

A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS

A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS: UNLOCKING THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSE

A **VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS** OPENS THE DOOR TO A FASCINATING WORLD WHERE NUMBERS, PATTERNS, AND LOGIC COME TOGETHER TO DESCRIBE EVERYTHING FROM THE TINIEST ATOMS TO THE VASTNESS OF THE COSMOS. WHETHER YOU REALIZE IT OR NOT, MATHEMATICS IS WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF DAILY LIFE — FROM BALANCING YOUR BUDGET TO PREDICTING THE WEATHER AND EVEN CREATING THE TECHNOLOGY WE RELY ON EVERY DAY. BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS MATHEMATICS, AND WHY DOES IT HOLD SUCH A CRUCIAL PLACE IN HUMAN UNDERSTANDING? LET'S TAKE A FRIENDLY AND INSIGHTFUL STROLL THROUGH THE BASICS OF THIS TIMELESS DISCIPLINE.

WHAT IS MATHEMATICS?

AT ITS CORE, MATHEMATICS IS THE STUDY OF NUMBERS, QUANTITIES, SHAPES, AND PATTERNS. IT'S A WAY OF THINKING THAT HELPS US SOLVE PROBLEMS, MAKE PREDICTIONS, AND UNDERSTAND THE WORLD IN A LOGICAL AND CONSISTENT MANNER. BUT MATHEMATICS IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST ARITHMETIC OR GEOMETRY; IT'S A BROAD FIELD THAT ENCOMPASSES VARIOUS BRANCHES, EACH WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE FOCUS AND APPLICATIONS.

THE FOUNDATIONS: NUMBERS AND OPERATIONS

THE STARTING POINT OF ANY MATHEMATICAL EXPLORATION OFTEN BEGINS WITH NUMBERS. FROM NATURAL NUMBERS (1, 2, 3...) TO INTEGERS, FRACTIONS, AND REAL NUMBERS, THESE ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS USED TO COUNT, MEASURE, AND COMPARE.

UNDERSTANDING BASIC OPERATIONS LIKE ADDITION, SUBTRACTION, MULTIPLICATION, AND DIVISION IS ESSENTIAL, BUT MATHEMATICS QUICKLY EXPANDS BEYOND THESE SIMPLE TASKS INTO MORE COMPLEX IDEAS SUCH AS EXPONENTS, ROOTS, AND LOGARITHMS. THESE CONCEPTS ALLOW US TO HANDLE GROWTH RATES, SCALES, AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT AREN'T IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS.

PATTERNS AND RELATIONSHIPS: ALGEBRA AND FUNCTIONS

ALGEBRA IS WHERE MATHEMATICS STARTS TO BECOME A LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLS AND VARIABLES. INSTEAD OF JUST WORKING WITH SPECIFIC NUMBERS, ALGEBRA USES LETTERS TO REPRESENT UNKNOWN OR GENERAL VALUES, ENABLING US TO FORM EQUATIONS AND FIND SOLUTIONS.

FUNCTIONS, A FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT IN ALGEBRA AND CALCULUS, DESCRIBE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VARIABLES. FOR EXAMPLE, A FUNCTION MIGHT SHOW HOW THE SPEED OF A CAR CHANGES OVER TIME OR HOW THE AREA OF A CIRCLE GROWS AS ITS RADIUS INCREASES. THIS ABSTRACTION LETS US MODEL REAL-WORLD PHENOMENA MATHEMATICALLY.

THE BRANCHES OF MATHEMATICS

MATHEMATICS IS VAST, BUT SOME KEY BRANCHES PROVIDE A HELPFUL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING ITS DIVERSITY.

GEOMETRY: THE STUDY OF SHAPES AND SPACE

GEOMETRY IS ALL ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE PROPERTIES AND RELATIONS OF POINTS, LINES, SURFACES, AND SOLIDS. FROM THE SIMPLE SHAPES YOU LEARNED ABOUT IN SCHOOL TO COMPLEX FIGURES STUDIED IN HIGHER MATHEMATICS, GEOMETRY HELPS US MAKE SENSE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD.

APPLICATIONS OF GEOMETRY ARE EVERYWHERE — IN ARCHITECTURE, ART, ENGINEERING, AND EVEN COMPUTER GRAPHICS. IT ALLOWS US TO CALCULATE AREAS, VOLUMES, AND ANGLES, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL IN DESIGNING EVERYTHING FROM BUILDINGS TO VIDEO GAMES.

CALCULUS: CHANGE AND MOTION

CALCULUS INVESTIGATES HOW THINGS CHANGE. DEVELOPED INDEPENDENTLY BY ISAAC NEWTON AND GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ, CALCULUS INTRODUCES CONCEPTS SUCH AS DERIVATIVES AND INTEGRALS.

DERIVATIVES MEASURE HOW A QUANTITY CHANGES INSTANTLY, CAPTURING IDEAS LIKE VELOCITY OR ACCELERATION. INTEGRALS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HELP CALCULATE AREAS UNDER CURVES AND ACCUMULATE QUANTITIES OVER TIME. TOGETHER, CALCULUS IS INDISPENSABLE IN PHYSICS, ECONOMICS, BIOLOGY, AND COUNTLESS OTHER FIELDS.

STATISTICS AND PROBABILITY: MAKING SENSE OF DATA AND UNCERTAINTY

IN TODAY'S DATA-DRIVEN WORLD, STATISTICS AND PROBABILITY ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER. STATISTICS INVOLVES COLLECTING, ANALYZING, AND INTERPRETING DATA TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS.

PROBABILITY, A CLOSELY RELATED FIELD, STUDIES THE LIKELIHOOD OF EVENTS HAPPENING. WHETHER PREDICTING WEATHER PATTERNS OR ASSESSING RISKS IN FINANCE, THESE BRANCHES HELP US NAVIGATE UNCERTAINTY WITH MATHEMATICAL RIGOR.

WHY MATHEMATICS MATTERS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

YOU MIGHT WONDER WHY A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS MATTERS BEYOND ACADEMIC CURIOSITY. THE TRUTH IS, MATHEMATICAL THINKING SHARPENS PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS AND LOGICAL REASONING, WHICH ARE VALUABLE IN ANY PROFESSION OR DAILY DECISION-MAKING.

ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING

MATHEMATICS TEACHES YOU TO APPROACH PROBLEMS METHODICALLY, BREAKING DOWN COMPLEX ISSUES INTO MANAGEABLE PARTS. THIS KIND OF STRUCTURED THINKING TRANSFERS WELL TO OTHER AREAS LIKE PROGRAMMING, FINANCE, AND EVEN PERSONAL PLANNING.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

BEHIND EVERY APP, ELECTRONIC DEVICE, OR INTERNET SERVICE LIES MATHEMATICAL ALGORITHMS AND MODELS. UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF MATHEMATICS CAN DEMYSTIFY HOW TECHNOLOGY WORKS AND INSPIRE INNOVATION.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

BUDGETING, INVESTING, AND MANAGING DEBT ALL REQUIRE SOME DEGREE OF MATHEMATICAL KNOWLEDGE. GRASPING CONCEPTS LIKE INTEREST RATES, PERCENTAGES, AND COMPOUND GROWTH EMPOWERS YOU TO MAKE SMARTER FINANCIAL DECISIONS.

TIPS FOR EMBRACING MATHEMATICS

IF MATH FEELS INTIMIDATING, YOU'RE NOT ALONE. MANY PEOPLE FIND IT CHALLENGING AT FIRST, BUT WITH THE RIGHT APPROACH, ANYONE CAN DEVELOP A STRONG UNDERSTANDING.

- **START WITH THE BASICS:** ENSURE A SOLID GRASP OF FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS BEFORE MOVING ON TO MORE ADVANCED TOPICS.
- **PRACTICE REGULARLY:** LIKE ANY SKILL, MATH IMPROVES WITH CONSISTENT PRACTICE AND PROBLEM-SOLVING.
- **USE REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES:** RELATE MATH PROBLEMS TO EVERYDAY SITUATIONS TO MAKE LEARNING MORE RELEVANT AND ENGAGING.
- **ASK QUESTIONS AND SEEK HELP:** DON'T HESITATE TO USE RESOURCES LIKE TUTORS, ONLINE COURSES, OR STUDY GROUPS.
- **STAY CURIOUS:** EXPLORE HOW MATH CONNECTS TO YOUR INTERESTS, WHETHER THAT'S MUSIC, SPORTS, OR NATURE.

MATHEMATICS AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ASPECTS OF MATHEMATICS IS ITS UNIVERSALITY. REGARDLESS OF CULTURE OR LANGUAGE, MATHEMATICAL TRUTHS REMAIN CONSISTENT. A CIRCLE HAS THE SAME PROPERTIES WHETHER YOU'RE IN TOKYO, PARIS, OR NEW YORK.

THIS UNIVERSALITY MAKES MATHEMATICS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR COLLABORATION ACROSS BORDERS, ENABLING SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS WORLDWIDE TO SOLVE COMPLEX PROBLEMS TOGETHER.

EXPLORING A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS REVEALS JUST HOW DEEPLY INTERTWINED MATH IS WITH HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESS. IT'S A JOURNEY THAT STARTS WITH SIMPLE NUMBERS AND GROWS INTO A COMPREHENSIVE LANGUAGE DESCRIBING THE WORLD'S MYSTERIES. WHETHER YOU'RE SOLVING A PUZZLE, DESIGNING A BUILDING, OR ANALYZING DATA, THE PRINCIPLES OF MATHEMATICS OFFER CLARITY AND INSIGHT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF 'A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS'?

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF 'A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS' IS TO PROVIDE A CONCISE AND ACCESSIBLE OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS, HISTORY, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MATHEMATICS FOR A GENERAL AUDIENCE.

WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF 'A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS' AND WHAT IS THEIR BACKGROUND?

THE AUTHOR IS TIMOTHY GOWERS, A RENOWNED MATHEMATICIAN AND FIELDS MEDALIST, KNOWN FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMBINATORICS AND FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS, AS WELL AS FOR HIS EFFORTS TO COMMUNICATE MATHEMATICS TO A WIDER AUDIENCE.

How does the book address the complexity of advanced mathematical concepts?

The book simplifies complex mathematical ideas by using clear explanations, relatable examples, and avoiding excessive technical jargon, making advanced concepts understandable to readers without a strong math background.

What topics are covered in 'A Very Short Introduction to Mathematics'?

The book covers topics such as the nature of mathematical proof, different branches of mathematics (like algebra, geometry, calculus), the history and development of mathematical thought, and the role of mathematics in science and everyday life.

Is 'A Very Short Introduction to Mathematics' suitable for beginners?

Yes, the book is designed for beginners and general readers interested in understanding the basics and significance of mathematics without requiring prior advanced knowledge.

How does the book explain the relevance of mathematics in modern society?

It highlights how mathematics underpins various fields such as technology, engineering, finance, and natural sciences, demonstrating its essential role in solving real-world problems and advancing human knowledge.

Does the book include historical context about mathematics?

Yes, the book provides historical insights into the development of mathematical ideas and the contributions of key mathematicians throughout history, helping readers appreciate the evolution of the discipline.

What unique perspective does 'A Very Short Introduction to Mathematics' offer compared to other math books?

The book offers a unique blend of rigorous mathematical thought with accessible language, emphasizing not just mathematical techniques but also the philosophy and beauty of mathematics, encouraging readers to see it as a creative and intellectual pursuit.

Additional Resources

A Very Short Introduction to Mathematics: Exploring the Foundations and Scope

A Very Short Introduction to Mathematics serves as an essential gateway for understanding one of the most fundamental disciplines in human knowledge. Mathematics is not merely a subject confined to classrooms or academic texts; it is a universal language that underpins science, technology, economics, and even daily decision-making. This article delves into the core principles of mathematics, its historical evolution, and the various branches that illustrate its vast scope, providing readers with a professional yet accessible overview.

The Essence and Evolution of Mathematics

Mathematics can be broadly defined as the study of numbers, quantities, shapes, and patterns, and the logical relationships between them. Its origins date back to ancient civilizations, where early humans used basic arithmetic for trade, agriculture, and astronomy. Over millennia, mathematics evolved from rudimentary

COUNTING SYSTEMS TO SOPHISTICATED FRAMEWORKS THAT DESCRIBE THE UNIVERSE'S BEHAVIOR.

THE TRANSITION FROM CONCRETE COUNTING TO ABSTRACT REASONING MARKED A PIVOTAL DEVELOPMENT. ANCIENT GREEK MATHEMATICIANS, SUCH AS EUCLID AND PYTHAGORAS, FORMALIZED GEOMETRY AND NUMBER THEORY, INTRODUCING AXIOMS AND PROOFS—CONCEPTS THAT REMAIN CENTRAL TODAY. THE FIELD CONTINUED TO EXPAND THROUGH THE RENAISSANCE AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION, WITH CALCULUS EMERGING AS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING CHANGE AND MOTION, THANKS TO NEWTON AND LEIBNIZ.

MATHEMATICS AS A LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE

MATHEMATICS FUNCTIONS AS THE FOUNDATIONAL LANGUAGE FOR MANY SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINES. PHYSICS, FOR EXAMPLE, RELIES HEAVILY ON MATHEMATICAL MODELS TO EXPLAIN NATURAL PHENOMENA, FROM THE ORBIT OF PLANETS TO QUANTUM MECHANICS. SIMILARLY, BIOLOGY USES STATISTICAL METHODS AND MATHEMATICAL MODELING TO ANALYZE GENETIC PATTERNS AND POPULATION DYNAMICS.

THE PRECISION AND PREDICTIVE POWER OF MATHEMATICS MAKE IT INVALUABLE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT. ENGINEERING DISCIPLINES USE CALCULUS, ALGEBRA, AND DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS TO DESIGN EVERYTHING FROM BRIDGES TO COMPUTER ALGORITHMS. THIS TIGHTLY WOVEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS ITS INDISPENSABLE ROLE IN MODERN INNOVATION.

CORE BRANCHES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS WOULD BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT AN OVERVIEW OF ITS PRIMARY BRANCHES. EACH BRANCH ADDRESSES DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROBLEMS AND OFFERS UNIQUE METHODS AND INSIGHTS.

ARITHMETIC AND NUMBER THEORY

AT THE MOST BASIC LEVEL, ARITHMETIC DEALS WITH THE PROPERTIES OF NUMBERS AND THE RULES FOR OPERATIONS SUCH AS ADDITION, SUBTRACTION, MULTIPLICATION, AND DIVISION. NUMBER THEORY, OFTEN CALLED THE "QUEEN OF MATHEMATICS," EXPLORES INTEGERS AND THEIR PROPERTIES, INCLUDING PRIME NUMBERS, DIVISIBILITY, AND MODULAR ARITHMETIC. ITS APPLICATIONS RANGE FROM CRYPTOGRAPHY TO COMPUTER SECURITY.

ALGEBRA AND ITS STRUCTURAL APPROACH

ALGEBRA INTRODUCES THE CONCEPT OF VARIABLES AND THE MANIPULATION OF MATHEMATICAL SYMBOLS. IT PROVIDES A SYSTEMATIC WAY TO SOLVE EQUATIONS AND UNDERSTAND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN QUANTITIES. BEYOND ELEMENTARY ALGEBRA, ABSTRACT ALGEBRA INVESTIGATES ALGEBRAIC STRUCTURES SUCH AS GROUPS, RINGS, AND FIELDS, WHICH ARE FUNDAMENTAL IN ADVANCED MATHEMATICS AND THEORETICAL PHYSICS.

GEOMETRY AND SPATIAL UNDERSTANDING

GEOMETRY FOCUSES ON SHAPES, SIZES, AND THE PROPERTIES OF SPACE. STARTING WITH EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRY, WHICH STUDIES FLAT SURFACES, THE FIELD HAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE NON-EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRIES—ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CURVATURE OF SPACE IN GENERAL RELATIVITY. GEOMETRY ALSO FINDS PRACTICAL USE IN COMPUTER GRAPHICS, ROBOTICS, AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.

CALCULUS AND CHANGE

CALCULUS IS THE STUDY OF CONTINUOUS CHANGE AND MOTION. IT ENCOMPASSES DIFFERENTIAL CALCULUS, WHICH DEALS WITH RATES OF CHANGE, AND INTEGRAL CALCULUS, WHICH CONCERNS ACCUMULATION AND AREA UNDER CURVES. CALCULUS IS CRUCIAL IN PHYSICS, ENGINEERING, ECONOMICS, AND ANY DOMAIN WHERE DYNAMIC SYSTEMS ARE ANALYZED.

STATISTICS AND PROBABILITY

STATISTICS INVOLVES COLLECTING, ANALYZING, AND INTERPRETING DATA TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS. PROBABILITY THEORY STUDIES THE LIKELIHOOD OF EVENTS, ENABLING RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREDICTION UNDER UNCERTAINTY. THESE BRANCHES HAVE WITNESSED EXPLOSIVE GROWTH DUE TO THE RISE OF BIG DATA AND MACHINE LEARNING, INFLUENCING FIELDS FROM FINANCE TO HEALTHCARE ANALYTICS.

MATHEMATICS IN THE MODERN WORLD

THE DIGITAL ERA HAS AMPLIFIED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATHEMATICS. ALGORITHMS—STEP-BY-STEP MATHEMATICAL INSTRUCTIONS—DRIVE EVERYTHING FROM SEARCH ENGINES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CRYPTOGRAPHY. FURTHERMORE, MATHEMATICAL OPTIMIZATION TECHNIQUES PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN LOGISTICS, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND ECONOMIC PLANNING.

HOWEVER, THE ABSTRACT NATURE OF MATHEMATICS CAN PRESENT EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES. STUDENTS OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING, WHICH HAS LED TO PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS EMPHASIZING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS. THE ONGOING COLLABORATION BETWEEN MATHEMATICIANS, EDUCATORS, AND TECHNOLOGISTS AIMS TO MAKE MATHEMATICS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND ENGAGING.

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF MATHEMATICAL MODELING

MATHEMATICAL MODELING SIMPLIFIES COMPLEX SYSTEMS BY REPRESENTING THEM WITH EQUATIONS AND LOGICAL STRUCTURES. THIS APPROACH ALLOWS SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS TO SIMULATE SCENARIOS AND PREDICT OUTCOMES. YET, MODELS ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THEIR ASSUMPTIONS AND DATA QUALITY. OVERSIMPLIFICATION OR ERRORS CAN LEAD TO INACCURATE PREDICTIONS, EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR CRITICAL EVALUATION.

- **ADVANTAGES:** ENABLES PRECISE PREDICTIONS, FACILITATES PROBLEM-SOLVING, SUPPORTS TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION.
- **LIMITATIONS:** DEPENDENT ON ACCURATE DATA, MAY OVERLOOK REAL-WORLD COMPLEXITIES, CAN BE COMPUTATIONALLY INTENSIVE.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF MATHEMATICS

ONE OF MATHEMATICS' MOST COMPELLING FEATURES IS ITS INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE. IT INTERSECTS WITH PHILOSOPHY, LOGIC, COMPUTER SCIENCE, AND ECONOMICS, FOSTERING A RICH INTELLECTUAL ECOSYSTEM. FOR INSTANCE, MATHEMATICAL LOGIC UNDERPINS COMPUTER PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES, WHILE GAME THEORY, A BRANCH OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS, INFORMS DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES IN ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE.

THIS INTEGRATIVE ASPECT UNDERSCORES MATHEMATICS AS NOT JUST A STANDALONE DISCIPLINE BUT A VERSATILE TOOL SHAPING DIVERSE FIELDS.

A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICS REVEALS A DISCIPLINE CHARACTERIZED BY BOTH PROFOUND ABSTRACTION AND TANGIBLE APPLICABILITY. ITS EVOLUTION FROM SIMPLE COUNTING TO COMPLEX MODELING REFLECTS HUMANITY'S QUEST TO UNDERSTAND AND MANIPULATE THE WORLD SYSTEMATICALLY. AS TECHNOLOGY AND DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING BECOME INCREASINGLY CENTRAL, THE ROLE OF MATHEMATICS CONTINUES TO EXPAND, REAFFIRMING ITS PLACE AT THE HEART OF KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION.

[A Very Short Introduction To Mathematics](#)

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Timothy Gowers, 2002-08-22 The aim of this volume is to explain the differences between research-level mathematics and the maths taught at school. Most differences are philosophical and the first few chapters are about general aspects of mathematical thought.

a very short introduction to mathematics: *The History of Mathematics: A Very Short Introduction* Jacqueline Stedall, 2012-02-23 In this Very Short Introduction, Jacqueline Stedall explores the rich historical and cultural diversity of mathematical endeavour from the distant past to the present day, using illustrative case studies drawn from a range of times and places; including early imperial China, the medieval Islamic world, and nineteenth-century Britain.

a very short introduction to mathematics: Number Theory: A Very Short Introduction

Robin Wilson, 2020-05-28 Number theory is the branch of mathematics that is primarily concerned with the counting numbers. Of particular importance are the prime numbers, the 'building blocks' of our number system. The subject is an old one, dating back over two millennia to the ancient Greeks, and for many years has been studied for its intrinsic beauty and elegance, not least because several of its challenges are so easy to state that everyone can understand them, and yet no-one has ever been able to resolve them. But number theory has also recently become of great practical importance - in the area of cryptography, where the security of your credit card, and indeed of the nation's defence, depends on a result concerning prime numbers that dates back to the 18th century. Recent years have witnessed other spectacular developments, such as Andrew Wiles's proof of 'Fermat's last theorem' (unproved for over 250 years) and some exciting work on prime numbers. In this Very Short Introduction Robin Wilson introduces the main areas of classical number theory, both ancient and modern. Drawing on the work of many of the greatest mathematicians of the past, such as Euclid, Fermat, Euler, and Gauss, he situates some of the most interesting and creative problems in the area in their historical context. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Alain Goriely, 2018-01-25 Mathematics is playing an increasingly important role in society and the sciences, enhancing our ability to use models and handle data. While pure mathematics is mostly interested in abstract structures, applied mathematics sits at the interface between this abstract world and the world in which we live. This area of mathematics takes its nourishment from society and science and, in turn, provides a unified way to understand problems

arising in diverse fields. This Very Short Introduction presents a compact yet comprehensive view of the field of applied mathematics, and explores its relationships with (pure) mathematics, science, and engineering. Explaining the nature of applied mathematics, Alain Goriely discusses its early achievements in physics and engineering, and its development as a separate field after World War II. Using historical examples, current applications, and challenges, Goriely illustrates the particular role that mathematics plays in the modern sciences today and its far-reaching potential. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

a very short introduction to mathematics: *The History of Mathematics* Jacqueline Stedall, 2012-02-23 Mathematics is a fundamental human activity that can be practised and understood in a multitude of ways; indeed, mathematical ideas themselves are far from being fixed, but are adapted and changed by their passage across periods and cultures. In this Very Short Introduction, Jacqueline Stedall explores the rich historical and cultural diversity of mathematical endeavour from the distant past to the present day. Arranged thematically, to exemplify the varied contexts in which people have learned, used, and handed on mathematics, she also includes illustrative case studies drawn from a range of times and places, including early imperial China, the medieval Islamic world, and nineteenth-century Britain. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

a very short introduction to mathematics: Algebra Peter M. Higgins, 2015-10-22 Algebra marked the beginning of modern mathematics, moving it beyond arithmetic, which involves calculations featuring given numbers, to problems where some quantities are unknown. Now, it stands as a pillar of mathematics, underpinning the quantitative sciences, both social and physical. This Very Short Introduction explains algebra from scratch. Over the course of ten logical chapters, Higgins offers a step by step approach for readers keen on developing their understanding of algebra. Using theory and example, he renews the reader's acquaintance with school mathematics, before taking them progressively further and deeper into the subject. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

a very short introduction to mathematics: *Mathematics* Timothy Gowers, 2002 Review: Mathematics is a subject we are all exposed to in our daily lives, but one which many of us fear. In this introduction, Timothy Gowers elucidates the most fundamental differences, which are primarily philosophical, between advanced mathematics and what we learn at school, so that one emerges with a clearer understanding of such paradoxical-sounding concepts as 'infinity', 'curved space', and 'imaginary numbers'. From basic ideas, through to philosophical queries, to common sociological questions about the mathematical community, this book unravels some of the mysteries of space and numbers.--BOOK JACKET.

a very short introduction to mathematics: Mathematical Finance: A Very Short Introduction Mark H. A. Davis, 2019-01-17 In recent years the finance industry has mushroomed to become an important part of modern economies, and many science and engineering graduates have joined the industry as quantitative analysts, with mathematical and computational skills that are needed to solve complex problems of asset valuation and risk management. An important parallel story exists of scientific endeavour. Between 1965-1995, insightful ideas in economics about asset valuation were turned into a mathematical 'theory of arbitrage', an enterprise whose first achievement was the famous 1973 Black-Scholes formula, followed by extensive investigations using

all the resources of modern analysis and probability. The growth of the finance industry proceeded hand-in-hand with these developments. Now new challenges arise to deal with the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis and to take advantage of new technology, which has revolutionized the practice of trading. This Very Short Introduction introduces readers with no previous background in this area to arbitrage theory and why it works the way it does. Illuminating pricing theory, Mark Davis explains its applications to interest rates, credit trading, fund management and risk management. He concludes with a survey of the most pressing issues in mathematical finance today. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

a very short introduction to mathematics: *Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* Michael Beaney, 2017-11-16 Originating in the pioneering work of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein in the four decades around the turn of the twentieth century, analytic philosophy established itself in various forms in the 1930s. After the Second World War, it developed further in North America, in the rest of Europe, and is now growing in influence as the dominant philosophical tradition right across the world, from Latin America to East Asia. In this Very Short Introduction Michael Beaney introduces some of the key ideas of the founders of analytic philosophy by exploring certain fundamental philosophical questions and showing how those ideas can be used in offering answers. Considering the work of Susan Stebbing, he also explores the application of analytic philosophy to critical thinking, and emphasizes the conceptual creativity that lies at the heart of fruitful analysis. Throughout, Beaney illustrates why clarity of thinking, precision of expression, and rigour of argumentation are rightly seen as virtues of analytic philosophy. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

a very short introduction to mathematics: *Philosophical Method: A Very Short Introduction* Timothy Williamson, 2020-08-27 What are philosophers trying to achieve? How can they succeed? Does philosophy make progress? Is it in competition with science, or doing something completely different, or neither? Timothy Williamson tackles some of the key questions surrounding philosophy in new and provocative ways, showing how philosophy begins in common sense curiosity, and develops through our capacity to dispute rationally with each other. Discussing philosophy's ability to clarify our thoughts, he explains why such clarification depends on the development of philosophical theories, and how those theories can be tested by imaginative thought experiments, and compared against each other by standards similar to those used in the natural and social sciences. He also shows how logical rigour can be understood as a way of enhancing the explanatory power of philosophical theories. Drawing on the history of philosophy to provide a track record of philosophical thinking's successes and failures, Williams overturns widely held dogmas about the distinctive nature of philosophy in comparison to the sciences, demystifies its methods, and considers the future of the discipline. From thought experiments, to deduction, to theories, this Very Short Introduction will cause you to totally rethink what philosophy is. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable. Previously published in hardback as *Doing Philosophy*

a very short introduction to mathematics: *Fractals: A Very Short Introduction* Kenneth Falconer, 2013-09-26 Many are familiar with the beauty and ubiquity of fractal forms within nature. Unlike the study of smooth forms such as spheres, fractal geometry describes more familiar shapes and patterns, such as the complex contours of coastlines, the outlines of clouds, and the branching

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