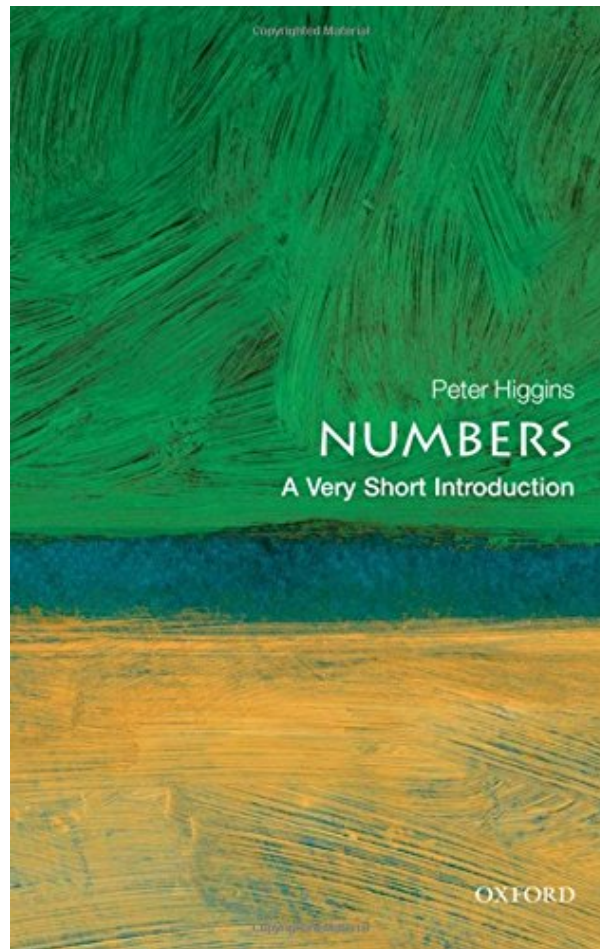
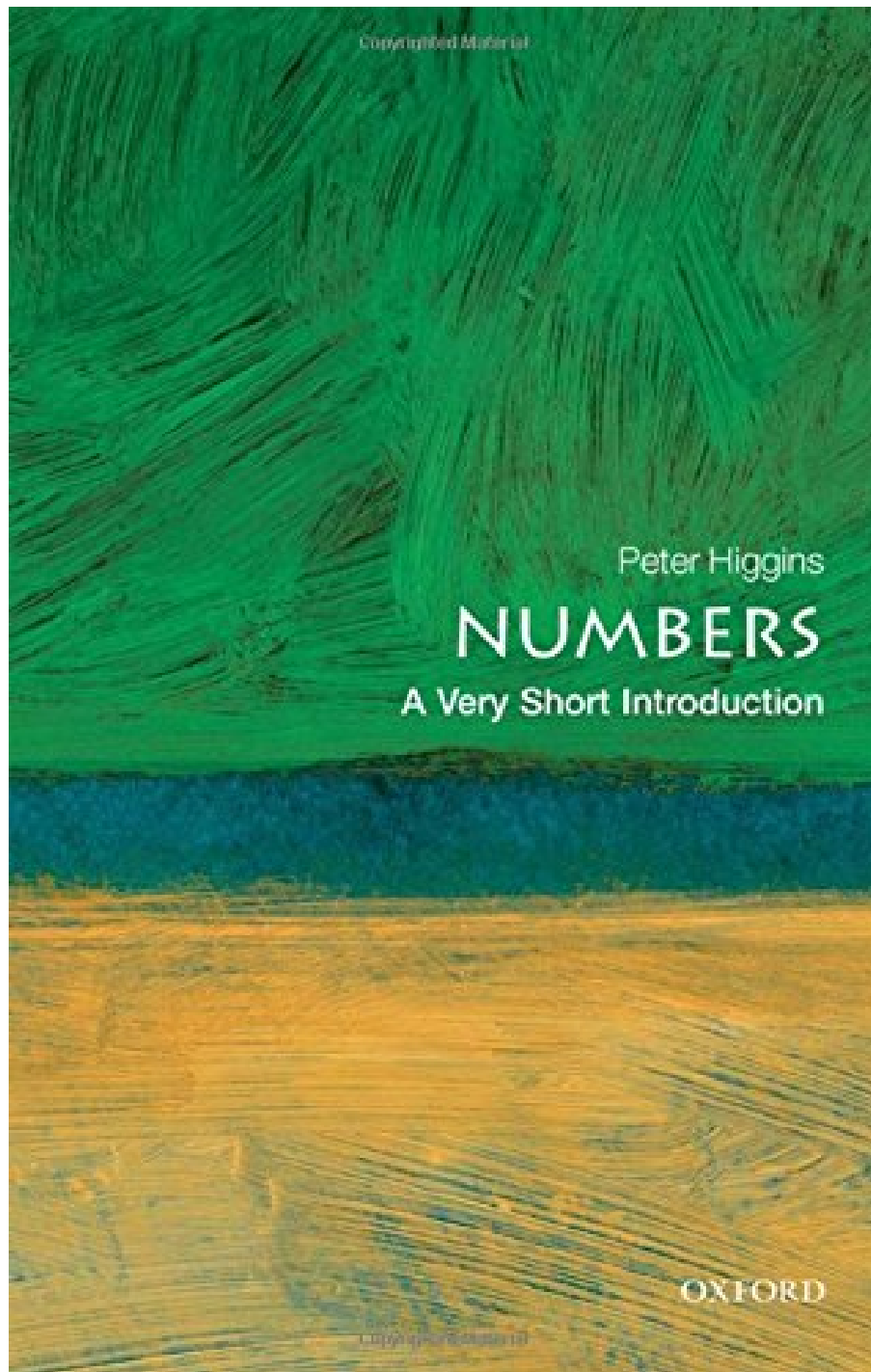


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About the Author

Peter M. Higgins is Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Essex University. The author of five popular mathematics books, he is the inventor of Circular Sudoku.

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NUMBERS: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION BY PETER M. HIGGINS PDF

Numbers are integral to our everyday lives and factor into almost everything we do. In this Very Short Introduction, Peter M. Higgins, a renowned popular-science writer, unravels the world of numbers, demonstrating its richness and providing an overview of all the number types that feature in modern science and mathematics. Indeed, Higgins paints a crystal-clear picture of the number world, showing how the modern number system matured over many centuries, and introducing key concepts such as integers, fractions, real and imaginary numbers, and complex numbers. Higgins sheds light on such fascinating topics as the series of primes, describing how primes are now used to encrypt confidential data on the internet. He also explores the infinite nature of number collections and explains how the so-called real numbers knit together to form the continuum of the number line. Written in the fashion of Higgins' highly popular science paperbacks, Numbers accurately explains the nature of numbers and how so-called complex numbers and number systems are used in calculations that arise in real problems.

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9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

A Fine Introduction to the Beauty and Mystery of Mathematics

By Joseph A. Schrock

I just finished reading "Numbers: A Very Short Introduction". I'm pretty much a mathematical hobbyist -- thus not a "real" mathematician. However, my verdict on this book, as with other VSI books via Oxford University Press, is that it is quite pleasing reading, and that it is a fine introduction to elementary numbers,

as well as the more mysterious numbers such as complex numbers, transcendental numbers, quaternions, etc.

For people who are professional mathematics students, mathematicians, or those who merely like to dabble in mathematics, this book is an excellent (brief) overview of much of the currently discovered mathematical world. Who knows what additional mysterious numbers and concepts might evolve in human mathematical endeavors over the next century or two?

From my perspective, this book is highly recommended for those who love to read about the world of numbers.

25 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

As clear an introduction to number theory as is possible

By Michael Birman

Oxford University Press has created a superb series of small format books that introduce disparate academic subjects. These attractively designed, sturdily bound books easily slip into a pocket for convenient transport (except for one inexplicable exception: the introduction to Bertrand Russell which for some reason is 50% larger and bound by a glossy cover). I've collected many of the nearly 300 books in the series; storage is easy to do given their small footprint. This new addition to the series is Numbers and it is primarily written for those with nothing more than an elementary knowledge of mathematics but who are fascinated by the world of numbers and are unafraid of taking the plunge. Innumeracy is rampant with many intelligent people convincing themselves that mathematics is too difficult, too arcane to be understood. As one advances up math's ladder of abstractions it does tend to get a bit hair-raising but none of those difficulties are in evidence here.

Author Peter Higgins has mastered the technique of using familiar language to describe the fascinating world of number theory. This short introduction concentrates on the behavior of counting numbers or integers, the simplest concepts in all of math. He begins by discussing the behavior of these most fundamental of mathematical entities. From there he leads the reader into the important realm of Prime Numbers (divisible only by 1 and themselves). Primes are reigning kings amongst numbers: the famous Riemann Hypothesis deals with them. Prime number theory inevitably leads to a discussion of cryptography (primes are the malleable agents of devising encryption codes). Higgins also discusses so-called Perfect Numbers (numbers like 6 that are uniquely the sum of its divisors: $1+2+3$).

The author then enters the more daunting world of complex numbers, the realm of the imaginary square-root of -1. This is probably the most abstract topic tackled by Higgins but his descriptions and language are not too difficult. He is always precise and clear and I found that a little concentration was all that was necessary to follow him on the path. Higgins concludes this fine little book with an introduction to infinity, featuring the peculiar universe of 19th Century number theorist Georg Cantor. It is an appropriate conclusion to this book because infinity is the key attribute of the world of numbers. I read this diminutive volume in a single sitting, found nothing overwhelming and I was always engrossed. If you're interested in learning a little more about numbers, have a few hours of spare time and are both curious and adventurous, you could hardly do better than this splendid introduction.

Mike Birman

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Good. Various aspects of numbers.

By Rudra Prasanna Mohapatra

Basic math skills desired. Or else partial understanding. Numbers, types, applications, few math giants, good book for person love for math not stat.

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