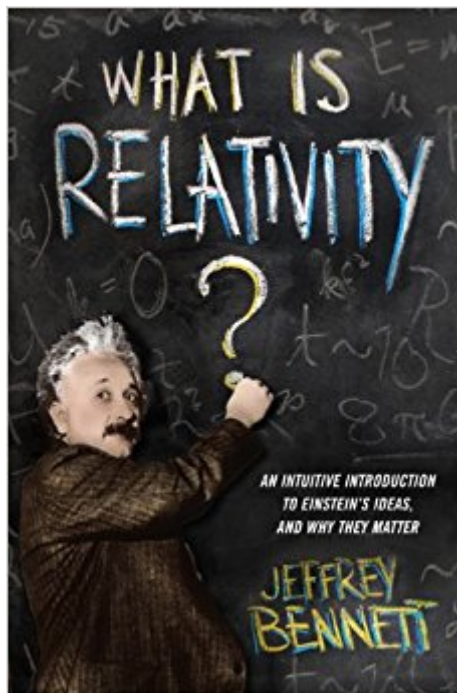




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What Is Relativity?: An Intuitive Introduction To Einstein's Ideas, And Why They Matter



Synopsis

It is commonly assumed that if the Sun suddenly turned into a black hole, it would suck Earth and the rest of the planets into oblivion. Yet, as prominent author and astrophysicist Jeffrey Bennett points out, black holes don't suck. With that simple idea in mind, Bennett begins an entertaining introduction to Einstein's theories of relativity, describing the amazing phenomena readers would actually experience if they took a trip to a black hole. The theory of relativity also reveals the speed of light as the cosmic speed limit, the mind-bending ideas of time dilation and curvature of spacetime, and what may be the most famous equation in history: $E = mc^2$. Indeed, the theory of relativity shapes much of our modern understanding of the universe. It is not just a theory; every major prediction of relativity has been tested to exquisite precision, and its practical applications include the Global Positioning System (GPS). Amply illustrated and written in clear, accessible prose, Bennett's book proves anyone can grasp the basics of Einstein's ideas. His intuitive, nonmathematical approach gives a wide audience its first real taste of how relativity works and why it is so important to science and the way we view ourselves as human beings.

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Customer Reviews

Jeffrey Bennett has produced what is probably the most readable, intelligible explanation of relativity yet published. My family surprised me with this book for Father's Day, knowing I would love pondering the mind-blowing concepts of Einstein's theories. Bennett has a gift for taking what may be the most widely misunderstood theory in modern science and bringing it within the realm of the lay reader. The implications of relativity are truly bizarre from our medium-sized, medium-moving experience as human beings, and I find myself constantly thinking about just how strange the universe truly is. A jewel of a book.

"What is Relativity?" is a wonderful book for anyone who wants to gain a solid understanding of Einstein's general relativity. It is suitable for readers with or without science backgrounds as there are virtually no mathematical equations. Instead the author guides the reader along using clever, well-crafted examples that are visually supported with clear, intuitive graphics. As you read this book, you can expect many of those "Oh, so that's what that term means!" moments. Ultimately, you'll come away with a real appreciation for Einstein, his theory of general relativity and the profound impact it has had on our view of the universe we live in. I can't think of a nicer tribute to Einstein on this 100-year anniversary of his greatest theory!

A fun book that mixes simple ideas and concepts from day to day life, to form a train of logic that when followed will conclude in some form of understanding of relativity, that would otherwise be inaccessible for most. Some people confuse their inability to understand with Mr Bennett's inability to teach. This is nonsense of course, Mr Bennett's teaching ability is not in question here. Perfect book that anybody with even only a sliver of knowledge in physics, or other science, will be able to enjoy.

Unfortunately this book does not explain the nature of light or why it is constant or why things are the way they are. But that is not what Bennett was trying to explain. What he does explain, and I think quite well, is that our viewing of physical realities are from perspectives that are relative; relative to what we are viewing while it/we are moving and the gravitational forces acting upon it/us. Not that I could rattle off an explanation after reading this. But I do follow Bennett's explanation of Einstein's theories of special and general relativity. I will have to read this again and think about the ideas. But they are presented well enough here that I feel I can grasp the notions and begin to

actually think and consider them. Good job!!

Great book. Makes the theories of both special and general relativity comprehensible if not necessarily easy to understand. I felt smarter after reading it and read it again just when I finished it. The book is that good. The writer obviously loves his subject, and his desire to convey knowledge to everyone who cares to learn is palpable. I cannot recommend the book too highly.

For physics flunkies like me, who love to keep abreast of developments in cosmology and quantum physics but struggle with anything beyond $a+b=c$, then this book is great. It explains the concepts of very difficult ideas in ways that are understandable, allowing the reader to journey through Relativity to ultimately reach an understanding of how Black Holes work and how they are created - without the appearance of mathematics. Hurray!! The only criticism is there are occasional explanations at critical moments which are ambiguous and for the want of just another sentence of clarification, those explanations would be much clearer. I have found myself talking to the book, hopelessly asking it a question, "Yes but.....?". In spite of that, just hang in there and you should still be carried along with the story. It'll be a great book to refer back to when concepts become a little hazy in the future.

Very interesting information. The author describes concepts in an easy to understand manner while making you feel smart by knowing how complex concepts work. No higher math required to understand beyond algebra. I would recommend to anyone interested in how the universe operates and or Einsteins work.

Acknowledging that it's only an introduction, it's probably the best possible explanation for a layman of the theories of relativity. it's really hard to get one's mind around the concept of a space-time dimension.

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