

There are two main interpretations of Genesis 1:

1. **Fiat Creationism (24-Hour-Days)** - the world was brought into being in six 24-hour days with an appearance of age (i.e., all the trees would have been created fully formed, and would have had rings showing annual growth, even though only a week old; Adam would have appeared 25 or 30 years old).
2. **Gradual Creation over Eons (Days are a Literary Framework)** - God used natural processes to create the world and life, supernaturally intervening on occasion; the days in the Genesis account are a literary framework for declaring *that* God created, not *how* God created.

Cons for Framework understanding of Genesis 1:

1. The word *yom* ("day") is used over 2,000 times in the Hebrew OT. In over 95% of those occurrences, the word means 24 hour day. (Most of the 5% are expressions like the "day of the Lord.") So we come to each occurrence of the word *yom* with the expectation that it will probably mean a 24 hour day. The repeated mention of "evening" and "morning" seems to confirm this. There are signs that the passage is intended as historical narrative, not poetry:
 - it uses the *wayyigtol* expression characteristic of prose
 - it doesn't have the key mark of Hebrew poetry, namely parallelism.
2. In Exodus 20:9-11, God gives the reason for our schedule of six days of work and one day of rest:
Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. ...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Because our days are 24-hour days and because they are modeled after God's, it would seem to follow that God's days must have been 24-hour ones also.
3. We have a deep-seated feeling that figurative language is inferior to literal language.

Cons for 24-hour understanding of Genesis 1:

1. We see several indications that this passage is an artistic, poetic arrangement of the creation story and not merely a straightforward, chronological account:
 - a. Genesis 1 is skillfully composed around the symbolic numbers ten, three, and particularly seven:
 - 10 times we find "God said." [vv3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28,29] Of those 10, 3 concern mankind (vv26,28,29) and 7 the rest of the creatures
 - of those 10, 3 use the verb "to be" ("let there be"—vv3,6,14) for the creatures in the heavens, and 7 use different verbs for the world below
 - the verb "to make" appears 10 times. also the formula "according to its/their kind."
 - there are 3 benedictions ("bless" v22,28,2:3)
 - the verb "create" is used at 3 points in the story, the third time thrice
 - 7 times we read the completion formula ("and it was so"), and 7 times the approval ("and God saw that it was good"); interestingly, those groups of 7 are independent of the 7 days.
 - b. There is very powerful symmetry between Days 1, 2, & 3 and Days 4, 5, & 6:
 - light (Day 1) corresponds to the luminaries (Day 4)
 - creation of sky and separation of waters (Day 2) correspond to the birds and fish (Day 5)
 - appearance of dry land and vegetation (Day 3) correspond to creation of animals and man and the gift of food (Day 6)
 - i.e., in Days 1-3 we see the work of creating spaces through divine acts of separation. In Days 4-6 we see the work of populating of the corresponding spaces. (The immobile parts of creation versus the mobile.)If this is history, beyond doubt it is no ordinary history.
2. There are further indications that this passage is not mere prose:
 - a. The sun that marks the "evening and morning" was not created until Day 4—even though we had "evening and morning" three times before that.
 - b. Genesis 2 tells us that Adam named all the animals before he met Eve; could he do that in a couple hours on Day 6?
3. We need to believe that God created a profoundly deceptive world, with countless markers pointing to the world being eons of years old.