

Timothy Gowers

# MATHEMATICS

A Very Short Introduction

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# Mathematics A Very Short Introduction Very Short Introductions

**Timothy Gowers**



## **Mathematics A Very Short Introduction Very Short Introductions:**

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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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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 *Trigonometry* Glen Van Brummelen, 2020-01-23 Born of the desire to understand the workings of motions of the heavenly bodies trigonometry gave the ancient Greeks the ability to predict their futures Most of what we see of the subject in school comes from these heavenly origins 15th century astronomer Regiomontanus called it the foot of the ladder to the stars In this Very Short Introduction Glen Van Brummelen shows how trigonometry connects mathematics to science and has today become an indispensable tool in predicting cyclic patterns like animal populations and ocean tides Its historical journey through major cultures such as medieval India and the Islamic World has taken it through disciplines such as geography and even religious practice Trigonometry has also been a major player in the most startling mathematical developments of the modern world Its interactions with the concept of infinity led to Taylor and Fourier series some of the most practical tools of modern science The birth of complex numbers led to a shocking union of exponential and trigonometric functions creating the most beautiful formulas and powerful modelling tools in science Finally as Van Brummelen shows trigonometry allows us to explore the strange new worlds of non Euclidean geometries opening up bizarre possibilities for the shape of space itself And indeed one of those new geometries spherical takes us full circle back to ancient Greek astronomers and European navigators who first used it to chart their ways across the heavens and the earth 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 Measurement: A Very Short Introduction David J. Hand, 2016-09-29 Measurement is a fundamental concept that underpins almost every aspect of the modern world It is central to the sciences social sciences medicine and economics but it affects everyday life We measure everything from the distance of far off galaxies to the temperature of the air levels of risk political majorities taxes blood pressure IQ and weight The history of measurement goes back to the ancient world and its story has been one of gradual standardization Today there are different types of measurement levels of accuracy and systems of units applied in different contexts Measurement involves notions of variability accuracy reliability and error and challenges such as the measurement of extreme values In this Very Short Introduction David Hand explains the common mathematical framework underlying all measurement the main approaches to measurement and the challenges involved Following a brief historical account of measurement he discusses measurement as used in the physical sciences and engineering the life sciences and medicine the social and behavioural sciences economics business and public policy 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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most obvious and the first context in which major new techniques depended on formulating infinite processes is calculus But there are many others for example Fourier analysis and fractals In this Very Short Introduction Ian Stewart discusses infinity in mathematics while also drawing in the various other aspects of infinity and explaining some of the major problems and insights arising from this concept He argues that working with infinity is not just an abstract intellectual exercise but that it is instead a concept with important practical everyday applications and considers how mathematicians use infinity and infinitesimals to answer questions or supply techniques that do not appear to involve the infinite

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concrete radically altered possibilities for shaping buildings transforming what architects were able to imagine as did new systems for air conditioning and lighting While architects weren't responsible for these innovations they were among the first to appreciate how they could make the world look and feel different in connection with imagery from other spheres like modern art and industrial design Focusing on a selection of modern buildings that also symbolize bigger cultural ideas Sharr discusses what modern architecture was like why it was like that and how it was imagined Considering the work of some of the historians and critics who helped to shape modern architecture he demonstrates how the field owes as much to its storytellers as to its buildings 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 [Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction](#) Julia Annas, 2000-10-12 Presents fundamental philosophical questions as posed by ancient philosophers comparing and contrasting modern differences in approach and perspective

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