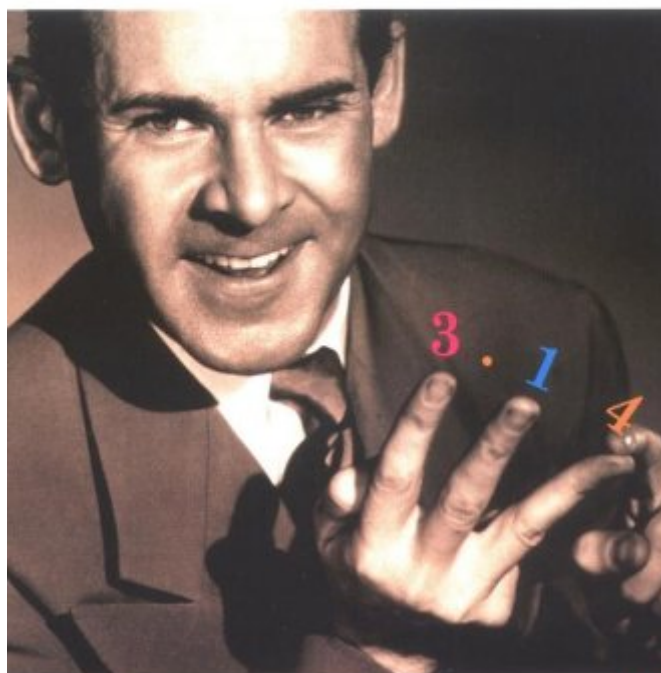# The Penguin Dictionary Of Curious And Interesting Numbers (Penguin Press Science)

THE PENGUIN DICTIONARY OF
Curious and Interesting

NUMBERS

REVISED EDITION

DAVID WELLS

Synopsis

Why was the number of Hardy's taxi significant? Why does Graham's number need its own notation? How many grains of sand would fill the universe? What is the connection between the Golden Ratio and sunflowers? Why is 999 more than a distress call? All these questions and a host more are answered in this fascinating book, which has now been newly revised, with nearly 200 extra entries and some 250 additions to the original entries. From minus one and its square root, via cyclic, weird, amicable, perfect, untouchable and lucky numbers, aliquot sequences, the Cattle problem, Pascal's triangle and the Syracuse algorithm, music, magic and maps, pancakes, polyhedra and palindromes, to numbers so large that they boggle the imagination, all you ever wanted to know about numbers is here. There is even a comprehensive index for those annoying occasions when you remember the name but can't recall the number.

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Customer Reviews

In the foreword to G.H. Hardy's book A Mathematician's Apology, C.P. Snow tells an anecdote about Hardy and his collaborator Srinivasa Ramanujan. Hardy, perhaps the greatest number theorist of 20th century, took a taxi from London to the hospital at Putney where Ramanujan was

dying of tuberculosis, Hardy noticed its number, 1729. Always inept about introducing a conversation, he entered the room where Ramanujan was lying in bed and, with scarcely a hello, blurted out his opinion about the taxi-cab number. It was, he declared, "rather a dull number," adding that he hoped that wasn't a bad omen. "No, Hardy! No, Hardy," said Ramanujan, "it is a very interesting number. It is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways."Usually it takes a great deal of insight as well as considerable mathematical training to discover a yet unknown properties of some number. Only recognizing the beauty of a number pattern is much easier, though, especially with a friendly book like this one on hand. Wells, a long-time mathematics popularizer, has collected over 1000 numbers he considers interesting. Each of them is given a short explanation, often accompanied with a bibliographic reference. Celebrities among the numbers, like i, e or Pi, are given a more comprehensive treatment. Included are also several sequences, like Fibonacci's, Mersenne's, Fermat's, Carmichael's or Kaprekar's, each accompanied with its explanation. So are cyclic, amicable, untouchable or lucky numbers, and many more sequences you probably didn't know about.While Wells' dictionary certainly gives the impression of a well-researched work, the list of numbers is by no means exhaustive.

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