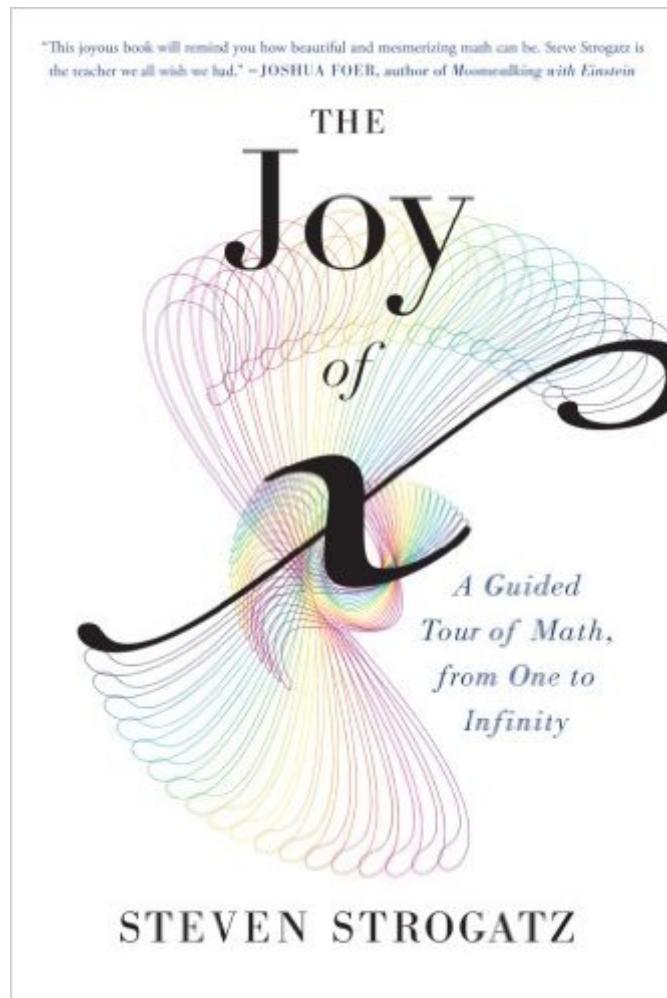


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# The Joy Of X: A Guided Tour Of Math, From One To Infinity



## Synopsis

"Delightful . . . easily digestible chapters include plenty of helpful examples and illustrations. You'll never forget the Pythagorean theorem again!"<sup>1</sup> *Scientific American* Many people take math in high school and promptly forget much of it. But math plays a part in all of our lives all of the time, whether we know it or not. In *The Joy of x*, Steven Strogatz expands on his hit *New York Times* series to explain the big ideas of math gently and clearly, with wit, insight, and brilliant illustrations. Whether he is illuminating how often you should flip your mattress to get the maximum lifespan from it, explaining just how Google searches the internet, or determining how many people you should date before settling down, Strogatz shows how math connects to every aspect of life. Discussing pop culture, medicine, law, philosophy, art, and business, Strogatz is the math teacher you wish you'd had. Whether you aced integral calculus or aren't sure what an integer is, you'll find profound wisdom and persistent delight in *The Joy of x*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Struggling through several years of higher math in engineering school in the 1960s didn't engender a love of mathematics in me. It wasn't until years later that I began to value the beauty and elegance of mathematics. A big part of my appreciation came from mathematicians like Steven Strogatz who wrote about math for readers who appreciated the concepts but had no desire to wade into a morass of complex equations. In *The Joy of x*, Strogatz has done a masterful job as our tour guide through the elements of mathematics, and he's done it without "dumbing it down" or making it just another refresher course for the subject. He presented the various mathematical elements and concepts in fresh new ways, but he clearly expected the reader to exercise their mind to

understand. The reward was a new appreciation of the beauty of mathematics and for how our knowledge of the subject advanced in fits and starts over several thousand years. The book has six parts, each presenting certain elements of mathematics: Numbers, Relationships, Shapes, Change, Data, and Frontiers. These sections represent a grand tour through the history and development of mathematics, including the practical - and some whimsical - applications. Never again will I fall into the trap of bungling the answer to the classic "If three men paint three fences in three hours, how long will it take for one man to paint one fence?" (answer: 3 hours). Now I understand why a piece of paper can't be folded in half more than 7-8 times, and how a high school junior was able to beat the record using a monstrously long roll of... toilet paper! I know how Luke could guarantee himself a win over Darth Vader in a game of laser tag (hint: it involves a conic section).

Before you buy this book, take a second to examine yourself. If you always hated math, don't bother with this book. You will just use it to reinforce your dislikes. But if you have ever looked at numbers, triangles, or even google page rankings and wondered how anyone ever figured any of that stuff out, this might be your book.== The Good Stuff ==\* This is not a math book. You won't learn how to calculate the area of a triangle, the odds of a no-hitter or the present value of a 40 year annuity. But if you are willing to read carefully and think about the concepts presented, you will have a better understanding of how math is used to model and predict the way the world works.\* I am an Electrical Engineer, a field that uses moderate level math on a daily basis. Even though none of this material was new to me, there was some interesting ways of explaining things which I had never considered before. This always comes in handy, even among fellow techies. And there were numerous facts and observations which, while I probably could derive them myself, were interesting enough to spend some time examining.\* All the material presented in the book is certainly at the level that any high-school graduate could understand. You might not be able to grasp the nuances of the material, or be able to use the concepts to solve real world problems, but you will have an understanding of how the math works. Depending on the amount of math you have been exposed to, some topics might require the reader to think a bit to understand the concepts. Think about a two page article that describes how an internal combustion engine works.

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