

The Language of Mathematics: Making the Invisible Visible

By Keith Devlin

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"The great book of nature," said Galileo, "can be read only by those who know the language in which it was written. And this language is mathematics." In *The Language of Mathematics*, award-winning author Keith Devlin reveals the vital role mathematics plays in our eternal quest to understand who we are and the world we live in. More than just the study of numbers, mathematics provides us with the eyes to recognize and describe the hidden patterns of life?patterns that exist in the physical, biological, and social worlds without, and the realm of ideas and thoughts within.

Taking the reader on a wondrous journey through the invisible universe that surrounds us?a universe made visible by mathematics?Devlin shows us what keeps a jumbo jet in the air, explains how we can see and hear a football game on TV, allows us to predict the weather, the behavior of the stock market, and the outcome of elections. Microwave ovens, telephone cables, children's toys, pacemakers, automobiles, and computers?all operate on mathematical principles. Far from a dry and esoteric subject, mathematics is a rich and living part of our culture. An exploration of an often woefully misunderstood subject, *The Language of Mathematics* celebrates the simplicity, the precision, the purity, and the elegance of mathematics.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Keith Devlin is trying to be the Carl Sagan of mathematics, and he is succeeding. He writes: "Though the structures and patterns of mathematics reflect the structure of, and resonate in, the human mind every bit as much as do the structures and patterns of music, human beings have developed no mathematical equivalent of a pair of ears. Mathematics can be seen only with the eyes of the mind." All of his books are attempts to get around this problem, to "try to communicate to others some sense of what it is we experience--some sense of the simplicity, the precision, the purity, and the elegance that give the patterns of mathematics their aesthetic value."

Life by the Numbers, Devlin's companion book to the PBS series of the same name, is heavily illustrated and soothingly low on equations. But as he says, wanting mathematics without abstract notation "is rather like saying that Shakespeare would be much easier to understand if it were written in simpler language."

The Language of Mathematics is Devlin's second iteration of the approach he used in *Mathematics: The Science of Patterns*. It covers all the same ground (and uses many of the same words) as the latter, but with fewer glossy pictures, sidebars, and references. Devlin has also added chapters on statistics and on mathematical patterns in nature. --*Mary Ellen Curtin*

From Scientific American
...he skillfully gives both a history of the subject and a guide through the terrain.... Keith Devlin is an apt teacher of the language.

Review

“Keith Devlin's *The Language of Mathematics* is the perfect book for people who have questions about math they've always wanted to ask but were afraid they wouldn't understand the answers to.” ?*Boston Book Review*

“Devlin takes readers on a tour of the numeric underpinnings of everyday life.” ?*Wired*

“As Galileo put it, 'The great book of nature can be read only by those who know the language in which it was written. And this language is mathematics.' Keith Devlin is an apt teacher of the language.” ?*Scientific American*

“Devlin, who is able to write for generalists, embarks on the sea of numbers, shapes, and patterns. His voyage potentially had sixty or so destinations, the discrete topics that make up mathematics; to manage the trip Devlin limits the port of call to eight . . . Devlin's tour indeed achieves its purpose.” ?*Booklist*

“Those interested in a broad take on the history and current state of the art of math should look no further than *The Language of Mathematics*.” ?*Publishers Weekly*

Users Review

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Steven Strong:

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