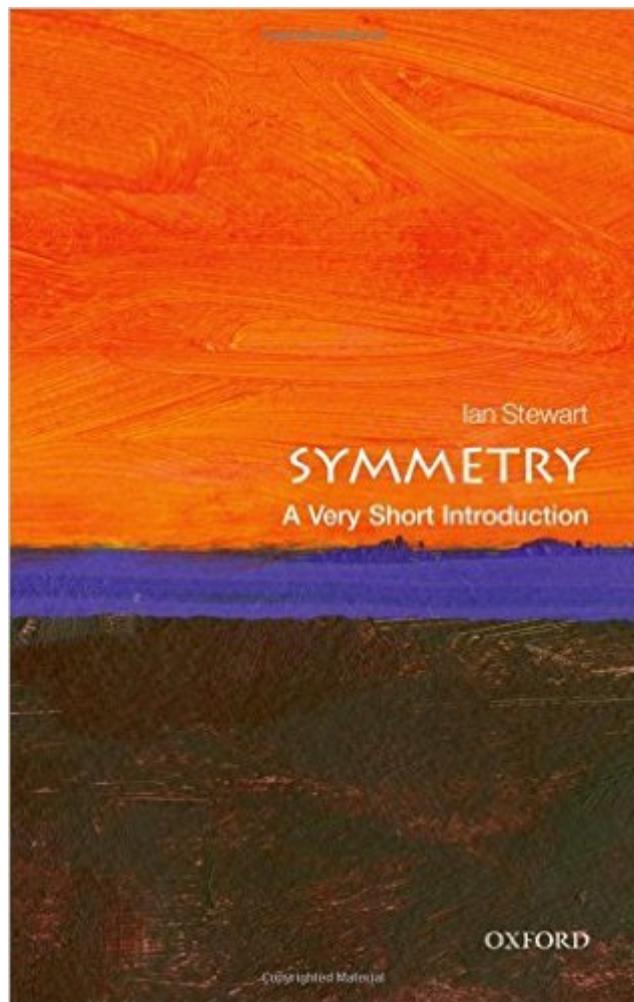


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Symmetry: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

Symmetry is an immensely important concept in mathematics and throughout the sciences. In this Very Short Introduction, Ian Stewart demonstrates symmetry's deep implications, showing how it even plays a major role in the current search to unify relativity and quantum theory. Stewart, a respected mathematician as well as a widely known popular-science and science-fiction writer, brings to this volume his deep knowledge of the subject and his gift for conveying science to general readers with clarity and humor. He describes how symmetry's applications range across the entire field of mathematics and how symmetry governs the structure of crystals, innumerable types of pattern formation, and how systems change their state as parameters vary. Symmetry is also highly visual, with applications that include animal markings, locomotion, evolutionary biology, elastic buckling, waves, the shape of the Earth, and the form of galaxies. Fundamental physics is governed by symmetries in the laws of nature--Einstein's point that the laws should be the same at all locations and all times. About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

Book Information

Series: Very Short Introductions

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 12, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199651981

ISBN-13: 978-0199651986

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 0.4 x 4.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces ([View shipping rates and policies](#))

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book deserves five stars for its broad coverage of a very interesting subject, and one star for its dense mathematical presentation of that topic. Reading it is like drifting into a graduate-level seminar on group theory that first enticed you in with its catchy title. Every chapter starts with an interesting presentation of a fascinating aspect of symmetry, from Islamic art to the regular gaits of animals, from Rubik's cube to the symmetry of the laws of nature. Soon enough, though, you start running into the sentences such as "A cycle is a permutation of distinct numbers X_1, \dots, X_m that sends X_j to X_{j+1} if 1

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