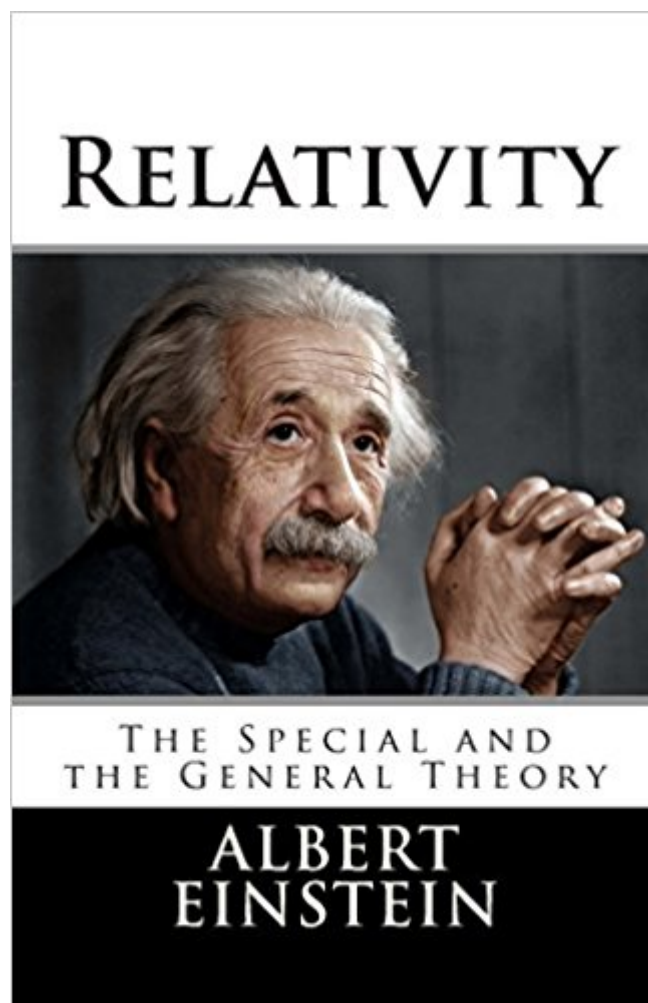


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Relativity: The Special And The General Theory



Synopsis

Relativity: The Special and General Theory Albert EINSTEIN (1879 - 1955), Translated by Robert W. Lawson (1890 - 1960) This is an introduction to Einstein's space-bending, time-stretching theory of Relativity, written by the master himself. Special and General relativity explain the structure of space time and provide a theory of gravitation, respectively. Einstein's theories shocked the world with their counterintuitive results, including the dissolution of absolute time. In this book he brings a simplified form of his profound understanding of the subject to the layperson. In the words of Einstein: "The present book is intended, as far as possible, to give an exact insight into the theory of Relativity to those readers who, from a general scientific and philosophical point of view, are interested in the theory, but who are not conversant with the mathematical apparatus of theoretical physics." • The book is challenging at times but, when approached patiently, proves itself one of the most lucid explanations of Relativity to be found anywhere.

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There is no doubt that Albert Einstein has been one of the most brilliant minds of the past century. His major contribution to science was the special and the general theory of relativity, which gave a new dimension to that we call today "Modern Physics". Many people feel frustrated because when they try to understand relativity, they find some authors that expound in their books a complex arrangement of equations referring to the mathematical part of the theory, namely, the books are accessible for people with certain levels of knowledge (that is the case of engineers, physicists, mathematicians, among others). Nevertheless, perceiving and anticipating this situation, Albert Einstein wrote this book (more than fifty years ago) whit the purpose of exposing the special and the general theory of relativity in such a way that anyone can understand it. I this sense, I think, Einstein succeeded because despite the shortness of the book, the same covers the most important aspects of relativity in a clear and concise form. Moreover, the book has appendixes where the author makes reference to some interesting subjects like the problem of space and relativity, the experimental confirmation of the theory, to name a few. If you have decided to learn something about relativity, and you do not have vast knowledge in physics and mathematics, I sincerely recommend you this book. On the other hand, if you were a reader looking for more technical information (mathematical foundation of general relativity), I would choose the book "Gravitation" written by Misner, Wheeler y Thorne. This text represents an encyclopedia about general relativity.

This is the introduction to relativity written by Einstein. It is NOT the book which contains the original works, which is a very difficult book (just think that Planck had to ask for several clarifications before he understood Einstein's breakthrough paper). Here the great scientist set to himself the goal of explaining to the educated, but not specialized, man.Einstein was, of course, very deep. When he talked about any topic in physics, chances are that he went deeper than anyone else who thought about the same theme, for a comparable time span. Now, imagine relativity. When he wrote this

book he had thought about this matter for several decades. Nobody reached this depth, then and afterwards. The fruits of his thought, like black-holes, are being proved true now, after so much time! So, the difference between this book and all other introductory books on relativity is proportional to the difference between Einstein himself and the other authors. You don't have to believe me: just read the excerpts! You'll not remain indifferent to the majesty of his ideas. Put yourself in the right mood: Einstein was a very simple man who was, in writing this book, sincerely interested in explaining his creation to you. Follow his path, read attentively, and, above all, think! The reward will be great.

Do not buy the copy of this book with ISBN 978-1452841212 !!! You have been warned! The equations which are set out as images (ie any that require more than simple typesetting) have not been printed, and the text just shows the file name instead eg. eq1.gif. I can't believe that they're selling this book! The other copies are ok from what I have seen on the preview pages.

It seems as if at least two or three books are published every year to explain the concepts of special and general relativity to the public. I haven't encountered another one as good as this. Contrary to widespread misconception, Albert Einstein was not an exceptionally expert mathematician. His justly deserved fame rests on the fact that he had an incredible intuition for physics, and a willingness to think the unthinkable whenever that seemed to be where the physics led. So it's not surprising that he could explain both the concepts of special relativity and those of general relativity in clear, simple language suitable for the non-technical reader. The result is a masterpiece, especially the discussion of general relativity. The mathematics of general relativity in its applications is esoteric, to say the least; any reader who wishes to glimpse this can take a look at Robert M. Wald's book "General Relativity." But the underlying ideas are very simple, simple enough to be easily grasped by any 11th or 12th grade student in an "academic" curriculum. The problem with them is that for most people the ideas are counterintuitive. The other books for laypeople that I've looked at go through all sorts of contortions to make the ideas plausible. Einstein doesn't. He proceeds steadily, simply and logically to show how special relativity follows from direct observation. Then he points out that special relativity is only useful in certain exceptional cases, and asks himself (and us) what properties a more general physical theory must have to be consistent both with observation and with special relativity. General relativity just lands in our laps as a result of this simple train of thought. I treasure this book.

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