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Guesstimation 2.0: Solving Today's Problems On The Back Of A Napkin



Synopsis

Guesstimation 2.0 reveals the simple and effective techniques needed to estimate virtually anything--quickly--and illustrates them using an eclectic array of problems. A stimulating follow-up to Guesstimation, this is the must-have book for anyone preparing for a job interview in technology or finance, where more and more leading businesses test applicants using estimation questions just like these. The ability to guesstimate on your feet is an essential skill to have in today's world, whether you're trying to distinguish between a billion-dollar subsidy and a trillion-dollar stimulus, a megawatt wind turbine and a gigawatt nuclear plant, or parts-per-million and parts-per-billion contaminants. Lawrence Weinstein begins with a concise tutorial on how to solve these kinds of order of magnitude problems, and then invites readers to have a go themselves. The book features dozens of problems along with helpful hints and easy-to-understand solutions. It also includes appendixes containing useful formulas and more. Guesstimation 2.0 shows how to estimate everything from how closely you can orbit a neutron star without being pulled apart by gravity, to the fuel used to transport your food from the farm to the store, to the total length of all toilet paper used in the United States. It also enables readers to answer, once and for all, the most asked environmental question of our day: paper or plastic?

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Customer Reviews

My review is really of both the first and second books. After reading the first "Guesstimation" by Weinstein and Adam, I was (and remain) hooked. I was thoroughly delighted by the second of what

I hope will be a long series to feed my habit. There were more wonderful (albeit a few somewhat whimsical) questions, some of which I had actually thought about before reading them. My mindset when I started was a residue of undergraduate engineering courses, where every solution had to match the "by the book" expected answer to several decimal places. We spent more time manipulating numbers and equations by sliderule [that really dates me] than in really understanding the questions from a practical perspective. Weinstein's "Guesstimation 2.0" carries on turning that mindset upside-down. You won't pass an engineering course from it, but you will have another valuable tool to hone your "BS-detector" and understand how some of today's problems really are part of a bigger picture. And you'll have fun amazing your friends - you will not read this book without reading at least one or two questions and solutions aloud to somebody else. After reading each book once through for fun, I went back and reread each question to look more closely at the logic of its solution. My first reaction was usually: "Hey, he can't make that assumption or simplification". Then I read the careful explanation of why the precision of each assumption had little effect on the solution. I double-checked a few (using a spreadsheet to 4 decimal places) and realized that he was exactly right - for 99% of the reasons I might ponder these weighty questions, a ball-park solution was plenty good enough. If you're like me, you'll read this in bed straight through, staying up way too late.

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