



Towing Icebergs, Falling Dominoes, and Other Adventures in Applied Mathematics

Robert B. Banks

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Although we seldom think of it, our lives are played out in a world of numbers. Such common activities as throwing baseballs, skipping rope, growing flowers, playing football, measuring savings accounts, and many others are inherently mathematical. So are more speculative problems that are simply fun to ponder in themselves--such as the best way to score Olympic events.

Here Robert Banks presents a wide range of musings, both practical and entertaining, that have intrigued him and others: How tall can one grow? Why do we get stuck in traffic? Which football player would have a better chance of breaking away--a small, speedy wide receiver or a huge, slow linebacker? Can California water shortages be alleviated by towing icebergs from Antarctica? What is the fastest the 100-meter dash will ever be run?

The book's twenty-four concise chapters, each centered on a real-world phenomenon, are presented in an informal and engaging manner. Banks shows how math and simple reasoning together may produce elegant models that explain everything from the federal debt to the proper technique for ski-jumping.

This book, which requires of its readers only a basic understanding of high school or college math, is for anyone fascinated by the workings of mathematics in our everyday lives, as well as its applications to what may be imagined. All will be rewarded with a myriad of interesting problems and the know-how to solve them.

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