In artificial intelligence, an intelligent agent is an entity that perceives its environment, takes actions autonomously to achieve goals, and may improve its performance through machine learning or by acquiring knowledge. AI textbooks[which?] define artificial intelligence as the "study and design of intelligent agents," emphasizing that goal-directed behavior is central to intelligence.

A specialized subset of intelligent agents, agentic AI (also known as an AI agent or simply agent), expands this concept by proactively pursuing goals, making decisions, and taking actions over extended periods.

Intelligent agents can range from simple to highly complex. A basic thermostat or control system is considered an intelligent agent, as is a human being, or any other system that meets the same criteria—such as a firm, a state, or a biome.[1]