

The Theoretical Minimum: What You Need to Know to Start Doing Physics

By Leonard Susskind, George Hrabovsky

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A world-class physicist and a citizen scientist combine forces to teach Physics 101—the DIY way

The Theoretical Minimum is a book for anyone who has ever regretted not taking physics in college—or who simply wants to know how to think like a physicist. In this unconventional introduction, physicist Leonard Susskind and hacker-scientist George Hrabovsky offer a first course in physics and associated math for the ardent amateur. Unlike most popular physics books—which give readers a taste of what physicists know but shy away from equations or math—Susskind and Hrabovsky actually teach the skills you need to do physics, beginning with classical mechanics, yourself. Based on Susskind's enormously popular Stanford University-based (and YouTube-featured) continuing-education course, the authors cover the minimum—the theoretical minimum of the title—that readers need to master to study more advanced topics.

An alternative to the conventional go-to-college method, *The Theoretical Minimum* provides a tool kit for amateur scientists to learn physics at their own pace.

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Editorial Review

Review

***Wall Street Journal*, Best Books of 2013**
“Every minute of our lives is now dependent on technology, yet the wonders of basic science are foreign to many of us. Everyone who remembers even a bit of math should read this inviting and accessible account of ‘what you need to know to start doing physics.’”

Wall Street Journal
“So what do you do if you enjoyed science at school or college but ended up with a different career and are still wondering what makes the universe tick?.... Leonard Susskind and George Hrabovsky’s *The Theoretical Minimum* is the book for you. In this neat little book the authors aim to provide the minimum amount of knowledge you need about classical physics…to gain some real understanding of the world…. They do so with great success…. Along the way you get beautifully clear explanations of famously ‘difficult’ things like differential and integral calculus, conservation laws and what physicists mean by symmetries…. Messrs. Susskind and Hrabovsky’s book is a powerful exposition of why science is ‘real’ and a counter to the kind of wishful thinking employed by people who, for whatever reason, reject the scientific worldview.”

Physics Today
“A pleasure to read….a beautiful, high-level overview of the entire subject.”

***Scientific American*'s Cocktail Party Physics blog**
“It’s clear, insightful, and designed for those hardcore physics fans who’ve read all the popular treatments and now might be interested in moving out of the armchair into the real action of actually engaging in theoretical physics.”

Science Blogs: Built on Facts
“[A] charming and erudite instance of a genre with very few members – a pop-physics book with partial differential equations on a good fraction of the pages…. More impressive still is that the book entirely resists the temptation to skip to the good stuff – quantum mechanics and so on. This is a book which is purely about classical mechanics…. [S]ucceeds admirably in its goal. It presents classical mechanics in all its glory, from forces to Hamiltonians to symmetry and conservation laws, in a casual but detailed style.”

Physics World
“Very readable. Abstract concepts are well explained….[*The Theoretical Minimum*] provide[s] a clear description of advanced classical physics concepts, and gives readers who want a challenge the opportunity to exercise their brain in new ways.”

Not Even Wrong
“[Q]uite good…. The style is breezy and colloquial, with lots of nice explanations of some of the basic concepts of physics. It’s wonderful to see Poisson brackets appearing and nicely explained in a popular book destined to be displayed at bookstores everywhere.”

Sean Carroll, physicist, California Institute of Technology, and author of *The Particle at the End of the Universe*

“What a wonderful and unique resource. For anyone who is determined to learn physics for real, looking beyond conventional popularizations, this is the ideal place to start. It gets directly to the important points, with nuggets of deep insight scattered along the way. I'm going to be recommending this book right and left.”

About the Author
Leonard Susskind has been the Felix Bloch Professor in theoretical physics at Stanford University since 1978. The author of "The Cosmic Landscape" and "The Black Hole War," he is a member of the National Academy of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the recipient of numerous prizes including the science writing prize of the American Institute of Physics for his Scientific American article on black holes. He lives in Palo Alto, California. George Hrabovsky is a hacker-physicist in Wisconsin involved in as citizen science, or the community of individuals who do science at home. Since May 1999 he has been the president of Madison Area Science and Technology (MAST), a nonprofit organization dedicated to scientific and technological research and education. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

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