



## Five Golden Rules: Great Theories of 20th-Century Mathematics--and Why They Matter

By John Casti

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"With this groundbreaking work, John Casti shows himself to be a great mathematics writer. Five Golden Rules is a feast of rare new delights all made perfectly comprehensible." -Rudy Rucker, author of The Fourth Dimension.

"With the lucid informality for which he has become known, John Casti has written an engaging and articulate examination of five great mathematical theorems and their myriad applications." -John Allen Paulos, author of A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

What do mathematicians do all day, and why in the world should we care? Science writer John L. Casti approaches these questions with characteristic flair in *Five Golden Rules*, a short work explaining five important 20th-century mathematical theories and their importance in our daily lives. The reader is left with a new appreciation for the men and women who are paid to do little but think and convince their peers that their thoughts are important. Von Neumann's minimax theorem, crucial for modern economics and military strategy, is first up, and Casti expresses its simple elegance in terms that even those with the rustiest high school math can handle. Four other theories, covering topology, computing, optimization, and singularities, get their turn, and each is a work of beauty much like the greatest poems or paintings of our time. Some of the practical applications are surprising (who knew that geometrical analysis can tell us if a joke will be funny?) but more surprising still is our general ignorance of the role math plays in our lives. Though the material gets more involved as the book progresses, elementary algebra and geometry, coupled with a willingness to work things out before proceeding, will suffice for most readers. Casti has once again gifted us with a clear, penetrating book covering a subject still largely uncovered. *Five Golden Rules* will make math real even to the most hardened number-phobe. --Rob Lightner

#### From Library Journal

Most people have a very poor idea of what mathematicians do, since in school they are exposed only to centuries-old material. Casti (Complexification, HarperCollins, 1994) has written an excellent exposition of five of the most interesting mathematical theories of the 20th century that are still undergoing significant study. He discusses the mathematicians who discovered each theorem and explains how these theories are applied to real problems. This work is not for everyone; it is aimed at the nonmathematician willing to invest some time and effort to learn about modern mathematics. The serious reader will find it worth the effort; the chapter on "Theory of Communication" is in itself sufficient to recommend the purchase of the book. ?Harold D. Shane, Baruch Coll., CUNY

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#### From the Publisher

An accessible and engaging treatment of the world's greatest mathematical theorems. Devoted to one theorem, each chapter introduces the mathematicians who created the theorem and the history of math at that time. Explains, in simple terms, what the theorem says and how it was proved. Numerous diagrams, cartoons and examples illustrate how the theorem works and bring the math to life.

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**Susan Metcalf:**

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