



Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension: A Mathematician's Journey Through Narcissistic Numbers, Optimal Dating Algorithms, at Least Two Kinds of Infinity, and More

By Matt Parker

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A revolutionary book from the stand-up mathematician that makes math fun again now in paperback!

Math is boring, says the mathematician and comedian Matt Parker. Part of the problem may be the way the subject is taught, but it's also true that we all, to a greater or lesser extent, find math difficult and counterintuitive. This counterintuitiveness is actually part of the point, argues Parker: the extraordinary thing about math is that it allows us to access logic and ideas beyond what our brains can instinctively do through its logical tools we are able to reach beyond our innate abilities and grasp more and more abstract concepts.

In the absorbing and exhilarating "Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension," Parker sets out to convince his readers to revisit the very math that put them off the subject as fourteen-year-olds. Starting with the foundations of math familiar from school (numbers, geometry, and algebra), he takes us on a grand tour, from four dimensional shapes, knot theory, the mysteries of prime numbers, optimization algorithms, and the math behind barcodes and iPhone screens to the different kinds of infinity and slightly beyond.

Both playful and sophisticated, " Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension" is filled with captivating games and puzzles, a buffet of optional hands-on activities that entice us to take pleasure in mathematics at all levels. Parker invites us to relearn much of what baffled us in school and, this time, to be utterly enthralled by it."

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 8 Up—For readers who haven't balked at Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, 1988) or Robert P. Crease and Alfred Scharff Goldhaber's *The Quantum Moment* (Norton, 2014), this sustained ramble through the thickets of mathematics offers similarly lucid but challenging insights into our universe's deeper patterns and principles. Building not on a chronological but a conceptual framework outlined in the opening chapter, "Zeroth Chapter," the author explores the historical evolution of mathematical tools, conjectures, and concepts from numbers and geometrical shapes to primes, knots, algorithms, multiple dimensions, computers from the Antikythera Mechanism on, probability, "ridiculous" (i.e., negative, transcendental, surreal, and the like) numbers, and infinities of diverse flavor. He adds lots of small diagrams and photos to illustrate his topics, but appends no index or, aside from follow-up comments on scattered posers, back matter. A stand-up comedian as well as a trained mathematician, Parker lightens the intellectual load considerably with zingers ("That's the problem with binary jokes: they either work or they don't") and everyday examples from bar bets to dating algorithms. Still, even confirmed math geeks will find this pleasurable but not casual reading.—John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York City

Review

“*Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension* shows off math at its most playful and multifarious, ranging from classics like knot theory and ruler-and-compass constructions to more whimsical topics like the topology of beer logos and error-correcting scarves.” ?*Jordan Ellenberg, author of How to Not Be Wrong*

“Matt Parker is some sort of unholy fusion of a prankster, wizard and brilliant nerd--maths is rarely this clever, funny and ever so slightly naughty.” ?*Adam Rutherford, author of Creation*

“This is the best book on recreational mathematics since Martin Gardner's *My Best Mathematical and Logic Puzzles*.” ?*Library Journal*

About the Author

Matt Parker is a stand-up comedian and mathematician. He writes about math for *The Guardian*, has a math column in *The Telegraph*, is a regular panelist on Radio 4's *The Infinite Monkey Cage*, has appeared in and worked on *Five Greatest* on the Discovery Channel, and has performed his math stand-up routines in front of audiences of thousands.

Users Review

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Jason Urso:

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