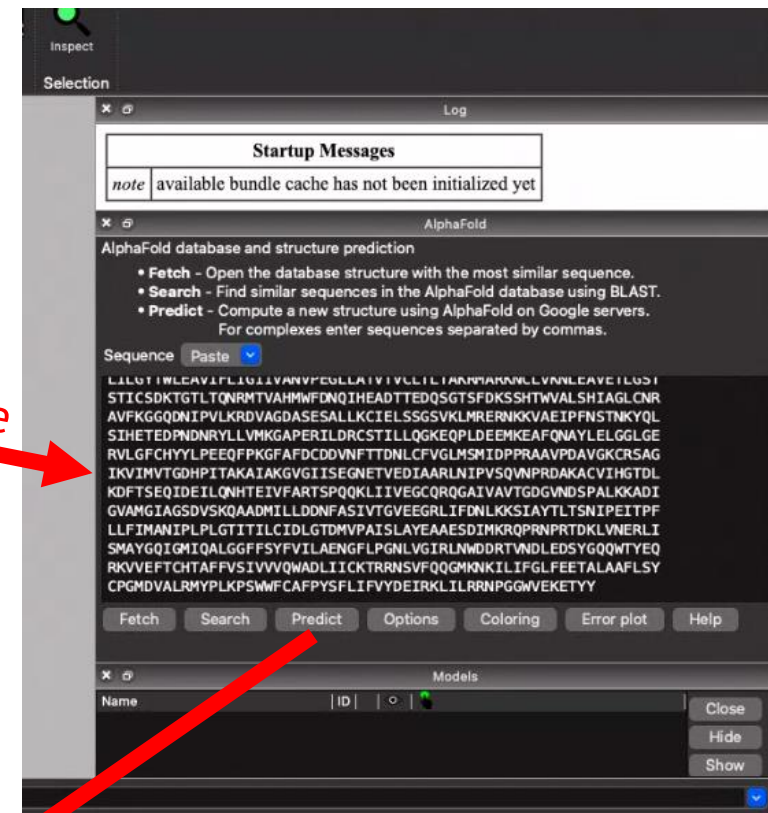
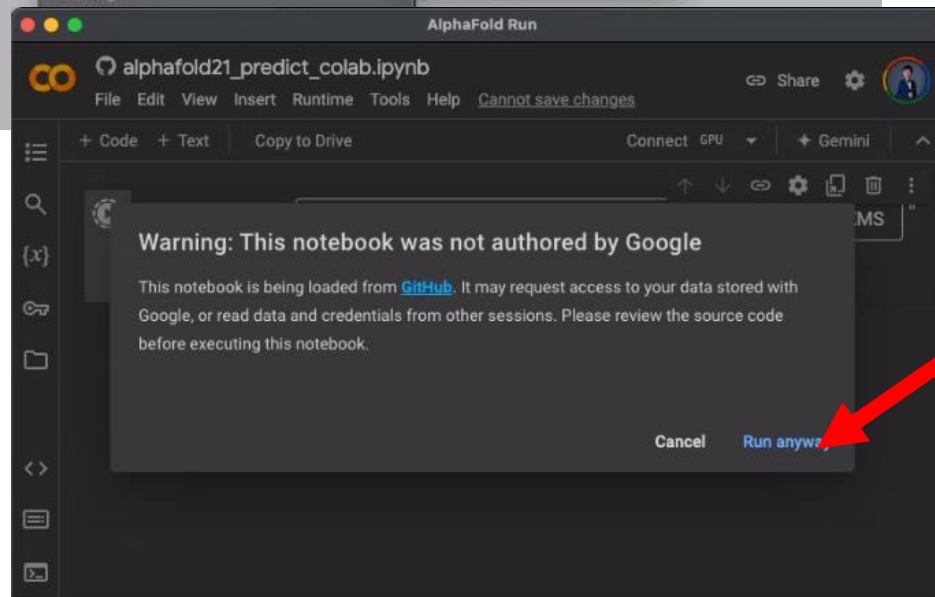
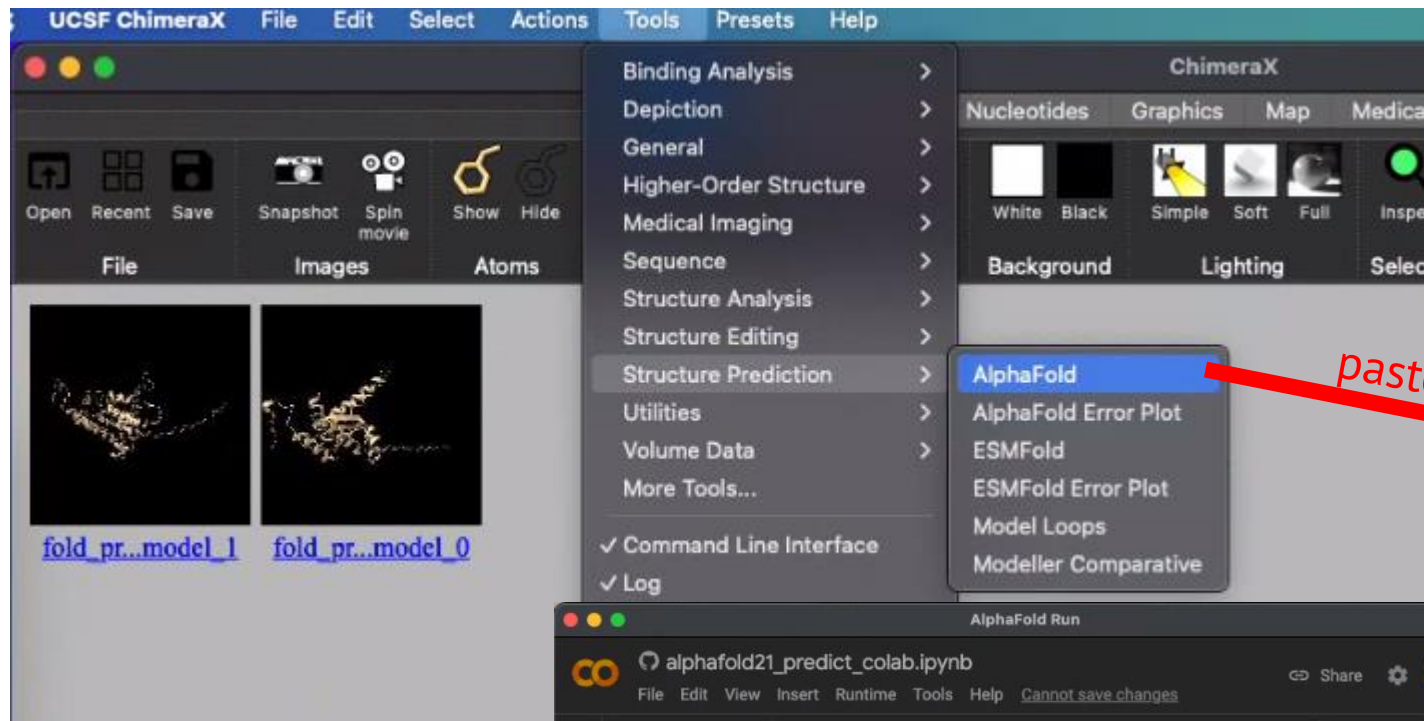


Predict own data

Main ways of accessing predicted protein structures from AlphaFold:

- The open-source code is publicly accessible at <https://github.com/google-deepmind/alphafold>
 - Total control over predictions
 - Need large storage space and a modern GPU
- Interactive Google Colab notebooks: <https://bit.ly/alphafoldcolab>
 - More limited in terms of configuration
 - Easier to use, harder to break

UCSF ChimeraX + Colab (google) + AlphaFold



paste sequence

- Sequence data from UniProt: <https://www.uniprot.org/uniprotkb/P13637/entry#sequences>
- Use commas to separate if more than one sequences

Options

For complexes enter sequences separated by commas.

Sequence

```
LILGTWLEAVIFLIGIIVANVPEGLLAIVTVCLTIFAKMARNCLVNNLEAVEILC  
STICSDKTGTLTQNRMTVAHMWFDNQIHEADTTEDQSGTSFDKSSHTWVALSHIAGLC  
AVFKGGQDNIPVLKRDVAGDASESALLKCIELSSGSVKLMRERNKKVAEIPFNSTNKY  
SIHETEDPNDNRYLLVMKGAPERILDRCASTILLQGKEQPLDEEMKEAFQAYLELGGI  
RVLGFCHYYLPEEQFPKGFADFDCDDVNFTTDNLCFVGLMSMIDPPRAAVPDAVGKCRS  
IKVIMVTGDHPITAKAIAKGVGIISEGNETVEDIAARLNIPVSQVNPRDAKACVIHGT  
KDFITSEQIDEILQNHTEIVFARTSPQQKLIIVEGCQRQGAIVAVTGDGVNDSPALKKA  
GVAMGIAGSDVSKQAADMILLDDNFASIVTGVEEGRLIFDNLKKSIAYTTLTSNIPEIT  
LLFIMANIPLPLGTITILCIDLGTDMVPAISLAYEAAESDIMKRQPRNPRTDKLVNEF  
SMAYGQIGMIQALGGFFSYFVILAENGFLPGNLVGIRLNWDDRTVNDLEDSYGQQWTY  
RKVVEFTCHTAFVSIVVQWADLIICKTRRNSVFQQGMKNKILIFGLFEETALAFL  
CPGMDVALRMYPLKPSWWFCAPYSFLIFVYDEIRKLIILRRNPGGWVEKETY
```

Use PDB templates when predicting structures

Energy-minimize predicted structures

Trim fetched structure to the aligned structure sequence

Result

ChimeraX

Home Molecule Display Nucleotides Graphics Map Medical Image Markers Right Mouse

File Images Atoms Cartoons Styles Background Lighting Selection

Log

AlphaFold

AlphaFold database and structure prediction

- **Fetch** - Open the database structure with the most similar sequence.
- **Search** - Find similar sequences in the AlphaFold database using BLAST.
- **Predict** - Compute a new structure using AlphaFold on Google servers.

For complexes enter sequences separated by commas.

Sequence

```
LLIGTIVLEAVIFLIGIIVANVPFELLAIVIVCLITIANMANNLVANLEAVEILGSI  
STICSDKTGTLTQNRMTVAHMWFDNQIHEADTTEDQSGTSFDKSSHTWVALSHIAGLCNR  
AVFKGGQDNIPVLKRDVAGDASESALLKCIELSSGSVKLMRENNKQVAEIPFNSTNKYQL  
SIHETEDPNDNRLLVMKGAPERILDRCTILLQKKEQLDEEMKEAFQNAVLELGGLE  
RVLGFCHYYLPEEQFKGFADFCDVNFNTDNLFCVGLMSMIDPPRAAVPDAVGKCRSAG  
IKVIMVTDHPITAKAIAKGVGIISEGNETVEDIAARLNIPVSQVNPDAKACVIHGTDL  
KDFTEQIDEILQNHTEIVFARTSPQQLIIVEGCRQGAIVAVTGDGVNDSPALKKADI  
GVAMGIAGSDVSKQAADMILLDDNFASIVTGVEEGRIFDNLKKSIAAYTLTNSIPEITPF  
LLFIMANIPLPLGTITILCIDLGTDMVPAISLAYEAAESDIMKRQPRNPRTDKLVNERLI  
SMAYGQIGMIQALGGFFSYFVILAENGLPGNLVGIRLNDDRTVNDLEDSYGQQWTEYQ  
RKVVEFTCHTAFFVSIWVQWADLII CKTRRNSVFGQGMKNKILIFGLFEETALAAFLSY  
CPGMDVALRMYPLKPSWVFCAPPYSFLIFVYDEIRKILIRRNPGGWVEKETYY
```

Fetch Search Predict Options Coloring Error plot Help

Results directory

Use PDB templates when predicting structures

Energy-minimize predicted structures

Trim fetched structure to the aligned structure sequence

Models

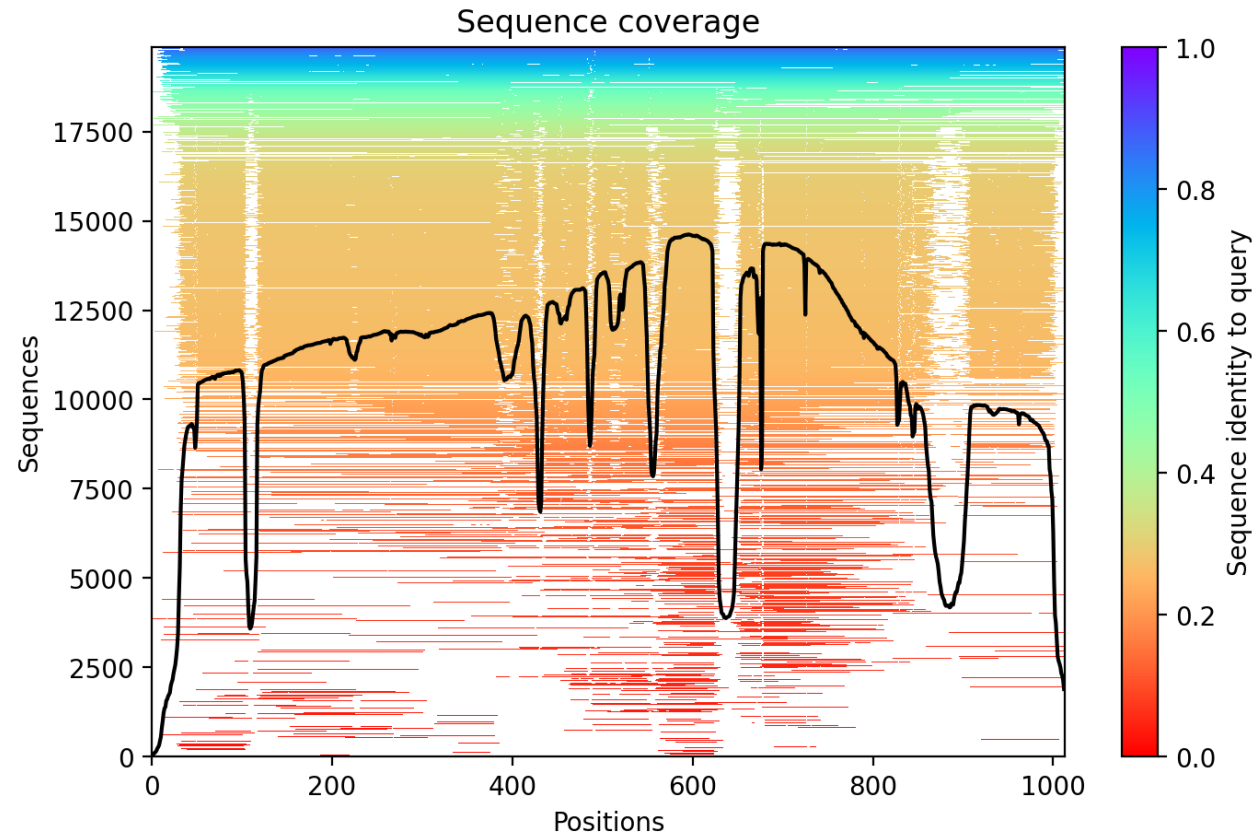
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Close Hide Show View Infr

Command:

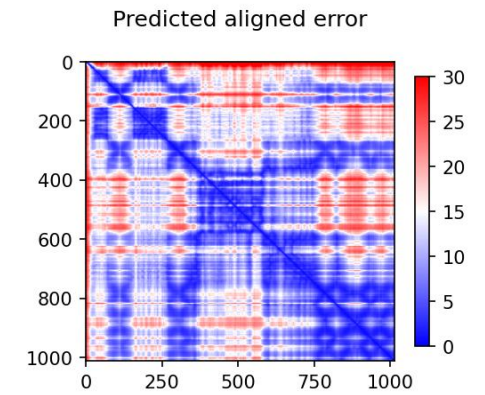
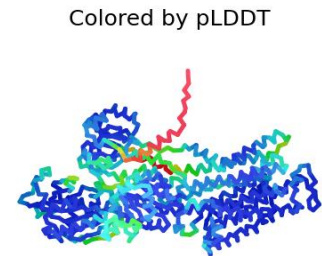
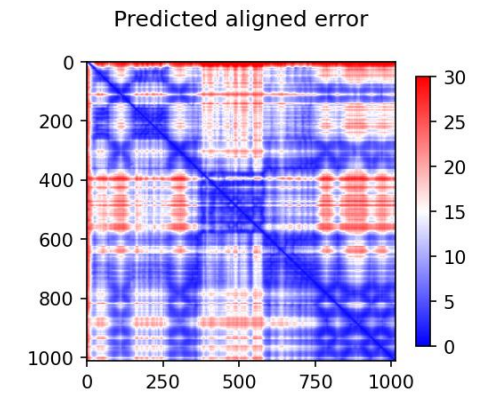
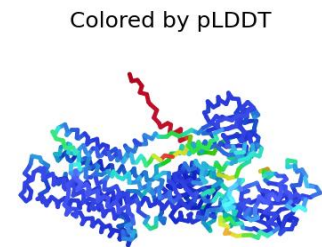
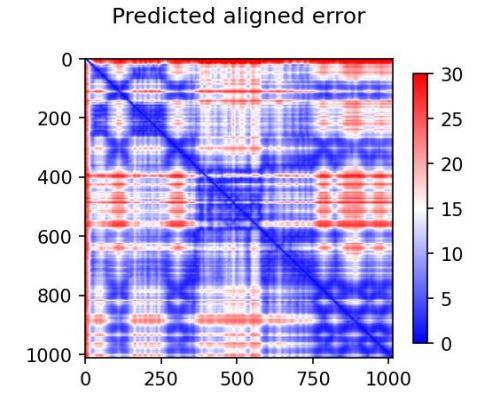
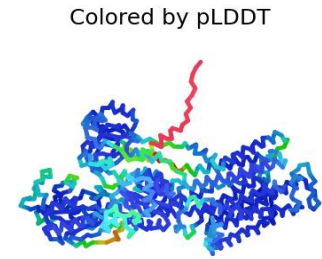
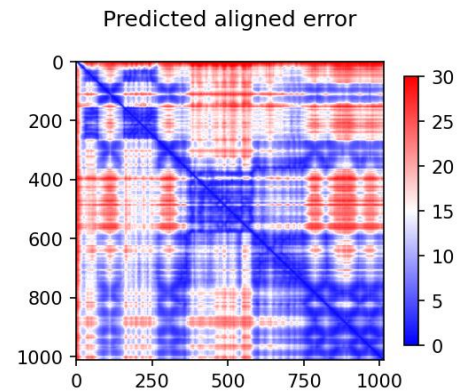
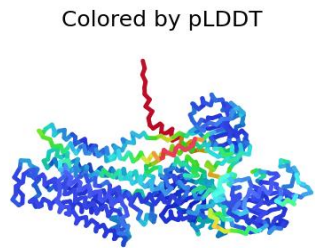
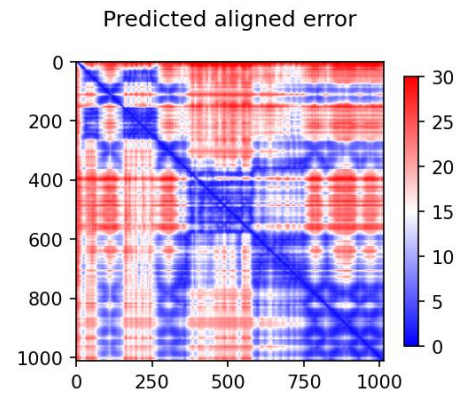
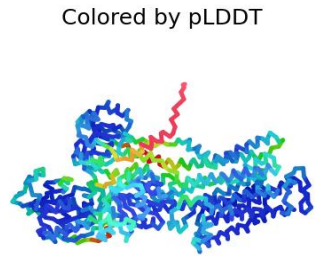
Results available here: [\[prediction\]](#)

Sequence coverage



- It refers to how well the target protein sequence is covered by other sequences in the multiple sequence alignment.
- High coverage:
 - Many sequences in the MSA align to the target sequence at each position
 - Informed by a large amount of evolutionary data

Different predictions



Show error plot in ChimeraX

The screenshot displays the ChimeraX interface with the AlphaFold Predicted Aligned Error (PAE) plot and the AlphaFold analysis panel. The PAE plot is a heatmap showing the predicted aligned errors for the best_model.pdb #1. The plot is a square matrix with a blue diagonal line, indicating that the error is zero for residues aligned to themselves. The color scale ranges from blue (low error) to yellow (high error). The plot is titled "AlphaFold Predicted Aligned Error" and includes the text "Predicted aligned errors (PAE) for best_model.pdb #1" and "Drag a box to color structure residues and atoms." Below the plot are buttons for "Color PAE Domains", "Color pLDDT", and "Help", along with the text "E486 M1 = 25.7".

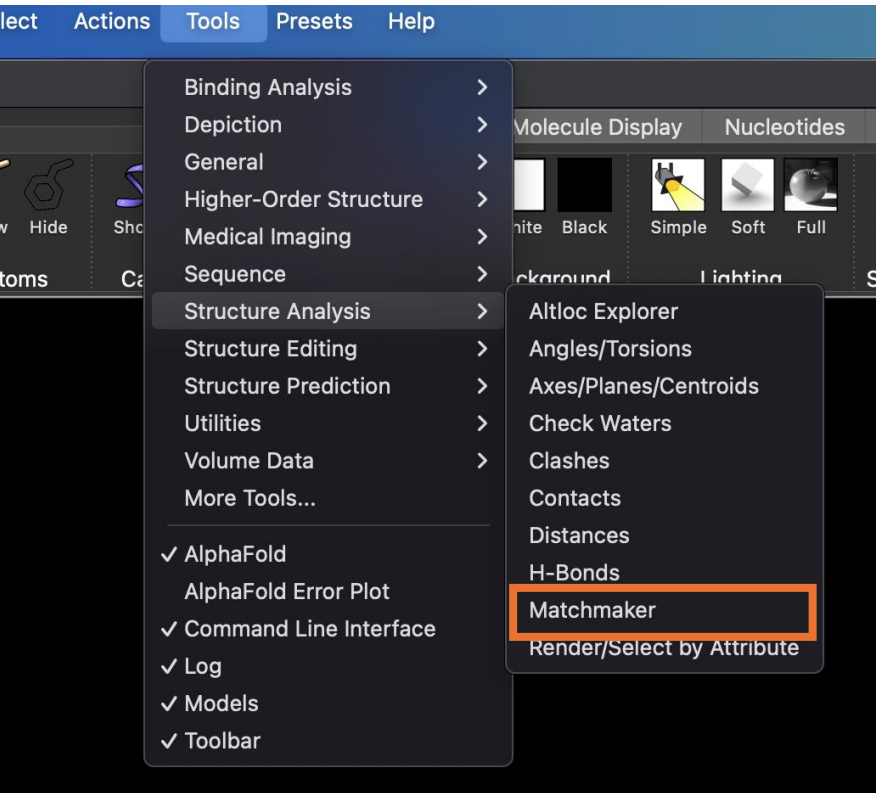
The AlphaFold analysis panel on the right contains the following information:

- Log
- AlphaFold Run
- AlphaFold
- AlphaFold database and structure prediction
 - Fetch - Open the database structure with the most similar sequence.
 - Search - Find similar sequences in the AlphaFold database using BLAST.
 - Predict - Compute a new structure using AlphaFold on Google servers. For complexes enter sequences separated by commas.
- Sequence
- Sequence:

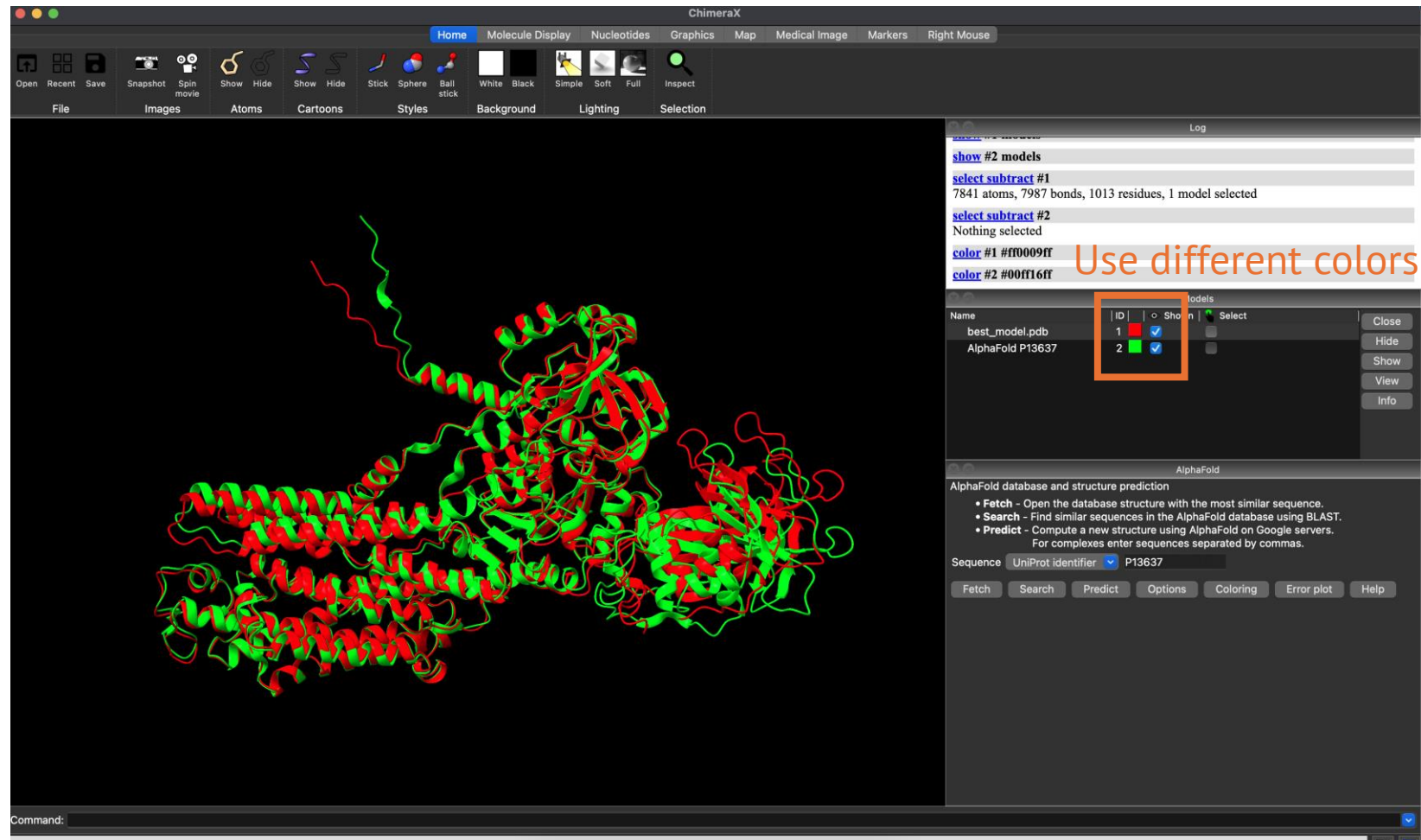
```
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STI CSDKTGLT QNRMTVAHMFNDQI HEADT T DQSGTSFDKSSHTWALSHIAGL CNR
AVFKGGQDNIPV LKRDVAGDASESALLKCI ELSGSKVLMRERNKVAEIPFNSN KYQL
SIHETEDPNDNR YLLVMKGAPERILDR CSTILLQKGEQPLDEEMKEAFQNAYLELGG LGE
RVLGFC HYLLPEEQFPKGF AFD CDDVNF TTDNLLCFVGLMSMIDPPRAAVPD AVGKCRSAG
IKVIMVTGDHPITAKA IAKGVGI ISEGNETVEDI AARLNIPVQVNP RDAKACVIHGTDL
KDFTEQIDEILQNHT EIVFARTSPQQLI IVEGCQRQGAIVAVTGDGVNDSPAL KKADI
GVAMGIAGSDVSKQAADMILLDDNFASIVTGVEEGR LIFDNLKKSIA YTLTNSIPEITPF
LLFIMAN IPLPLGTIT ILCIDLGDMPAISL AEAESD IMKRQPRNPRTDKLVNERLI
SMAYGQIGMIQALGGFFSYFVILAENGF LPGNLVGI RLNWDRTVNDLEDSYGGQWTYEQ
RKVVEFTCHTAFFVSIVVQWADLI ICKTRRNSV FQGMKNKILIFGLFEETALAAFLSY
CPGMDVALRMYP LKPSWFCAPFYSFLIFVYDEIRK LILRRNPGGWVEKETYY
```
- Buttons: Fetch, Search, Predict, Options, Coloring, Error plot, Help
- Results directory: ~/Downloads/ChimeraX/AlphaFold/prediction_[N] (A red arrow points to this button)
- Use PDB templates when predicting structures
- Energy-minimize predicted structures
- Trim fetched structure to the aligned structure sequence
- Models table:

Name	ID	Color	Visible	Selected
best_model.pdb	1	Green	Checked	Checked

Align the predicted structure with the experimental result

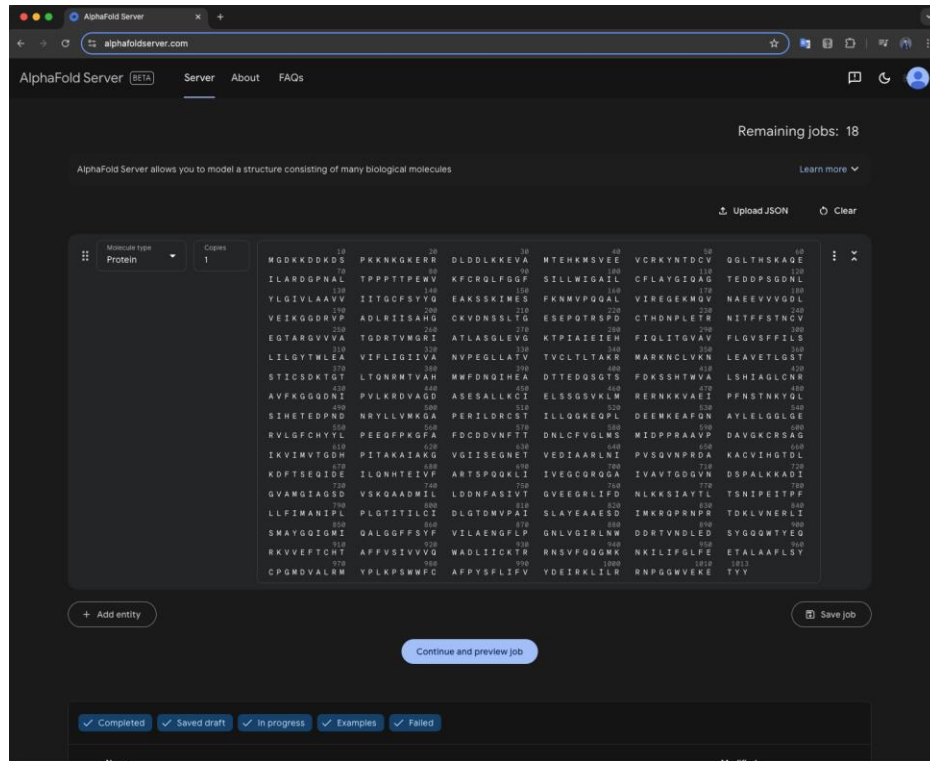


Use matchmaker



Use different colors

An alternative for Colab: AlphaFold server



AlphaFold Server **BETA** Server About FAQs

Remaining jobs: 18

AlphaFold Server allows you to model a structure consisting of many biological molecules [Learn more](#)

Upload JSON Clear

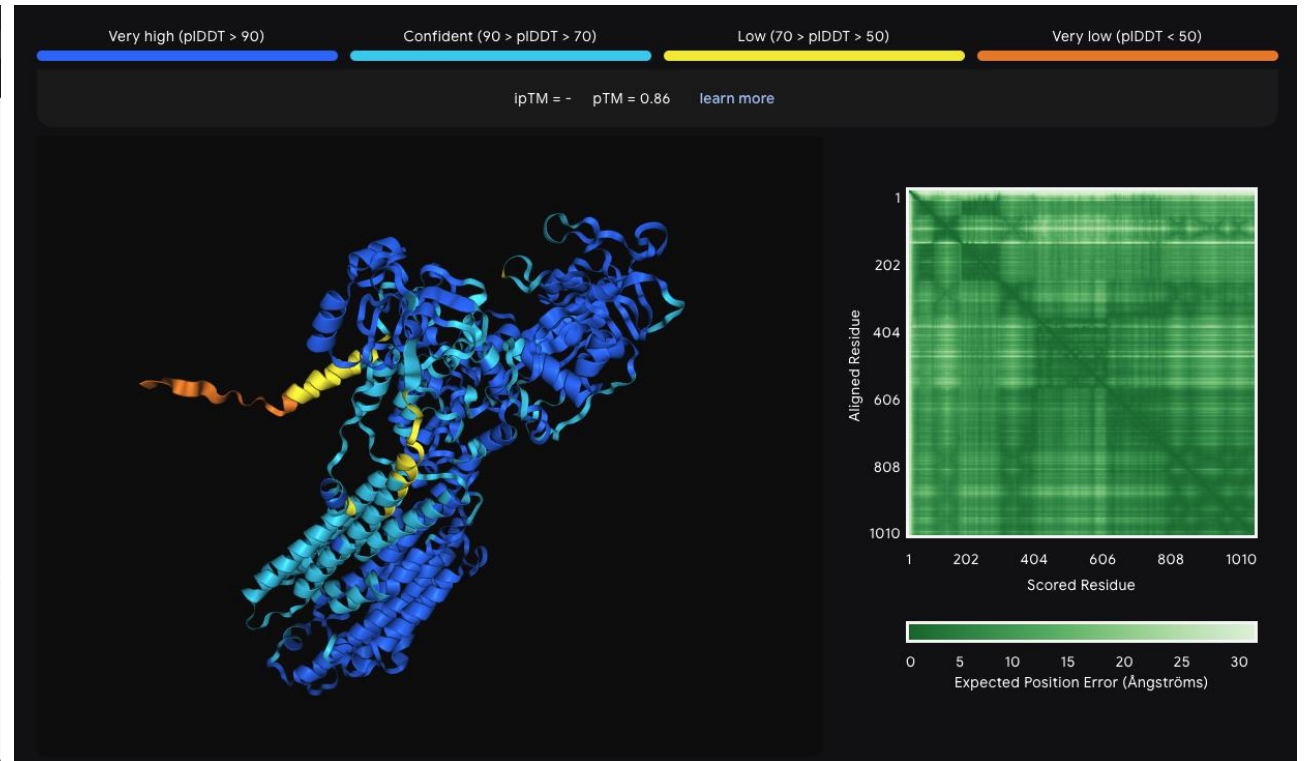
Molecule type: Protein Cycles: 1

```
MGDKKDDKDS PKKNGKERR DLDLKEVA MTEHKMSVEE VCRKYNTDGV GGLTHSKAGE
ILARDGNAL TPPPTTPEWY KFCRQLFGQ STILLWIGAIL CFLAGYIQAG TEDDPSSGNL
YLGIVLAAVV IITGCPYYG EAKSSKIWES PKNMVPQAL VIREGEMOV NAREVVVGGD
VEIKGDRVP ADLRIISAHG CKVDNSSLTG ESEPOTRSPD CTHDNPLETR NITFFSTNCV
EGTARGVVA TGDRVMGRRI ATLASGLEVG KTPPIAIEIH FIQLITGVAV FLGVSFFILS
LILGYTNLEA VIFLIGIIVA NYPEGLLATV TVCLTLTAKS MARKNCLVMK LEAVETLQST
STICSDKGT LTQNRHTVAH MWFDRQIEA DTTEDQSGS FOKSSHTWPA LSHIAGLCNR
AVFKGGQNI PVLKRDVAGD ASESALLKCI ELSGSGVKLM RERNKKVAEI PFNSTNKYQL
SIHETEDPD NRLLVMKGA PERILDRCSI ILLGGKEPL DEEMKEAFGN AYLELGGLE
RVLGFCHYL PEEGPPKGFPA FDCDDVFTT DNLCFVGLMS MIDPPRAAVP DAVGKCRSAG
IKVIMVTDW PITAKATAKG VGIITSEGET VEDIAARLI PVSQVNPRA KACVINGTDL
KDFVTEQIE ILONHTEIVF ARTSPQQLI IVEGCGRGA IVAVTGGVYN DSPALKKADI
GVANGIAGSD VSKQAADMIL LDDNFASIVT GVEEGRLIF NLKKSIAIYL TSNIFEITPF
LLPIMANIPL PLGTITILCI DLGDMVPAI SLAYEAESD IMKRGPNRP TOKLVNERLI
SMAYGGIWI GALGGFFSYF VILAENGLP GRNVGIRLNM DORTVNDLED SYGOQMTYEG
RKVVEFTCHT AFFVSIYVQ WADLIICKT RNSYFGGQK NKILIFGLIE ETALAAFLSY
CPGMDVALRM YLKPSSWFC APPYSFLIFV YDEIRKLILR RNPGGVKEE TTY
```

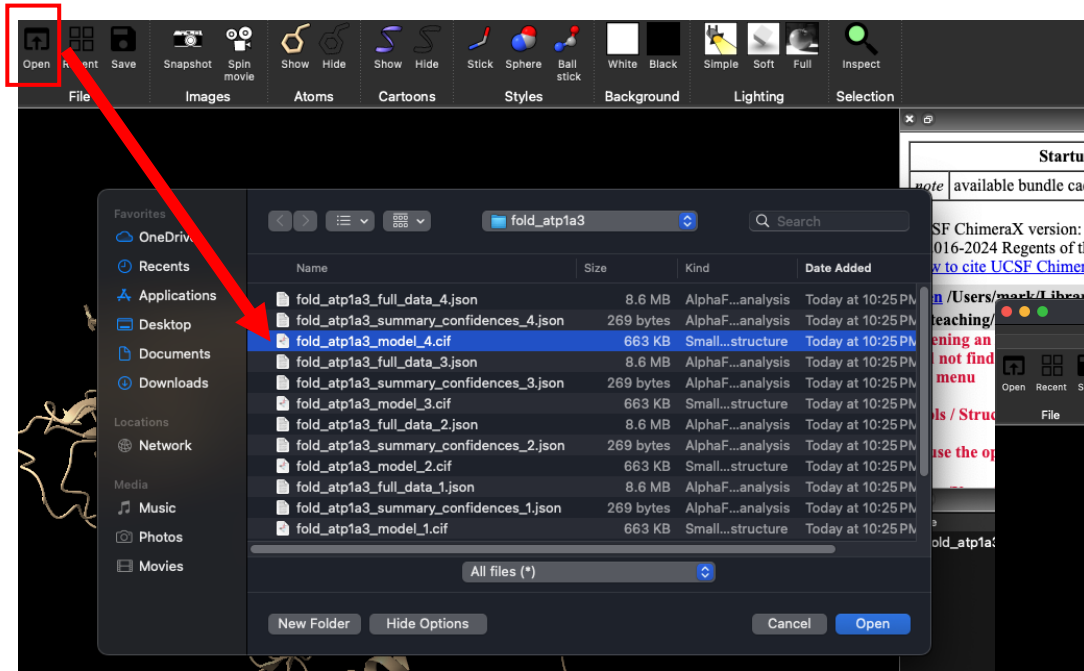
+ Add entity Save job

Continue and preview job

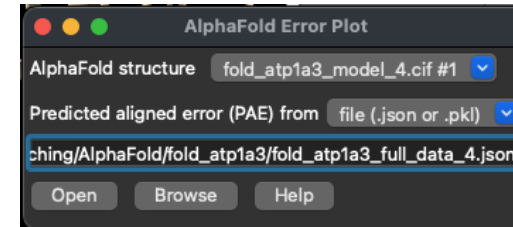
Completed Saved draft In progress Examples Failed



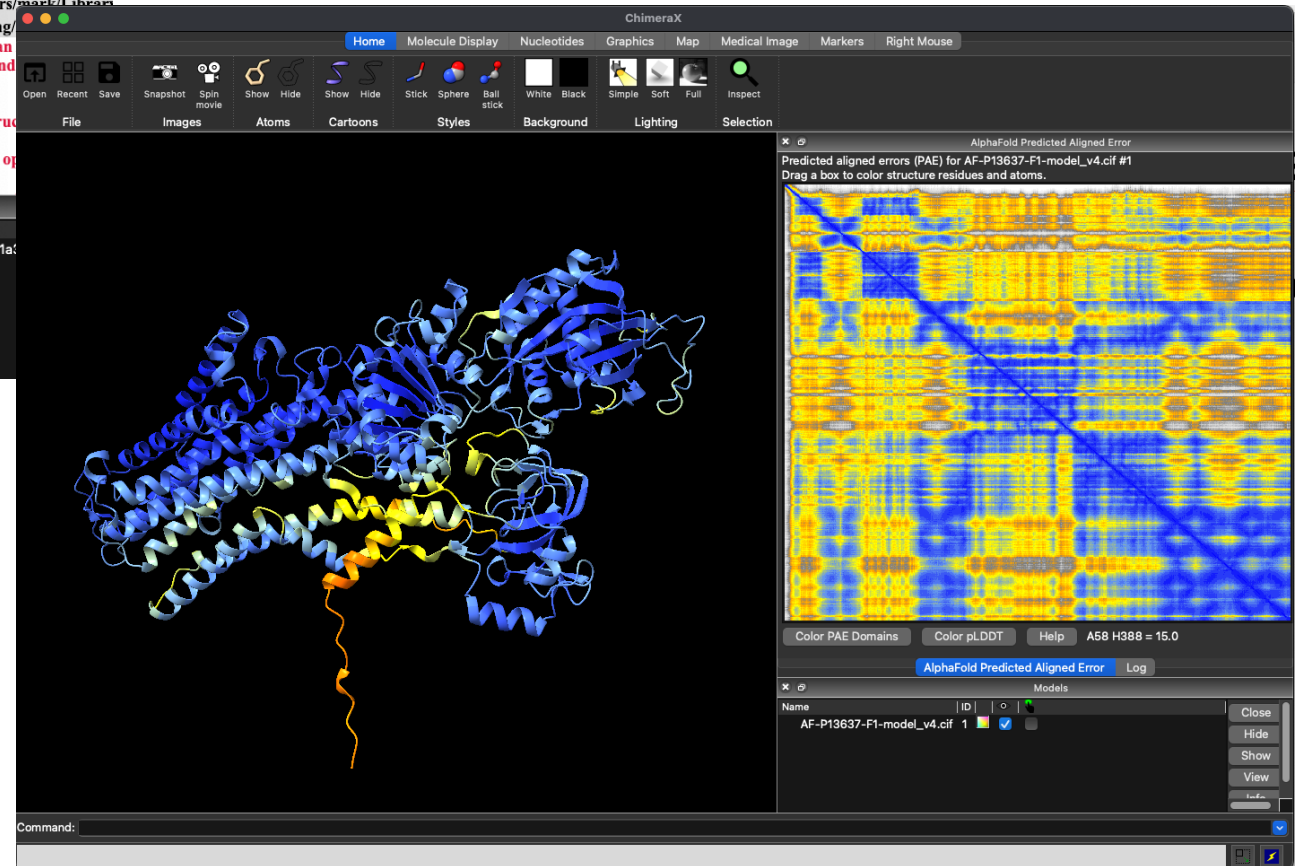
Open the results from the AlphaFold server in ChimeraX



Open protein structure



Error plot info was safe as json format



Results available [[HERE](#)]

Other visualization tools

- PyMOL: <https://github.com/schrodinger/pymol-open-source>
 - The open-source version has same functions as the commercial version
 - Installed in conda environment: `conda install conda-forge::pymol-open-source`
- Mol* 3D Viewer
 - Hosted by RCSB protein data bank
 - <https://www.rcsb.org/3d-view>

