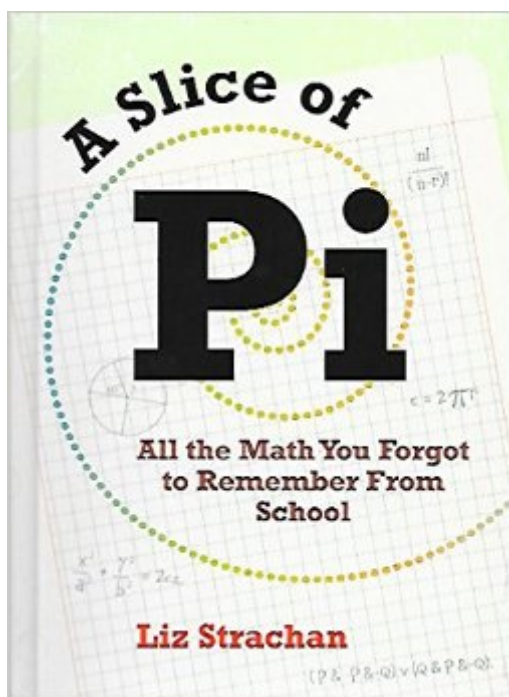


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# A Slice Of Pi: All The Math You Forgot To Remember From School



## Synopsis

Fun and Games With Math: In a Slice of Pi, Liz Strachan proves that solving tricky little math equations can be just as enjoyable as completing a good puzzle. Through fascinating math stories, quirky calculations, great party tricks, and humorous anecdotes from the classroom, she reveals the foundations of algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in a clear and entertaining style.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #614,617 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #222 inÂ Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Math Games

## Customer Reviews

Loved it. Contains lots of fun math facts. I got it to keep my old mind active. Good review of things I had long forgotten as well as new little math tricks. I had to think on every page.

I agree with the prior poster in that there are a lot of errors. Having said that, this is a very accessible introduction to math history for younger math students. My 8 yr old and her father are doing it as a read-aloud right now with the help of a whiteboard to work out some examples, and she's enjoying the introduction to math as something created by people who actually were interesting and had stories and personalities-something that most math books leave out. I would normally give this a 4 star rating, but there are enough errors (the definition of the derivative is just plain wrong, for example) to drop it to 3.

As a university mathematics professor and a number theorist by trade, I should have known better than to pick up this book and start reading it. I appreciate the author's attempt to make mathematics fun but the book's contents are unmotivated, unconnected, and, at times, wrong. The author asserts, for example, that it is not known whether all prime numbers, with the exception of 2 and 3,

are of the form  $6n-1$  or  $6n+1$  (where  $n$  is a positive integer ... the author is consistently sloppy about the numbers that variables can assume). This is not only known, but an easy consequence of elementary division. She also asserts that the exact number of prime numbers is unknown. Euclid proved that there are infinitely many prime numbers! I could go on. The scariest proclamation (on the back cover of the book) is that the author is a "numbers expert." Wow ... just wow.

"A slice of Pi" by Liz Strachan is not meant as an academic textbook but rather as a book for kids to get them interested in mathematics. And I think it does serve this purpose. As a scientist, I would not ask my students (college level) to use it as a reference book but I would definitely recommend it to a child in middle school to read for fun.

If this author's bio is to be believed, she was a teacher of mathematics for over 30 years in Scotland. Pity her students who were subjected to such misinformation as identifying Albert Einstein as a mathematician (chapter 66), and informing them that "no one has proved that prime numbers go on for ever" (chapter 27 on Eratosthenes), and "Maybe there is a point on the number line beyond which there are no more prime numbers. This is a mystery which mathematicians have not yet solved." (chapter 28 on Christian Goldbach). Worse than such howlers is the author's evident distaste for the subject. The lead sentence in the chapter on Goldbach is: "Some mathematicians, according to my pupils, should get themselves a proper job and stop fretting about trivial problems that seem to have no practical value." She spends the rest of that chapter, and the rest of the book, essentially endorsing that perspective. Mathematics, to student and teacher alike, resembles a foul tasting medicine, which has some incomprehensible value according to "the authorities". Therefore, it must be delivered in sugar-coated pills or sweet soothing syrup to disguise, as much as possible, its intrinsically wretched taste. The true mystery is that her editor and publisher are not ashamed to have their names associated with this work, which according to the information on the copyright page of the specimen used for this review is into (at least) its third printing since 2010. For home educators being pestered by relatives for failing to subject their children to "free public schooling", this book might be a useful exhibit of subject matter incompetence by a veteran teacher, with at least two published books and dozens of published articles in her CV. It is hard to think of any other practical use unless perhaps one needs a small doorstop and nothing better is handy. NOT recommended for libraries.

My husband, a chemist, loved it. Next it goes to my granddaughter, a math major.

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