

Scientific Progress

Technological development has been accelerating since the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. The invention of the steam engine allowed power to be generated on demand, permitting industries to be located away from natural power sources, such as rivers. The creation of the light bulb further increased productivity as activities were no longer restricted to daylight hours. Scientific discovery has always preceded technology, with our understanding of what is possible driving our exploration of how to do it. Technology, in turn, is then used to support further advances in science.

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However, most inventions are not transformational, but rather gradual improvements in quality, techniques, and technical details. Even Edison's patented light bulb only improved a previous design. Yet the role of technology in our current climate change predicament is undeniable. The benefits of progress come with costs and, it seems, dangers. We are now once again looking to technology to solve the problems that technology itself has caused.

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Did Edison invent the first light bulb?

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Most inventions involve big changes; is this true?

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What is a patent?