



Life by the Numbers

Keith Devlin

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Acclaim for Life by the Numbers

"Not in many, many years have I seen a book as instructive and enlightening about the beauty of mathematics. Life by the Numbers is truly superb. Sheer fun." —Amir Aczel author of Fermat's Last Theorem.

"A fascinating account of many of the ways in which mathematical ideas find application in the world around us. Keith Devlin is to be congratulated for bringing these ideas so accessibly to the public." —Sir Roger Penrose author of The Emperor's New Mind.

"This wondrous book reveals how, on the brink of the millennium, wizards are using math to bring movie dinosaurs to life, to improve tennis stars' serves, to win sailboat races, and to probe the eeriest corners of the cosmos. A pleasurable read for adult and young alike." —Keay Davidson coauthor of Wrinkles in Time.

Why do leopards grow spots when tigers grow stripes? Is the universe round, square, or some other shape? How do the dimples in a golf ball give it greater lift? Is there such a thing as a public mood? If so, how can we accurately take its pulse?

Only one tool of the human mind has the power and versatility to answer so many questions about our world—mathematics. Far from a musty set of equations and proofs, mathematics is a vital and creative way of thinking and seeing. It is the most powerful means we have of exploring our world and how it works, from the darkest depths of the oceans to the faintest glimmers of far-away galaxies, and from the aerodynamics of figure-skating jumps to the shadows of the fourth dimension.

In this captivating companion to the landmark PBS series Life by the Numbers, acclaimed author Keith Devlin reveals the astonishing range of creative and powerful ways in which scientists, artists, athletes, medical researchers, and many others are using mathematics to explore our world and to enhance our lives.

On this exhilarating tour you will explore deep-sea volcanoes with oceanographer Dawn Wright, go behind the scenes of blockbuster movies with special-effects designer Doug Trumbull, and probe the strange lives of viruses with microbiologist Sylvia Spengler. Listen to astronomer Robert Kirshner describe how he is charting the curve of space; discover how biologist Mike Labarbara visualizes the way a Tyrannosaurus rex carried its massive frame; and, along with brain researcher Brad Hatfield, peer into the mind of an Olympic markswoman at the moment she takes a shot. Glimpse a future of wearable computers and silicon "butlers" with computer scientist Pattie Maes, and watch a lilac come to life on screen with "computer botanist" Przemyslaw Prusinkiewicz.

Lavishly illustrated and beautifully written, Life by the Numbers brings mathematical exploration and invention to life through the stories of some of the most creative practitioners of the art. It imparts an appreciation of the ingenuity and the sheer fun of seeing our world through mathematical eyes.

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