# 

Table of Contents

[Academics 1](#_Toc119265000)

[Miguel de Cervantes 1](#_Toc119265001)

[Herbert Spencer 1](#_Toc119265002)

[Noam Chomsky 1](#_Toc119265003)

[Mark Twain 1](#_Toc119265004)

[1835-1910 1](#_Toc119265005)

[H. L. Mencken 1](#_Toc119265006)

[Computation 1](#_Toc119265007)

[Popular Mechanics 1](#_Toc119265008)

[Creativity 1](#_Toc119265009)

[Gary Larson 1](#_Toc119265010)

[J. K. Rowling 1](#_Toc119265011)

[Faith 1](#_Toc119265012)

[C.S. Lewis 1](#_Toc119265013)

[Passion 1](#_Toc119265014)

[Jack London 1](#_Toc119265015)

[Maya Angleou 1](#_Toc119265016)

[Mark Twain 1](#_Toc119265017)

[Planning 1](#_Toc119265018)

[Victor Hugo 1](#_Toc119265019)

[Psychology 1](#_Toc119265020)

[David Mumford 1](#_Toc119265021)

[Science 1](#_Toc119265022)

[Albert Einstein 1](#_Toc119265023)

[Thomas Alva Edison 1](#_Toc119265024)

[Jan L.A. van de Snepscheut 1](#_Toc119265025)

[Richard P. Feynman 1](#_Toc119265026)

[Buckminster Fuller 1](#_Toc119265027)

[Galileo Galilei 1](#_Toc119265028)

[Johannes Kepler 1](#_Toc119265029)

[Donald E. Knuth 1](#_Toc119265030)

[Kary Mullis 1](#_Toc119265031)

[John von Neumann 1](#_Toc119265032)

[Isaac Newton 1](#_Toc119265033)

[Jules Henri Poincare 1](#_Toc119265034)

[Arthur Schopenhauer 1](#_Toc119265035)

[Teaching 1](#_Toc119265036)

[E. M. Forster 1](#_Toc119265037)

[Leon Henkin 1](#_Toc119265038)

[Nelson Mandela 1](#_Toc119265039)

[Blaise Pascal 1](#_Toc119265040)

[Antoine de Saint-Exupery 1](#_Toc119265041)

[Dr. Seuss 1](#_Toc119265042)

[Technology 1](#_Toc119265043)

[Alice Kahn 1](#_Toc119265044)

[Logic 1](#_Toc119265045)

[L. Carroll 1](#_Toc119265046)

[Arthur Conan Doyle 1](#_Toc119265047)

[A study in scarlet 1](#_Toc119265048)

[Philip G. Hamerton 1](#_Toc119265049)

[Sherlock Holmes 1](#_Toc119265050)

[Blaise Pascal 1](#_Toc119265051)

[Moderation 1](#_Toc119265052)

[Peter Wehner 1](#_Toc119265053)

[Math 1](#_Toc119265054)

[Richard Courant and Fritz John 1](#_Toc119265055)

[Carl Friedrich Gauss 1](#_Toc119265056)

[Richard Askey 1](#_Toc119265057)

[Augustinus 1](#_Toc119265058)

[E. T. Bell 1](#_Toc119265059)

[Lipman Bers 1](#_Toc119265060)

[R. P. Boas 1](#_Toc119265061)

[David Bressoud 1](#_Toc119265062)

[A radical approach to real analysis, MAA, 2007, p. 22 1](#_Toc119265063)

[William Byers 1](#_Toc119265064)

[G. Cantor 1](#_Toc119265065)

[Jules Henri Poincare 1](#_Toc119265066)

[Augustin Louis Cauchy 1](#_Toc119265067)

[John B. Conway 1](#_Toc119265068)

[Mariana Cook 1](#_Toc119265069)

[Herbert Wilf 1](#_Toc119265070)

[Hermann Weyl 1](#_Toc119265071)

[Karl Weierstrass 1](#_Toc119265072)

[Peter J. Eccles 1](#_Toc119265073)

[Neil Falkner 1](#_Toc119265074)

[Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier 1](#_Toc119265075)

[Paul Halmos 1](#_Toc119265076)

[Richard Hamming 1](#_Toc119265077)

[Godfrey Harold Hardy 1](#_Toc119265078)

[Gila Hanna 1](#_Toc119265079)

[Charles Hermite 1](#_Toc119265080)

[Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 1](#_Toc119265081)

[Pierre-Simon de Laplace 1](#_Toc119265082)

[Paul Lockhart 1](#_Toc119265083)

[Blaise Pascal 1](#_Toc119265084)

[Math Jokes 1](#_Toc119265085)

[Anonymous 1](#_Toc119265086)

[E. Artin 1](#_Toc119265087)

[Bumpersticker on a car in Ithaca, NY 1](#_Toc119265088)

[Tendai Chitewere 1](#_Toc119265089)

[Charles R. Darwin 1](#_Toc119265090)

[Matt Groening 1](#_Toc119265091)

[Philosophy 1](#_Toc119265092)

[Alfred North Whitehead 1](#_Toc119265093)

[Philosophical jokes 1](#_Toc119265094)

[Woody Alen 1](#_Toc119265095)

[Douglas Adams 1](#_Toc119265096)

[Probability 1](#_Toc119265097)

[J. Neyman and E. S. Pearson 1](#_Toc119265098)

[Blaise Pascal 1](#_Toc119265099)

[Probability + Statistics jokes 1](#_Toc119265100)

[David Letterman 1](#_Toc119265101)

[Gian-Carlo Rota 1](#_Toc119265102)

# [Academics](#_top)

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| *"Hold your peace, senor," said Sancho; "faith, if I take to asking questions and answering, I'll go on from this till to-morrow morning. Nay! to ask foolish things and answer nonsense I needn't go looking for help from my neighbors."*  *"Thou hast said more than thou art aware of, Sancho," said Don Quixote; "for there are some who weary themselves out in learning and proving things that, after they are known and proved, are not worth a farthing to the understanding or memory."* Miguel de Cervantes The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha. 1615 |
| *There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation.* Herbert Spencer Apr 27 1820-1903. |
| *"Everyone engaged in research must have had the experience of working with feverish and prolonged intensity to write a paper which no one else will read or to solve a problem which no one else thinks important and which will bring no conceivable reward -- which may only confirm a general opinion that the researcher is wasting his time on irrelevancies."* Noam Chomsky A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior, Language, 35, No. 1 (1959), 26-58 |
| *"Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please."*  *"Few things are harder to put up with than a good example."* Mark Twain1835-1910 |
| *"For every problem, there is one solution which is simple, neat, and wrong."* H. L. Mencken 1880-1956 |

# [Computation](#_top)

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| *"Where a calculator like the ENIAC today is equipped with 18,000 vacuum tubes and weighs 30 tons, computers in the future may have only 1,000 vacuum tubes and perhaps weigh only 1 1/2 tons."* Popular Mechanics March 1949, p. 258 |

# [Creativity](#_top)

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| *"I don't know where my ideas come from. I will admit, however, that one key ingredient is caffeine. I get a couple cups of coffee into me and weird things just start to happen."* Gary Larson The Prehistory of The Far Side |
| *"Sometimes ideas just come to me. Other times I have to sweat and almost bleed to make ideas come. It's a mysterious process, but I hope I never find out exactly how it works."* J. K. Rowling |

# [Faith](#_top)

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| *Roughly speaking, the word faith seems to be used by Christians in two senses or on two levels, and I will take them in turn. In the first sense it means simply belief—accepting or regarding as true the doctrines of Christianity. That is fairly simple. But what does puzzle people—at least it used to puzzle me—is the fact that Christians regard faith in this sense as a virtue. I used to ask how on Earth it can be a virtue—what is there moral or immoral about believing or not believing a set of statements? Obviously, I used to say, a sane man accepts or rejects any statement, not because he wants or does not want to, but because the evidence seems to him good or bad. If he were mistaken about the goodness or badness of the evidence, that would not mean he was a bad man, but only that he was not very clever. And if he thought the evidence bad but tried to force himself to believe in spite of it, that would be merely stupid.*  *Well, I think I still take that view. But what I did not see then—and a good many people do not see still—was this. I was assuming that if the human mind once accepts a thing as true it will automatically go on regarding it as true, until some real reason for reconsidering it turns up. In fact, I was assuming that the human mind is completely ruled by reason. But that is not so. For example, my reason is perfectly convinced by good evidence that anesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they have me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anesthetics. It is not reason that is taking away my faith; on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other…..*  *Now just the same thing happens about Christianity. I am not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of evidence is against it. That is not the point at which faith comes in. But supposing a man’s reason once decides that the weight of the evidence is for it. I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next few weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief. Or else there will come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that is not perfectly fair; some moment, in fact, at which it would be very convenient if Christianity were not true. And once again his wishes and desires will carry out a blitz. I am not talking of moments at which any real new reasons against Christianity turn up. Those have to be faced and that is a different matter. I am talking about moments where a mere mood rises up against it.*  *Now faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding onto things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian, I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable; but when I was an atheist, I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why faith is such a necessary virtue; unless you teach your moods “where they get off” you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of faith.* C.S. Lewis Mere Christianity, 1952. |

# [Passion](#_top)

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| *I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.* Jack London London's literary executor, Irving Shepard, quoting a *Jack London Credo* in an introduction to a 1956 collection of London stories. |
| *You can only be truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money the goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you. All the other tangible rewards will come as a result.* Maya Angleou |
| *"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbour, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."* Mark Twain 1835-1910 |

# [Planning](#_top)

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| He who every morning plans the transaction of the day and follows out that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through the maze of the most busy life. But where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is surrendered merely to the chance of incidence, chaos will soon reign. Victor Hugo |

# [Psychology](#_top)

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| *"The world is continuous, but the mind is discrete."* David Mumford ICM 2002 plenary talk, Aug. 21, 2002 |

# [Science](#_top)

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| *"The most beautiful experience is the mysterious. It is the source of true art and science."*  *"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."*  *"Pure mathematics is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas."*  *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."*  *"Do not worry too much about your difficulties in mathematics, I can assure you that mine are still greater."*  *"I never think of the future--it comes soon enough."*  *"Imagination is more important than knowledge."*  *"It's not that I'm so smart. It's just that I spent more time on problems."* Albert Einstein 1879-1955 |
| *"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."* Thomas Alva Edison 1847-1931 |
| *"In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. But, in practice, there is."* Jan L.A. van de Snepscheut |
| *"One cannot understand... the universality of laws of nature, the relationship of things, without an understanding of mathematics. There is no other way to do it."* Richard P. Feynman |
| *"When I am working on a problem I never think about beauty. I only think about how to solve the problem. But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong."*  *"Everything you've learned in school as 'obvious' becomes less and less obvious as you begin to study the universe. For example, there are no solids in the universe. There's not even a suggestion of a solid. There are no absolute continuums. There are no surfaces. There are no straight lines."*  Buckminster Fuller  1895-1983 |
| *"Philosophy is written in this grand book--I mean the universe--which stands continually open to our glaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it."* Galileo Galilei Il Saggiatore, 1623 |
| *"Ubi materia, ibi geometria."*  *"Geometry is the archetype of the beauty of the world."* Johannes Kepler 1571-1630 |
| *"Science is what we understand well enough to explain to a computer, Art is all the rest."* Donald E. Knuth Foreword to A=B by Petkovsek, Wilf and Zeilberger |
| *"Sometimes a good idea comes to you when you are not looking for it. Through an improbable combination of coincidence, naivete and lucky mistakes ..."* Kary Mullis The Unusual Origin of the Polymerase Chain Reaction, Sci. Amer., April 1990, p. 445 |
| *"In mathematics you don't understand things. You just get used to them."*  *"If people do not believe that mathematics is simple, it is only because they do not realize how complicated life is."* John von Neumann 1903-1957 |
| *"Truth is ever to be found in the simplicity, and not in the multiplicity and confusion of things."*  *"I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."* Isaac Newton 1643-1727 |
| *"Thought is only a flash between two long nights, but this flash is everything."*  *"Science is facts; just as houses are made of stones, so is science made of facts; but a pile of stones is not a house and a collection of facts is not necessarily science."* Jules Henri Poincare 1854-1912 |
| *"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."* Arthur Schopenhauer 1788-1860 |

# [Teaching](#_top)

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| *"Spoon feeding, in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon."* E. M. Forster |
| *"One of the big misapprehensions about mathematics that we perpetrate in our classrooms is that the teacher always seems to know the answer to any problem that is discussed. This gives students the idea that there is a book somewhere with all the right answers to all of the interesting questions, and that teachers know those answers. And if one could get hold of the book, one would have everything settled. That's so unlike the true nature of mathematics."* Leon Henkin |
| *"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."* Nelson Mandela |
| *"We are usually convinced more easily by reasons we have found ourselves than by those which occured to others."* Blaise Pascal |
| *"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."*  *"Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them."* Antoine de Saint-Exupery |
| *"We've taught you that the earth is round, That red and white make pink, And something else that matters more -- We've taught you how to think."* Dr. Seuss *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day* |

# [Technology](#_top)

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| *"For a list of all the ways technology has failed to improve the quality of life, please press three."* Alice Kahn |

# [Logic](#_top)

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| *"Alice laughed: 'There's no use trying,' she said; 'one can't believe impossible things.' 'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.' "*  *"Where shall I begin" he asked. "Begin at the beginning", the king said, "and stop when you get to an end."*  *"And what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"* L. Carroll Alice in Wonderland |
| *"The grand thing is to be able to reason backwards."* Arthur Conan DoyleA study in scarlet |
| "Have you ever observed that we pay much more attention to a wise passage when it is quoted than when we read it in the original author?" Philip G. Hamerton |
| *"Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth."*  *"'Data! Data! Data!' he cried, impatiently. 'I can't make bricks without clay'."* Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1859-1930 |
| *"Contradiction is not a sign of falsity, nor the lack of contradiction a sign of truth."* Blaise Pascal |

# [Moderation](#_top)

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| *Moderation does not mean truth is always found equidistant between two extreme positions, nor does it mean that bold and at times even radical steps are not necessary to advance moral ends. Moderation takes into account what is needed at any given moment ... there are general characteristics we associate with moderation, including prudence, the humility to recognize limits (including our own), the willingness to balance competing principles and an aversion to fanaticism. Moderation accepts the complexity of life in this world and distrusts utopian visions and simple solutions. The way to think about moderation is as a disposition, not as an ideology. Its antithesis is not conviction but intemperance.*  Peter Wehner  NYT. Dec. 17, 2016 |

# [Math](#_top)

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| *Mathematics presented as a closed, linearly ordered, system of truths without reference to origin and purpose has its charm and satisfies a philosophical need. But the attitude of introverted science is unsuitable for students who seek intellectual independence rather than indoctrination; disregard for applications and intuition leads to isolation and atrophy of mathematics. It seems extremely important that students and instructors should be protected from smug purism.* Richard Courant and Fritz John From Introduction to Calculus and Analysis. |
| *Give me four parameters, and I will draw an elephant for you; with five I will have him raise and lower his trunk and his tail.* Carl Friedrich Gauss |
| *If things are nice there is probably a good reason why they are nice: and if you do not know at least one reason for this good fortune, then you still have work to do.* Richard Askey Ramanujan and Important Formulas, p. 32, in Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887-1920), a Tribute, K.R. Nagarajan and T. Soundarajan, eds., Madurai Kamaraj University, 1987 |
| *"Quapropter bono christiano, sive mathematici, sive quilibet impie divinantium, maxime dicentes vera, cavendi sunt, ne consortio daemoniorum animam deceptam, pacto quodam societatis irretiant."*  *("Thus the good christian should beware of mathematicians and all those who make false prophecies, however much they may in fact speak the truth; lest, being in league with the devil, they may deceive errant souls into making common cause.")* Augustinus De genesis ad literam, Liber 2, Caput XVII, Nr. 37 |
| *Obvious is the most dangerous word in mathematics.* E. T. Bell |
| *"Mathematics is a collection of cheap tricks and dirty jokes."* Lipman Bers |
| *Suppose that you want to teach the 'cat' concept to a very young child. Do you explain that a cat is a relatively small, primarily carnivorous mammal with retractible claws, a distinctive sonic output, etc.? I'll bet not. You probably show the kid a lot of different cats, saying 'kitty' each time, until it gets the idea. To put it more generally, generalizations are best made by abstraction from experience.* R. P. Boas From: Can we make mathematics inelligible?, American Mathematical Monthly 88 (1981), pp. 727-731 |
| *Mathematics as we know it and as it has come to shape modern science could never have come into being without some disregard for the dangers of the infinite.* David BressoudA radical approach to real analysis, MAA, 2007, p. 22 |
| *"Abstraction consists essentially in the creation and utilization of ambiguity."*  *"Logic moves in one direction, the direction of clarity, coherence and structure. Ambiguity moves in the other direction, that of fluidity, openness, and release. Mathematics moves back and forth between these two poles. [...] It is the interaction between these different aspects that gives mathematics its power."* William Byers How Mathematicians Think, Princeton University Press, 2007 |
| *"To ask the right question is harder than to answer it."* G. Cantor |
| *"Mathematics is the art of giving the same name to different things."*  *"One geometry cannot be more true than another; it can only be more convenient."* Jules Henri Poincare 1854-1912 |
| *"First, it is neccessary to study the facts, to multiply the number of observations, and then later to search for formulas that connect them so as thus to discern the particular laws governing a certain class of phenomena. In general, it is not until after these particular laws have been established that one can expect to discover and articulate the more general laws that complete theories by bringing a multitude of apparently very diverse phenomena together under a single governing principle."* Augustin Louis Cauchy *1789-1857* |
| *"To many, mathematics is a collection of theorems. For me, mathematics is a collection of examples; a theorem is a statement about a collection of examples and the purpuse of proving theorems is to classify and explain the examples..."* John B. Conway Subnormal Operators, Pitman Advanced Publishing Program, 1981 |
| *"I have photographed many people: artists, writers, and scientists, among others. In speaking about their work, mathematicians use the words 'elegance', 'truth', and 'beauty' more than everyone else combined."* Mariana Cook In the preface of her book Mathematicians: An Outer View of the Inner World with Clifford Gunning, Princeton University Press, 2009. |
| *"Induction makes you feel guilty for getting something out of nothing, and it is artificial, but it is one of the greatest ideas of civilization."* Herbert Wilf |
| *"My work always tried to unite the true with the beautiful, but when I had to choose one or the other, I usually chose the beautiful."* Hermann Weyl |
| *"A mathematician who is not also something of a poet will never be a complete mathematician."* Karl Weierstrass |
| *"Suppose that we think of the integers lined up like dominoes. The inductive step tells us that they are close enough for each domino to knock over the next one, the base case tells us that the first domino falls over, the conclusion is that they all fall over. The fault in this analogy is that it takes time for each domino to fall and so a domino which is a long way along the line won't fall over for a long time. Mathematical implication is outside time."* Peter J. Eccles An Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning, p. 41 |
| *"Analysis is the art of taming infinity."* Neil Falkner Amer. Math. Monthly 116 (2009), p. 658 |
| *"Mathematics compares the most diverse phenomena and discovers the secret analogies that unite them."* Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier 1768-1830 |
| *"The only way to learn mathematics is to do mathematics."*  *"A good stock of examples, as large as possible, is indispensable for a thorough understanding of any concept, and when I want to learn something new, I make it my first job to build one."* Paul Halmos |
| *"The purpose of computation is insight, not numbers."* Richard Hamming 1915--1998 |
| *"I believe that mathematical reality lies outside us, that our function is to discover or observe it, and that the theorems which we prove, and which we describe grandiloquently as our 'creations,' are simply the notes of our observations."*  *"The mathematician's patterns, like those of the painter's or the poet's, must be beautiful; the ideas, like the colours or the words, must fit together in a harmonious way."* Godfrey Harold Hardy |
| *"The student of mathematics has to develop a tolerance for ambiguity. Pedantry can be the enemy of insight."* Gila Hanna in David Tall (ed.), Advanced mathematical thinking |
| *"I believe that numbers and functions of Analysis are not the arbitrary result of our minds; I think that they exist outside of us, with the same character of necessity as the things of objective reality, and we meet them or discover them, and study them, as do the physicists, the chemists and the zoologists."* Charles Hermite quoted in Morris Kline's Mathematical Thought from Ancient to Modern Times, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 1035. |
| *"The imaginary number is a fine and wonderful resource of the human spirit, almost an amphibian between being and not being."* Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 1646-1716 |
| *"Nature laughs at the difficulties of integration."* Pierre-Simon de Laplace |
| *"There is nothing as dreamy and poetic, nothing as radical, subversive, and psychedelic, as mathematics. It is every bit as mind blowing as cosmology or physics (mathematicians conceived of black holes long before astronomers actually found any), and allows more freedom of expression than poetry, art, or music (which depends heavily on properties of the physical universe). Mathematics is the purest of the arts, as well as the most misunderstood."* Paul Lockhart A mathematician's lament |
| *"To speak freely of mathematics, I find it the highest exercise of the spirit; but at the same time I know that it is so useless that I make little distinction between a man who is only a mathematician and a common artisan. Also, I call it the most beautiful profession in the world; but it is only a profession."* Blaise Pascal |

# [Math Jokes](#_top)

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| logloglog n has been proved to go to infinity, but has never been observed to do so. Anonymous |
| It is my experience that proofs involving matrices can be shortened by 50% if one throws the matrices out. E. Artin Geometric Algebra, p. 14 |
| There are three kinds of people: those who can count and those who can't. Bumpersticker on a car in Ithaca, NY |
| *"I'm a mathematical optimist: I deal only with positive integers."*  *"The hardest thing being with a mathematician is that they always have problems."* Tendai Chitewere |
| "A mathematician is a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat which isn't there." Charles R. Darwin |
| *"Bart: Hey, Houdini! Why don't you saw Martin in half?*  *Magician: Oh, I'm not the kind of magician who does tricks. I'm a mathemagician!*  *[Kids groan]*  *Magician: Now, prepare to marvel at the mysteries of the universe, as I make this remainder disappear. [writes 7 goes into 28 three times]*  *Lisa: But 7 goes into 28 four times.*  *Magician: Uh, this is a magic 7."*  *"Apu: In fact I can recite pi to 40000 places. The last digit is one!*  *Homer: Mmmm, pie."*  *"Homer: This time tomorrow, you'll be wearing high heels!*  *Ned: Nope, you will.*  *Homer: 'Fraid not.*  *Ned: 'Fraid so!*  *Homer: 'Fraid not.*  *Ned: 'Fraid so!*  *Homer: 'Fraid not infinity!*  *Ned: 'Fraid so infinity plus one!*  *Homer: D'oh!"*  *"Internet Guy: Your stock is at zero.*  *Bart: But I have 52 million shares! What's 52 million times zero?! And don't tell me it's zero!"*  *"(Homer has disappeared into a wall in the living room.)*  *Lisa: Well, where's my dad?*  *Frink: Well, it should be obvious to even the most dimwitted individual who holds an advanced degree in hyperbolic topology, n'gee, that Homer Simpson has stumbled into...[the lights go off] the third dimension.*  *Lisa: [flips the light switch back] Sorry.*  *Frink: [drawing on a blackboard] Here is an ordinary square....*  *Wiggum: Whoa, whoa--slow down, egghead!*  *Frink: ... but suppose we extend the square beyond the two dimensions of our universe, along the hypothetical z-axis, there.*  *Everyone: [gasps]*  *Frink: This forms a three-dimensional object known as a "cube," or a "Frinkahedron" in honor of its discoverer, n'hey, n'hey.*  *Homer's voice: Help me! Are you helping me, or are you going on and on?*  *Frink: Oh, right. And, of course, within, we find the doomed individual."* Matt Groening The Simpsons |

# [Philosophy](#_top)

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| "Order is not sufficient. What is required, is something much more complex. It is order entering upon novelty; so that the massiveness of order does not degenerate into mere repetition; and so that the novelty is always reflected upon a background of system." Alfred North Whitehead 1861-1947 |

# [Philosophical jokes](#_top)

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| "What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case, I definitely overpaid for my carpet." Woody Alen |
| It is an important and popular fact that things are not always as what they seem. For instance, on the planet earth, man has always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much: the wheel, New York, wars. [...] But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than men; for precisely the same reasons. Douglas Adams The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy |

# [Probability](#_top)

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| *...no test based upon a theory of probability can by itself provide any valuable evidence of the truth or falsehood of a hypothesis. . . But we may look at the purpose of tests from another viewpoint. Without hoping to know whether each separate hypothesis is true or false, we may search for rules to govern our behavior with regard to them, in following which we insure that, in the long run of experience, we shall not often be wrong.* J. Neyman and E. S. Pearson On the Problem of the Most Efficient Tests of Statistical Hypotheses. 1933 |
| "It is not certain that everything is uncertain." Blaise Pascal |

# [Probability + Statistics jokes](#_top)

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| *"USA Today has come out with a new survey--apparently three out of every four people make up 75% of the population."* David Letterman |
| *"There is something in statistics that makes it very similar to astrology."* Gian-Carlo Rota |