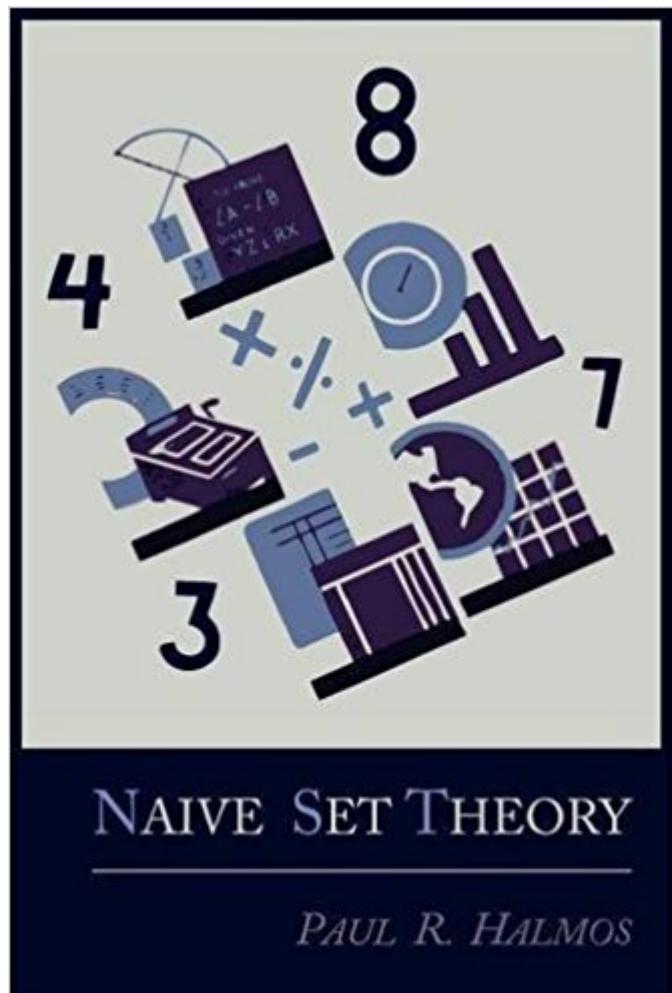


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Naive Set Theory



Synopsis

2011 Reprint of 1960 Edition. Full facsimile of the original edition, not reproduced with Optical Recognition Software. Paul Richard Halmos (1916-2006) was a Hungarian-born American mathematician who made fundamental advances in the areas of probability theory, statistics, operator theory, ergodic theory, and functional analysis (in particular, Hilbert spaces). He was also recognized as a great mathematical expositor. "...He (the author) uses the language and notation of ordinary informal mathematics to state the basic set-theoretic facts which a beginning student of advanced mathematics needs to know...Because of the informal method of presentation, the book is eminently suited for use as a textbook or for self-study. The reader should derive from this volume a maximum of understanding of the theorems of set theory and of their basic importance in the study of mathematics." - "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Oh, to be able to write like Paul Halmos! This is, quite simply, a beautiful book. Halmos has taken a field, wrapped his deep understanding around it, and brought the field forth into light in a way that it is accessible to any reader willing to invest the requisite effort, regardless of mathematical background. Each word is carefully chosen; Halmos has a knack for qualifying his statements gently and subtly so that on a first reading, the qualifications and limitations placed on the main results don't slow one down. On a second reading, the qualifications actually shed light on the intricacies of the subject. "Why does he qualify this?", one asks oneself, and in discovering the answer, comes to a better understanding of the field. Similarly, the small number of exercises posed for the reader have been very carefully chosen to shed light on the subject itself. Unlike the rote busywork included

with many mathematics texts, each problem posed by Halmos is, I would argue, essential to the book. The book is not easy going in that it can be read quickly. I have a reasonable mathematical background, I use mathematics daily in my professional life, and yet (taking time to work the exercises) I read this book at a pace of about four to six pages an hour. On the other hand, this is not so bad - the entire book is only 102 pages, and in those 102 pages Halmos manages to present a full semester's course in set theory. Finally, I should mention that anyone who has spent more time with applied mathematics than with the foundations of mathematics is likely to find this a fascinating read. When I read this book, it was not only the most interesting mathematics book I had read in at least a year, but also the most interesting philosophy book.

This is an edited version of my original review. First impressions don't always last! Today I find it horrible as a reference. It's just too wordy. Why not use a few equations instead of making lengthy explanations in words? Even beginning math students are supposed to learn the FORMAL language of math, so why not use it at the outset? The rest you read below is my original review (without change). I didn't change my original rating, but today I'd definitely rate it lower!/***/There is no escape from Set Theory in mathematics, and by extension, in physics. I finally realized that and went to the basics and bought this book and I am glad I did. Every little piece of knowledge I have in mathematics now appear to me in a brighter light. The book starts from scratch in that it assumes no prior knowledge in mathematics at all. It does, however, assume knowledge of basic pure logic. Set Theory is developed through the introduction of the axioms, one by one, where the axioms are taken as universal truths which cannot be derived (from previously introduced axioms). This development goes through various theorems valid for all sets, like De Morgan's laws, the formation of new sets from old ones, like the power set and cartesian products, relations and other more specialized constructs, like functions. Special sets are developed, e.g. the natural numbers. It is an amazing experience the first time one realizes that all sets one need (that I know of) in mathematics can be constructed from the empty set. Even more amazing is the fact that most of the symbols used in mathematics are actually sets. The development goes through ordinal numbers and their arithmetic, and end with a brief introduction to cardinal numbers.

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