

Image: Hubble's close-up of spiral's disk, bulge

20 December 2019



observations are needed in this area, studies suggest that some, or even most, galactic bulges may be complex composite structures rather than simple ones, with a mix of spherical, disk-like, or boxy components, potentially leading to a wide array of [bulge](#) morphologies in the universe.

This image comprises data from Hubble's Wide Field Camera 3 at visible and infrared wavelengths.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA, P. Erwin et al.

This image from the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope shows IC 2051, a galaxy in the southern constellation of Mensa (the Table Mountain) lying about 85 million light-years away. It is a spiral galaxy, as evidenced by its characteristic whirling, pinwheeling arms, and it has a bar of stars slicing through its center.

This galaxy was observed for a Hubble study on galactic bulges, the bright round central regions of [spiral galaxies](#). Spiral galaxies like IC 2051 are shaped a bit like flying saucers when seen from the side; they comprise a thin, flat disk, with a bulky bulge of stars in the center that extends above and below the disk. These bulges are thought to play a key role in how galaxies evolve, and to influence the growth of the supermassive black holes lurking at the centers of most spirals. While more

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