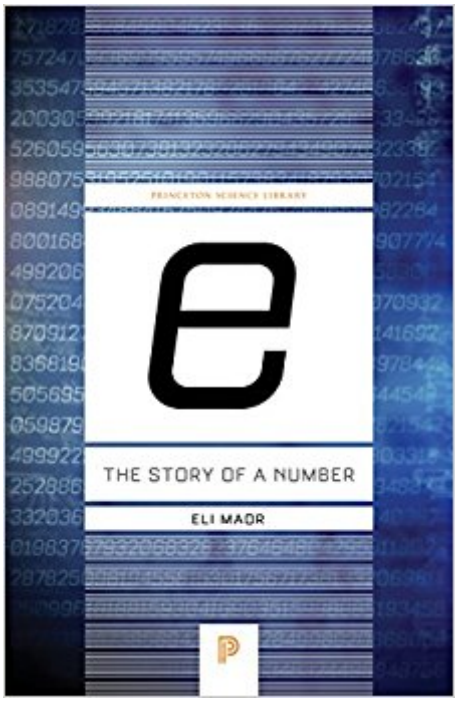
# "e:" The Story Of A Number (Princeton Science Library)



## Synopsis

The interest earned on a bank account, the arrangement of seeds in a sunflower, and the shape of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis are all intimately connected with the mysterious number e. In this informal and engaging history, Eli Maor portrays the curious characters and the elegant mathematics that lie behind the number. Designed for a reader with only a modest mathematical background, this biography brings out the central importance of e to mathematics and illuminates a golden era in the age of science.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Until about 1975, logarithms were every scientist’s best friend. They were the basis of the slide rule that was the totemic wand of the trade, listed in huge books consulted in every library. Then hand-held calculators arrived, and within a few years slide rules were museum pieces. But e remains, the center of the natural logarithmic function and of calculus. Eli Maor’s book is the only more or less popular account of the history of this universal constant. Maor gives human faces to fundamental mathematics, as in his fantasia of a meeting between Johann Bernoulli and J.S. Bach. e: The Story of a Number would be an excellent choice for a high school or college student of trigonometry or calculus. --Mary Ellen Curtin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Everyone whose mathematical education has gone beyond elementary school is familiar with the

number known as pi. Far fewer have been introduced to e, a number that is of equal importance in theoretical mathematics. Maor (mathematics, Northeastern Illinois Univ.) tries to fill this gap with this excellent book. He traces the history of mathematics from the 16th century to the present through the intriguing properties of this number. Maor says that his book is aimed at the reader with a "modest" mathematical background. Be warned that his definition of modest may not be yours. The text introduces and discusses logarithms, limits, calculus, differential equations, and even the theory of functions of complex variables. Not easy stuff! Nevertheless, the writing is clear and the material fascinating. Highly recommended.- Harold D. Shane, Baruch Coll., CUNYCopyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The book is great but the Kindle formatting needs work. There are numerous typographical errors throughout this book. For example, the use of the capital letter "I" for the number "1". This problem is not unique to this book. Many of the technical books I own in Kindle format have this problem. I would suggest to  that they either hire a technical editor or work more closely with the publishers of their technical books to do a final read-through prior to offering it to customers.

Most math books read far better on iPad than a Kindle. I had hoped the same would be the case for this book. However, the formulas are largely unreadable, being displayed as fuzzy grey smears that don’t get larger with increasing font size or attempt to stretch with the iPad gesture. Moreover, the number of typos in formulas and expressions made reading comprehension difficult despite having an adequate math background. I eventually figured out that "In" (capital I with serifs) was actually ln for natural log and that an italic I was the division slash. # was not equal, and on and on. As a result of the extreme carelessness used in what is obviously an automatic scanning and recognition of a manuscript, I cannot recommend the Kindle version of this book.As for the content, once I learned to read gibberish, I found the math interesting and the story delightful for amateur mathematicians. Many forgotten facts returned and even a few new connections were made, such as the sinh and cosh relation to the imaginary circular functions. I recommend reading this in print format and not as an e-book. The chapter on Euler rocks!

This book is a fun read for the math enthusiast, in the style of William Dunham’s books, most notably, Journey Through Genius. The story, full of witty flourishes and playful asides, builds in the same chronological sequence, demonstrating the development of logarithms and their famous "natural" base. While not quite as excellent as Dunham’s books, Eli Maor’s effort is a worthy

addition to the canon.As the title implies, the book catalogs the development of the number "e", the base of the natural logarithm. For me, a college math major, the nature and origin of this mysterious number were quite hazy. Born in the era of electronic calculators, I could not fathom the utility of logarithm tables and slide rules, which dominated the anxieties of science and math students for centuries before my time. This book allowed me to feel the pain of those ghostly legions who wrestled with these tools, albeit in a pleasantly blunted way!Some reviewers have opined that the book gets off subject a lot, but I did not find this to be the case. All the subjects covered were necessary chapters in the development of "e" and the science of logarithmic functions. The book is full of historical detail and anecdotes, in the style of Men of Mathematics, or Aubrey's Lives, but offers more technical grit than those books, like the Dunham books. In particular, information about Napier and the Bernoullis was all really new to me. The development of calculus, on the other hand, has been done to death, and is probably more of interest to high schoolers.In any event, the book is relatively short, so if the format does not appeal to you, you will not have wasted too much time on it, and I bet you will have learned at least something. I think this book would be a fantastic adjuct to the high school calculus course.

I like this book very much. That is the printed version of it. I also have the Kindle version, and it is AWFUL! It must have been scanned by machine, and nobody bothered to proof read it! If you don't know the material beforehand you'd be completely confused.

The book was most interesting but the Kindle experience was very frustrating. If  wants that people are willing to pay a decent price for ebooks, the editorial quality must mach that of printed books. All the mathematical formulas in the book were full of mistakes: dxldy instead of dx/dy, A instead of Delta, x" instead of x^n, I instead of 1 etc. I could go on and on. It looks like they took the book through an OCR software and didn't care to check it afterwards.I haven't seen the printed version but if it is of good printing quality, I would recommend it to anybody interested in the history of mathematics and the peculiarities of transcendental numbers. Now the reading experience was shadowed by my trying to understand what the misprinted equations really mean.

The author chooses to embed the discovery of 'e' within the development of the calculus, with many diversions to other mathematical topics on the side. I won't fault this approach, except to say that there are other (and perhaps better) ways to make 'e' appealing to a non-technical audience. For example, if the author had teamed up with an historical novelist (e.g., a modern-day James

Michener), the end product would have been radically different, and perhaps much more entertaining. A skilled historical novelist could have embedded the development of ’e’ within the cultural, religious, and intellectual turmoil of the Western European medieval period, providing the reader with a much broader perspective than the one provided by this book. That said, if you like mathematics (or if you don’t, but want to get out of your comfort zone), then you’ll enjoy this book.