

Risk A Very Short Introduction

Some people are cleverer than others. This everyday observation is the subject of an academic field that is often portrayed as confused and controversial, when in fact, the field of intelligence holds some of psychology's best-replicated findings. This Very Short Introduction describes what psychologists have discovered about how and why people differ in their thinking powers. Drawing on large scale data Ian Deary considers how many types of intelligence there are, and how intelligence changes with age. Along the way he tackles some of the most burning questions surrounding intelligence, such as whether larger brains are cleverer, and how genes and environments contribute to people's intelligence differences. He also considers the new field of cognitive epidemiology, which draws links between intelligence and better health, less illness, and longer life, and asks whether intelligence is increasing. In this new edition Deary also addresses the controversial question of whether men and women differ in intelligence. Throughout he provides a clear description of the data we can use to answer these questions and more. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

"In this Very Short Introduction Andrew Davies looks at how projects have developed since the industrial revolution to create the human-built world in which we live, work, and play.

Considering some of our greatest endeavours such as the Erie Canal, Apollo Moon landing, Japanese product development, and Chinese ecocity projects, Davies identifies how projects are organized and managed to design and produce large and complex systems, cope with fast changing conditions, and deal with the immense uncertainties required to create breakthrough innovations in products and services. He concludes by considering how projects could be organized to address the challenges facing the post-industrial society of the 21st century"--Amazon.com.

What is depression? What is bipolar disorder? How are they diagnosed and how are they treated? This volume gives a history of these two disorders and considers how they are experienced and understood today. Scott and Tacchi also discuss how mood disorders can influence creativity.

Causation is the most fundamental connection in the universe. Without it, there would be no science or technology. There would be no moral responsibility either, as none of our thoughts would be connected with our actions and none of our actions with any consequences. Nor would we have a system of law because blame resides only in someone having caused injury or damage. Any intervention we make in the world around us is premised on there being causal connections that are, to a degree, predictable. It is causation that is at the basis of prediction and also explanation. This Very Short Introduction introduces the key theories of causation and also the surrounding debates and controversies. Do causes produce their effects by guaranteeing them? Do causes have to precede their effects? Can causation be reduced to the forces of physics? And are we right to think of causation as one single thing at all? ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

From the beginning of time, humans have been driven by both a fear of the unknown and a curiosity to know. We have always yearned to know what lies ahead, whether threat or safety, scarcity or abundance. Throughout human history, our forebears tried to create certainty in the unknown, by seeking to influence outcomes with sacrifices to gods, preparing for the unexpected with advice from oracles, and by reading the stars through astrology. As scientific methods improve and computer technology develops we become ever more confident of our capacity to predict and quantify the future by accumulating and interpreting patterns from the past, yet the truth is there is still no certainty to be had. In this Very Short Introduction Jennifer Gidley considers some of our most burning questions: What is "the future"?; Is the future a time yet to come?; Or is it a utopian place?; Does the future have a history?; Is there only one future or are there many possible futures? She asks if the future can ever be truly predicted or if we create our own futures - both hoped for and feared - by our thoughts, feelings, and actions, and concludes by analysing how we can learn to study the future. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Risk is everywhere - from genetically modified crops, dams, and stem-cell therapy to heartbreak, online predators, inflation, and robbery. This Very Short Introduction examines what science has learned about how people deal with risks, what we can learn through decision theory, and how we can evaluate risk in our own lives.

Psychopathy is a personality disorder that has long captured the public imagination. Newspaper column inches have been devoted to murderers with psychopathic features, and we also encounter psychopaths in films and books. Individuals with psychopathy are characterised in particular by lack of empathy and guilt, manipulation of other people and, in the case of criminal psychopathy, premeditated violent behaviour. They are dangerous and can incur immeasurable emotional, psychological, physical, and financial costs to their victims and their families. Despite the public fascination with psychopathy, there is often a very limited understanding of the condition, and several myths about psychopathy abound. For example, people commonly assume that all psychopaths are sadistic serial killers or that all violent and antisocial individuals are psychopaths. Yet, research shows that most psychopaths are not serial killers, and, equally, there are plenty of antisocial and violent offenders who are not psychopaths. This Very Short Introduction gives an overview of how we can identify individuals with or at risk of developing psychopathy, and how they differ from other people who display antisocial behavior. Essi Viding also explores the latest genetic, neuroscience, and psychology evidence in order to illuminate why psychopaths behave and develop the way they do, and considers whether it is possible to prevent or even treat psychopathy. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

You cannot hide from radioactivity. Even the book you are holding is slightly radioactive, but there are more serious risks. Radioactivity - the breakdown of unstable atomic nuclei, releasing

radiation - is a fundamental process in nature. It is a process that has been harnessed to provide wide and important applications in science, medicine, industry, and energy production. But it remains much misunderstood - and feared, perhaps because nuclear radiation cannot be detected by human senses, and can undoubtedly do great harm if appropriate precautions are not taken. In recent times there have been increasing concerns about nuclear terrorism. The traces of radioactive atoms in rocks have allowed us to understand the nature and history of the Earth, in particular to date events in that history. Radioactive dating has been used for a variety of purposes, from determining the age of the first hominids to the dating of the Turin Shroud. The discovery of radioactivity has improved our survival kit, but also gave us the chance to reach a new level of awareness on the history of our species and its environmental impacts. In this Very Short Introduction, Claudio Tuniz explains the nature of radioactivity and discuss its role in nature. Describing radioactivity in the stars and in the Earth, he also looks at its wide range of applications in biomedicine and in science, as well as the mechanisms of nuclear fission and fusion, and the harnessing of nuclear power. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Games are everywhere: Drivers maneuvering in heavy traffic are playing a driving game. Bargain hunters bidding on eBay are playing an auctioning game. The supermarket's price for corn flakes is decided by playing an economic game. This Very Short Introduction offers a succinct tour of the fascinating world of game theory, a ground-breaking field that analyzes how to play games in a rational way. Ken Binmore, a renowned game theorist, explains the theory in a way that is both entertaining and non-mathematical yet also deeply insightful, revealing how game theory can shed light on everything from social gatherings, to ethical decision-making, to successful card-playing strategies, to calculating the sex ratio among bees. With mini-biographies of many fascinating, and occasionally eccentric, founders of the subject--including John Nash, subject of the movie *A Beautiful Mind*--this book offers a concise overview of a cutting-edge field that has seen spectacular successes in evolutionary biology and economics, and is beginning to revolutionize other disciplines from psychology to political science. About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, and Literary Theory to History. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given topic. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how it has developed and influenced society. Whatever the area of study, whatever the topic that fascinates the reader, the series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

In recent years the finance industry has mushroomed to become an important part of modern economies, and many science and engineering graduates have joined the industry as quantitative analysts, with mathematical and computational skills that are needed to solve complex problems of asset valuation and risk management. An important parallel story exists of scientific endeavour. Between 1965-1995, insightful ideas in economics about asset valuation were turned into a mathematical 'theory of arbitrage', an enterprise whose first achievement was the famous 1973 Black-Scholes formula, followed by extensive investigations using all the resources of modern analysis and probability. The growth of the finance industry proceeded hand-in-hand with these developments. Now new challenges arise to deal with the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis and to take advantage of new technology, which has revolutionized the practice of trading. This Very Short Introduction introduces readers with no previous background in this area to arbitrage theory and why it works the way it does. Illuminating pricing theory, Mark Davis explains its applications to interest rates, credit trading, fund management and risk management. He concludes with a survey of the most pressing issues in mathematical finance today.

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Have you ever wondered how it's possible to build a skyscraper, a big bridge, a jumbo jet, or a cruise liner? Everything has structure. Structure is the difference between a random pile of components and a fully functional object. Through structure the parts connect to make the whole. Natural structures vary from the very smallest part of an atom to the entire cosmology of the universe. Man-made structures include buildings, bridges, dams, ships, aeroplanes, rockets, trains, cars and fair-ground rides and all forms of artefacts, even large artistic sculptures. The wide range of different industries in which structural engineers work includes construction, transport, manufacturing, and aerospace. In this Very Short Introduction, David Blockley explores, in non-technical language, what structural engineering is all about, including examples ranging from the Shard in London and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to jumbo jets like the A380 and the Queen Elizabeth cruise liner. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

In this Very Short Introduction Peter Singer and Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek provide an authoritative account of the nature of utilitarianism, from its nineteenth-century origins, to its justification and its varieties. Considering how utilitarians can respond to objections that are often regarded as devastating, they explore the utilitarian answer to the question of whether torture can ever be justified. They also discuss what it is that utilitarians should seek to maximize, paying special attention to the classical utilitarian view that only pleasure or happiness is of intrinsic value. Singer and de Lazari-Radek conclude by analysing the continuing importance of utilitarianism in the world, indicating how it is a force for new thinking on contemporary moral challenges like global poverty, the treatment of animals, climate change, reducing the risk of human extinction, end-of-life decisions for terminally-ill patients, and the shift towards assessing the success of government policies in terms of their impact on happiness.

We make choices all the time - about trivial matters, about how to spend our money, about how to spend our time, about what to do with our lives. And we are also constantly judging the decisions other people make as rational or irrational. But what kind of criteria are we applying when we say that a choice is rational? What guides our own choices, especially in cases where

we don't have complete information about the outcomes? What strategies should be applied in making decisions which affect a lot of people, as in the case of government policy? This book explores what it means to be rational in all these contexts. It introduces ideas from economics, philosophy, and other areas, showing how the theory applies to decisions in everyday life, and to particular situations such as gambling and the allocation of resources. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Microeconomics - individuals' choices of where to live and work, how much to save, what to buy, and firms' decisions about location, hiring, firing, and investment - involves issues that concern us on a daily basis. But when people think about economics, they tend to place importance on the bigger picture - macroeconomics - including issues such as unemployment, inflation, and the competitiveness of nations. In this Very Short Introduction, Avinash Dixit argues that the microeconomy has a large impact on the economic world, arguably as much as the issues of macroeconomics. Dixit steers a clear path through the huge number of issues related to microeconomics, explaining what happens when things go well, as well as showing how they fail, why that happens, and what can be done about it. Using real-life examples from around the world, using the minimum of mathematics and including simple graphs, he provides insights into economics from psychology and sociology to explain economic behaviour and rational choice. An ideal introduction for anyone interested in business and economics. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Traditionally economists have based their economic predictions on the assumption that humans are super-rational creatures, using the information we are given efficiently and generally making selfish decisions that work well for us as individuals. Economists also assume that we're doing the very best we can possibly do - not only for today, but over our whole lifetimes too. But increasingly the study of behavioural economics is revealing that our lives are not that simple. Instead, our decisions are complicated by our own psychology. Each of us makes mistakes every day. We don't always know what's best for us and, even if we do, we might not have the self-control to deliver on our best intentions. We struggle to stay on diets, to get enough exercise and to manage our money. We misjudge risky situations. We are prone to herding: sometimes peer pressure leads us blindly to copy others around us; other times copying others helps us to learn quickly about new, unfamiliar situations. This Very Short Introduction explores the reasons why we make irrational decisions; how we decide quickly; why we make mistakes in risky situations; our tendency to procrastination; and how we are affected by social influences, personality, mood and emotions. The implications of understanding the rationale for our own financial behaviour are huge. Behavioural economics could help policy-makers to understand the people behind their policies, enabling them to design more effective policies, while at the same time we could find ourselves assaulted by increasingly savvy marketing. Michelle Baddeley concludes by looking forward, to see what the future of behavioural economics holds for us. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is probably the most divisive philosopher of the twentieth century. Considered by some to be the greatest charlatan ever to claim the title of 'philosopher', by some as an apologist for Nazism, he was also an acknowledged leader and central figure to many philosophers. Michael Inwood's lucid introduction to Heidegger's thought focuses on his most important work, 'Being and Time', and its major themes of existence in the world, inauthenticity, guilt, destiny, truth, and the nature of time. These themes are then reassessed in the light of Heidegger's later work, together with the extent of his philosophical importance and influence. This is an invaluable guide to the complex and voluminous thought of a major twentieth-century existentialist philosopher. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

How much faith should we place in what scientists tell us? Is it possible for scientific knowledge to be fully "objective?" What, really, can be defined as science? In the second edition of this Very Short Introduction, Samir Okasha explores the main themes and theories of contemporary philosophy of science, and investigates fascinating, challenging questions such as these. Starting at the very beginning, with a concise overview of the history of science, Okasha examines the nature of fundamental practices such as reasoning, causation, and explanation. Looking at scientific revolutions and the issue of scientific change, he asks whether there is a discernible pattern to the way scientific ideas change over time, and discusses realist versus anti-realist attitudes towards science. He finishes by considering science today, and the social and ethical philosophical questions surrounding modern science. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

In 1961 John F. Kennedy pledged to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Nine years later, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. Ten years later, Richard Nixon echoed this pledge by declaring a 'war' on cancer. More than 30 years later, however, cancer remains one of the largest causes of death worldwide, with around 1 in 3 developing the disease. Curing cancer is not 'rocket science', but the question is, why has cancer proved to be harder to tackle than the moon landings turned out to be? Cancer research is a major economic activity. There are constant improvements in treatment techniques that result in better cure rates and increased quality and quantity of life for those with the disease, yet stories of breakthroughs in a cure for cancer are often in the media. In this Very Short Introduction Nick James, founder of the CancerHelp UK website, examines the trends in diagnosis and treatment of the disease, as well as its economic consequences. Asking what cancer is and what causes it, he considers issues surrounding expensive drug development, what can be done to reduce the risk of developing cancer, and the use of complementary and alternative therapies. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas,

and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

What is innovation? How is innovation used in business? How can we use it to succeed? Innovation - the ways ideas are made valuable - makes an important contribution to economic and social development, and is an increasingly topical issue. Not so long ago, there were no information technologies, commercial airlines, or television companies. Our parents were born into a world very different to today's, where television had yet to be invented, and there was no penicillin or frozen food. When our grandparents were born there were no internal combustion engines, aeroplanes, cinemas, or radios. In the last 150 years our world has been transformed - largely in part due to innovation. This Very Short Introduction looks at what innovation is and why it affects us so profoundly. It examines how it occurs, who stimulates it, how it is pursued, and what its outcomes are, both positive and negative. Innovation is hugely challenging and failure is common, yet it is essential to our social and economic progress. Mark Dodgson and David Gann consider the extent to which our understanding of innovation developed over the past century and how it might be used to interpret the global economy we all face in the future. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Now a vital part of modern economies, the rapid growth of the finance industry in recent decades is largely due to the development of mathematical methods such as the theory of arbitrage. Asset valuation, credit trading, and fund management, now depend on these mathematical tools. Mark Davis explains the theories and their applications.

We find risks everywhere—from genetically modified crops, medical malpractice, and stem-cell therapy to intimacy, online predators, identity theft, inflation, and robbery. They arise from our own acts and they are imposed on us. In this Very Short Introduction, Baruch Fischhoff and John Kadvany draw on the sciences and humanities to explore and explain the many kinds of risk. Using simple conceptual frameworks from decision theory and behavioural research, they examine the science and practice of creating measures of risk, showing how scientists address risks by combining historical records, scientific theories, probability, and expert judgment. Risk: A Very Short Introduction describes what has been learned by cognitive scientists about how people deal with risks, applying these lessons to diverse examples, and demonstrating how understanding risk can aid choices in everyday life and public policies for health, safety, environment, finance, and many other topics. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Up to the 1960s, psychology was deeply under the influence of behaviourism, which focused on stimuli and responses, and regarded consideration of what may happen in the mind as unapproachable scientifically. This began to change with the devising of methods to try to tap into what was going on in the 'black box' of the mind, and the development of 'cognitive psychology'. With the study of patients who had suffered brain damage or injury to limited parts of the brain, outlines of brain components and processes began to take shape, and by the end of the 1970s, a new science, cognitive neuroscience, was born. But it was with the development of ways of accessing activation of the working brain using imaging techniques such as PET and fMRI that cognitive neuroscience came into its own, as a science cutting across psychology and neuroscience, with strong connections to philosophy of mind. Experiments involving subjects in scanners while doing various tasks, thinking, problem solving, and remembering are shedding light on the brain processes involved. The research is exciting and new, and often makes media headlines. But there is much misunderstanding about what brain imaging tells us, and the interpretation of studies on cognition. In this Very Short Introduction Richard Passingham, a distinguished cognitive neuroscientist, gives a provocative and exciting account of the nature and scope of this relatively new field, and the techniques available to us, focusing on investigation of the human brain. He explains what brain imaging shows, pointing out common misconceptions, and gives a brief overview of the different aspects of human cognition: perceiving, attending, remembering, reasoning, deciding, and acting. Passingham concludes with a discussion of the exciting advances that may lie ahead. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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"Peter Decherney tells the story of Hollywood, from its nineteenth-century origins to the emergence of internet media empires. Using well-known movies, stars, and directors, the book shows that the elements we take to be a natural part of the Hollywood experience--stars, genre-driven storytelling, blockbuster franchises, etc.--are the product of cultural, political, and commercial forces"--

Schizophrenia is the archetypal form of madness. Schizophrenia is a common disorder and has a devastating effect on sufferers and their families--patients typically hear voices in their heads and hold bizarre beliefs. The schizophrenic patient presented to the public in sensational press reports and lurid films bears little resemblance to reality of the illness. This book describes what schizophrenia is really like, how the illness progresses, and the treatments that have been applied. It also summarizes the most up-to-date knowledge available about the biological bases of this disorder. Finally it attempts to give some idea of what it is like to have schizophrenia and what this disorder tells us about the relationship between mind and brain. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

An introduction to metaphysics offers questions and answers covering such issues as properties, changes, time, personal identity, nothingness, and consciousness.

Public health is a term much used in the media, by health professionals, and by activists. At the national or the local level there are ministries or departments of public health, whilst international agencies such as the World Health Organisation promote public health policies, and regional organisations such as the European Union have public health funding and policies. But what do we mean when we speak about 'public health'? In this Very Short Introduction Virginia Berridge explores the areas which fall under the remit of public health, and explains how the individual histories of different countries have come to cause great differences in the perception of the role and responsibilities of public health organisations. Thus, in the United States litigation on public health issues is common, but state involvement is less, while some Scandinavian countries have a tradition of state involvement or even state ownership of industries such as alcohol in connection with public health. In its narrowest sense, public health can refer to the health of a population, the longevity of individual members, and their freedom from disease, but it can also be anticipatory, geared to the prevention of illness, rather than simply the provision of care and treatment. In the way public health deals with healthy as well as sick people it is therefore a separate concept from health services, which deal with the sick population. Drawing on a wide range of international examples, Berridge demonstrates the central role of history to understanding the amorphous nature of public health today. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable. Making good decisions under conditions of uncertainty - which is the norm - requires a sound appreciation of the way random chance works. As analysis and modelling of most aspects of the world, and all measurement, are necessarily imprecise and involve uncertainties of varying degrees, the understanding and management of probabilities is central to much work in the sciences and economics. In this Very Short Introduction, John Haigh introduces the ideas of probability and different philosophical approaches to probability, and gives a brief account of the history of development of probability theory, from Galileo and Pascal to Bayes, Laplace, Poisson, and Markov. He describes the basic probability distributions, and goes on to discuss a wide range of applications in science, economics, and a variety of other contexts such as games and betting. He concludes with an intriguing discussion of coincidences and some curious paradoxes. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Economics has the capacity to offer us deep insights into some of the most formidable problems of life, and offer solutions to them too. Combining a global approach with examples from everyday life, Partha Dasgupta describes the lives of two children who live very different lives in different parts of the world: in the Mid-West USA and in Ethiopia. He compares the obstacles facing them, and the processes that shape their lives, their families, and their futures. He shows how economics uncovers these processes, finds explanations for them, and how it forms policies and solutions. Along the way, Dasgupta provides an intelligent and accessible introduction to key economic factors and concepts such as individual choices, national policies, efficiency, equity, development, sustainability, dynamic equilibrium, property rights, markets, and public goods. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

With a broad scope across the millennia, from high literature to popular culture, between page and stage and screen, this Very Short Introduction considers comedy not only as a literary genre, but also as a broader impulse at work in many other historical and contemporary forms of satire, parody, and play.

Measurement is a fundamental concept that underpins almost every aspect of the modern world. It is central to the sciences, social sciences, medicine, and economics, but it affects everyday life. We measure everything - from the distance of far-off galaxies to the temperature of the air, levels of risk, political majorities, taxes, blood pressure, IQ, and weight. The history of measurement goes back to the ancient world, and its story has been one of gradual standardization. Today there are different types of measurement, levels of accuracy, and systems of units, applied in different contexts. Measurement involves notions of variability, accuracy, reliability, and error, and challenges such as the measurement of extreme values. In this Very Short Introduction, David Hand explains the common mathematical framework underlying all measurement, the main approaches to measurement, and the challenges involved. Following a brief historical account of measurement, he discusses measurement as used in the physical sciences and engineering, the life sciences and medicine, the social and behavioural sciences, economics, business, and public policy. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Viruses are big news. From pandemics such as HIV, swine flu, and SARS, we are constantly being bombarded with information about new lethal infections. In this Very Short Introduction Dorothy Crawford demonstrates how clever these entities really are. From their discovery and the unravelling of their intricate structures, Crawford demonstrates how these tiny parasites are by far the most abundant life forms on the planet. With up to two billion of them in each litre of sea water, viruses play a vital role in controlling the marine environment and are essential to the ocean's delicate ecosystem. Analyzing the threat of emerging virus infections, Crawford recounts stories of renowned killer viruses such as Ebola and rabies as well as the less known bat-borne Nipah and Hendra viruses. Pinpointing wild animals as the source of the most recent pandemics, she discusses the

reasons behind the present increase in potentially fatal infections, as well as evidence suggesting that long term viruses can eventually lead to cancer. By examining our lifestyle in the 21st century, Crawford looks to the future to ask whether we can ever live in harmony with viruses, and considers the ways in which we may need to adapt to prevent emerging viruses with devastating consequences. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Rocks, more than anything else, underpin our lives. They make up the solid structure of the Earth and of other rocky planets, and are present at the cores of gas giant planets. We live on the rocky surface of the planet, grow our food on weathered debris derived from rocks, and we obtain nearly all of the raw materials with which we found our civilization from rocks. From the Earth's crust to building bricks, rocks contain our sense of planetary history, and are a guide to our future. In this Very Short Introduction Jan Zalsiewicz looks at the nature and variety of rocks, and the processes by which they are formed. Starting from the origin of rocks and their key role in the formation of the Earth, he considers what we know about the deep rocks of the mantle and core, and what rocks can tell us about the evolution of the Earth, and looks at those found in outer space and on other planets. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Distilling the ideas of the greatest military theoreticians of history, including Sun Tzu, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Carl von Clausewitz, Antulio J. Echevarria II presents a fascinating account of the "art of the general." Drawing on historical examples, from Hannibal's war against Rome to Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, from the Allies' campaign to overwhelm Hitler's fortress to the terror attacks of September 11, Echevarria vividly describes the major types of military strategy and their advantages and disadvantages. Clear and engaging, this book shows that military strategy is essential for understanding major events of the past and becomes even more critical today, in a world increasingly threatened by weapons of mass destruction, terrorist attacks, and new dimensions of conflict such as cyberwar and space.

Since dyslexia was first described in the British Medical Journal in 1896, there has been debate about the definitions and diagnostic procedures used, with some casting doubt on its very existence. However, there is now a considerable body of research regarding the nature and characteristics of this relatively common learning disorder. The contemporary view of dyslexia has emerged from a century of research in medicine, psychology, and more recently neuroscience, and we now understand enough about this learning disorder to guide policy and practice. This Very Short Introduction provides an accessible overview of this exciting field of research, beginning with its history, and drawing on testimony from people living with dyslexia. Considering the potential causes of dyslexia, and looking at both genetic and environment factors, Margaret Snowling shows how cross-linguistic studies have documented the prevalence of dyslexia in different languages. Discussing the various brain scanning techniques that have been used to find out if the brains of people with dyslexia differ in structure or function from those of typical readers, Snowling moves on to weigh up various strategies and interventions which can help people living with dyslexia today. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Modern statistics is very different from the dry and dusty discipline of the popular imagination. In its place is an exciting subject which uses deep theory and powerful software tools to shed light and enable understanding. And it sheds this light on all aspects of our lives, enabling astronomers to explore the origins of the universe, archaeologists to investigate ancient civilisations, governments to understand how to benefit and improve society, and businesses to learn how best to provide goods and services. Aimed at readers with no prior mathematical knowledge, this Very Short Introduction explores and explains how statistics work, and how we can decipher them. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

In the wake of the post-Cold War era, the aftermath of 9/11, the 2008 global financial crisis, and the emergence of the G20 at the leaders level, few commentators expected a reshaping of the global system towards multipolarity, and away from the United States. And yet, the BRICS - encompassing Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - has emerged as a challenge to the international status quo. But what is its capacity as a transformative force? And can it provide a significant counter-narrative to the Western dominated global order? In this Very Short Introduction Andrew Cooper explores the emergence of the BRICS as a concept. Drawing on historical precedent, Cooper provides a contemporary analysis of the BRICS' practice and influence as as a forum and a lobby group in advancing a distinctive but amorphous agenda amongst global politics. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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As more of us live longer, the fear of an old age devastated by brain diseases like dementia is growing. Many people are already facing the challenges posed by these progressive and terminal conditions, whether in person or because they are caring for loved ones. Dementia is now the fifth most common cause of death across the world. It is small wonder that understanding, preventing, and finally curing these illnesses is now a global priority. Recent advances in brain research have given scientists a better chance than ever of finding ways to help patients, carers, and clinicians dealing with dementia. Yet there is still no effective treatment. Why has progress been so slow? And what can we all do to reduce our chances of getting the disease? In this Very Short Introduction Kathleen Taylor offers a guide to the science of dementia and brain ageing. Never forgetting the human costs of brain disorders - movingly illustrated throughout the book - she also discusses their costs to society. Clearly explaining the research, she sets out the main ideas which have driven dementia science, and the new contenders hoping to make a breakthrough. Taylor also looks at risk factors, and how to lower our chances of succumbing to dementia. Assessing current and potential treatments, including both drugs and other approaches, she explains, clearly and gently, what help is available for someone who is diagnosed with dementia, and how to boost the chances of living well with the condition. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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