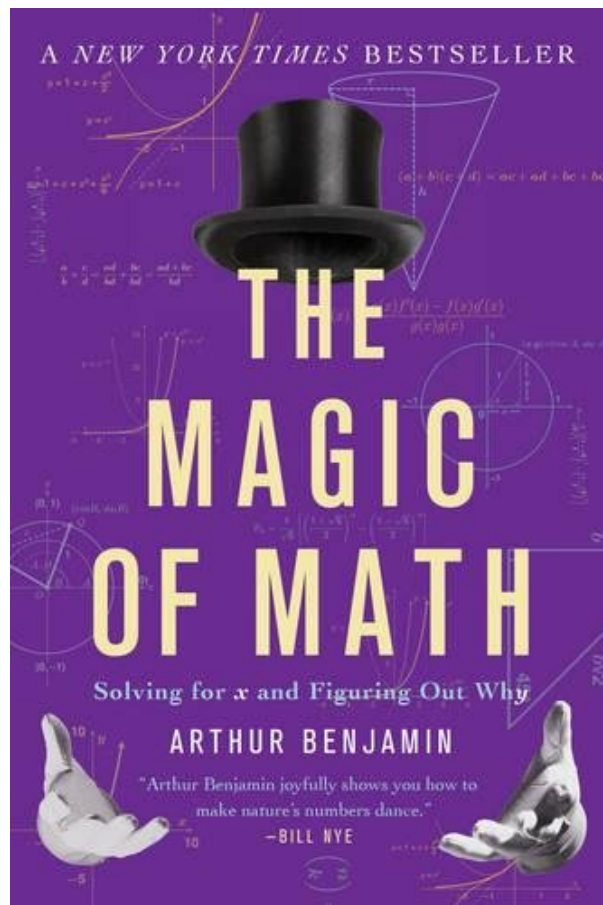


THE MAGIC OF MATH: SOLVING FOR X AND FIGURING OUT WHY BY ARTHUR BENJAMIN



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Review

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A New York Times Bestseller

"Arthur Benjamin . . . joyfully shows you how to make nature's numbers dance."

-Bill Nye

The Magic of Math is the math book you wish you had in school. Using a delightful assortment of examples—from ice-cream scoops and poker hands to measuring mountains and making magic squares—this book revels in key mathematical fields including arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and calculus, plus Fibonacci numbers, infinity, and, of course, mathematical magic tricks. Known throughout the world as the "mathemagician," Arthur Benjamin mixes mathematics and magic to make the subject fun, attractive, and easy to understand for math fan and math-phobic alike.

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Most helpful customer reviews

74 of 77 people found the following review helpful.

A compelling and engaging journey appropriate for a wide variety of readers

By Sam

The Magic of Math is a fantastic book, as one would expect from Arthur Benjamin. Benjamin's enthusiasm shines throughout the book, mathematical ideas are beautifully explained, and each chapter is surprisingly hard to put down! Moreover, the book is appropriate for many different audiences, including:

- Anyone who wants a better understanding of what it means to do mathematics, or wants to see the beauty and creativity inherent in mathematics
- Middle and High School students who want to see some of the mathematics "behind the scenes" of what they're learning in school
- Burgeoning mathematicians who want to see mathematics beyond the scope of the grade school curriculum
- Tutors and teachers who want an easy source of fun material to engage their students
- Anyone who wants to really understand *why* the math they learned in grade school is true.

People familiar with this genre of mathematics outreach books (e.g., *Here's Looking at Euclid*, *The Joy of X*, *Love and Math*, etc.) often find that many of the books are very similar, and that their contents tend to overlap greatly. While readers will certainly find common topics like the Pythagorean Theorem or the Fibonacci Numbers in Benjamin's book, I think they'll also encounter quite a substantial amount of new material in this book. In particular, Benjamin goes into more mathematical depth with much of the material he discusses. Further, a quick skim of the contents reveals a lot of beautiful mathematics that is not commonly in outreach books, including an especially thorough discussion of exciting topics in a field of mathematics known as combinatorics. If you're interested in understanding the kind of thinking a mathematician does, then you'll find these chapters especially novel!

At the same time, Benjamin's book is very readable. He clearly motivates the mathematical ideas he shares, and then proceeds to explain them in concrete and understandable ways. Of course, as with any good book, this book will make you think! However, you'll have Arthur Benjamin supporting you along the way, and you'll find yourself learning quite a bit of mathematics with that support. Benjamin is also sure to include a few optional and sometimes particularly robust mathematical ideas, but he clearly marks these as "asides," explicitly indicating to readers that grappling with these ideas is not necessary for understanding the material. Instead, these aside sections serve to make the book more interesting to people who might reread sections of the book, or who already have an especially strong background in mathematics.

The Bottom Line: This is a great book that can (and should!) be read by people from a huge variety of

backgrounds. Beautiful mathematical ideas lie waiting to be discovered, and readers will encounter both engaging prose and crystal-clear mathematical exposition.

Disclaimer: I was given a free copy of this book by the author, though there was neither an expectation nor a suggestion that I write a review

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A child's wonder

By Douglas C. Dovers

My third grade granddaughter got a D in math! When I squared 81 in my head she was disbelieving until we did it longhand. Her eyes widened and ensued an excited review of all she had learned in school and was so excited to share.

The book paid for itself several times over from the first few pages.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Arthur Benjamin works wonders with numbers

By N. Moyer

I only wish Arthur Benjamin were around when I was struggling with math in high school and college. Arthur Benjamin's books have changed my life and my perception of myself as a word person, never a numbers person. Now I am both. The section on magic squares is worth the price of the whole book, and there is so much more.

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"There's a playful joy to be found in this book, for readers at any level. Most magicians don't reveal their secrets, but in *The Magic of Math*, Arthur Benjamin shows how uncovering the mystery behind beautiful mathematical truths makes math even more marvelous to behold."-Francis Su, president, Mathematical Association of America "The *Magic of Math* offers an expansive, unforgettable journey through mathematics where numbers dance and mathematical secrets are revealed. Just open the book and start reading; you'll be swept over by the magic of Benjamin's writing. Luckily, there is no magician's code to these secrets as you'll undoubtedly want to share and perform them with family and friends." -Tim Chartier, professor of Mathematics, Davidson College, and author of *Math Bytes*

About the Author

Arthur Benjamin holds a PhD from Johns Hopkins University and is a professor of mathematics at Harvey Mudd College. The author of *The Secrets of Mental Math*, he lives in Claremont, California.

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