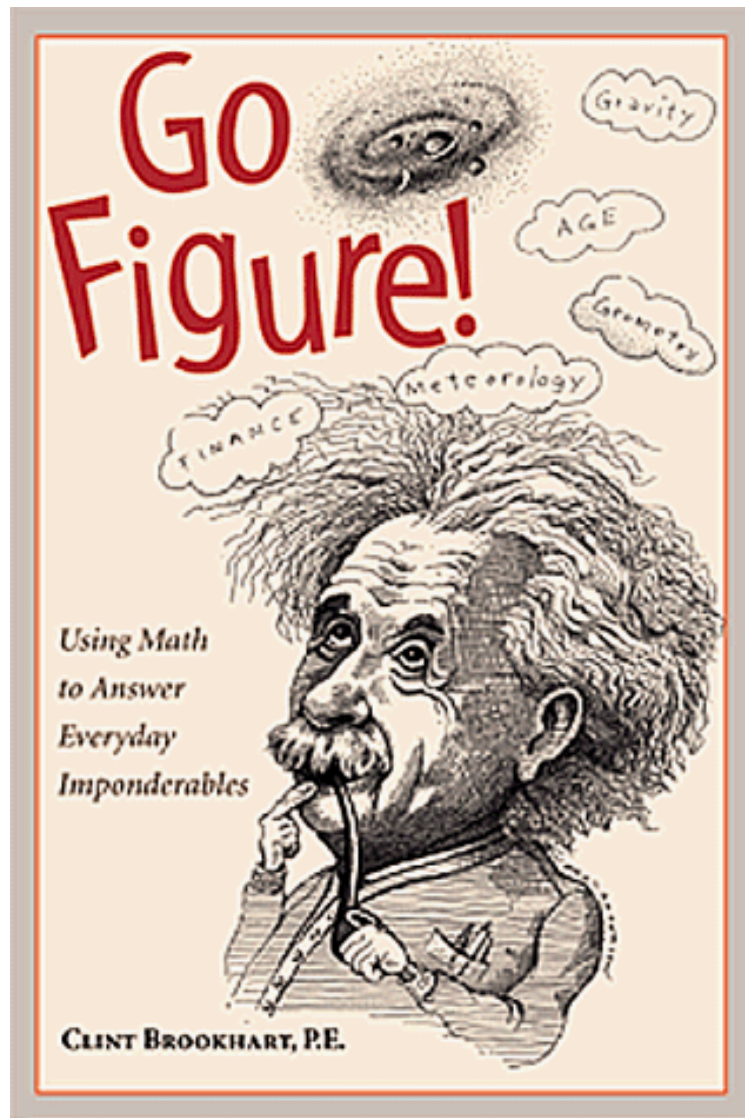


Go Figure!: Using Math to Answer Everyday Imponderables

Clint Brookhart

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scientific calculator experimentation, from which the appropriately equipped reader may learn. Carbon dating, factorial growth, pyramid schemes, and solar system mechanics are among the areas discussed, all in a lively fashion. Though some topics are advanced, many are presented in a suitably elementary fashion. Unfortunately, the book is marred by numerous serious errors, of which a striking example is the following miscasting of Goldbach's famous conjecture: "no one has ever found a number greater than 2 that could not be expressed as the sum of two prime numbers". (Try 11.) Others, such as the treatment of factorials, evidence faulty logic, a tin ear, misuse of common technical terms, and weak pedagogy. Readers encountering the material for the first time may be stimulated, but will also be misled and, likely, confused. A new printing is said to be in the works, so interested readers are advised to await its appearance before considering a purchase. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. New Ideas for the Math Hobbyist By A Customer The previous critics seem to be a little harsh. What makes a popular math book good is to be everything a textbook is not. That is, it should show lots of examples of what math can be used FOR, with little emphasis on pedantic matters (such as rationalizing the denominator). This book fits the bill. It has examples that people would like to USE, such as figuring their loan payments and predicting how tall their child will grow. It also shows some interesting new connections, showing how the gravitaional formula can be used to predict how many phone calls occur between cities. I think that most people who are curious about if there is more to math than what they learned in school, will enjoy this book.

Go Figure. is an engaging and diverse collection of maths-related anecdotes, puzzles and formulas. It shows readers all the interesting things they can figure out using basic algebra.'

From Library Journal This book, which was written by an engineer, might have been more appropriately subtitled, "Now that I have a scientific calculator, what do I do with it?" There is little here in the way of proof but lots of formulas with explanations of how to use them. The topics covered range from calculating the wind chill factor and temperature humidity index to computing the time dilation effect predicted by Einstein's theory of special relativity. Although not too many people will read this for pleasure, the book could be used to advantage as a supplementary text in a course in "cultural mathematics." It might well motivate students to learn how to use a calculator while at the same time exposing them to some of the ways math impinges on their lives. For most math collections. ?Harold D. Shane, Baruch Coll., CUNY Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.