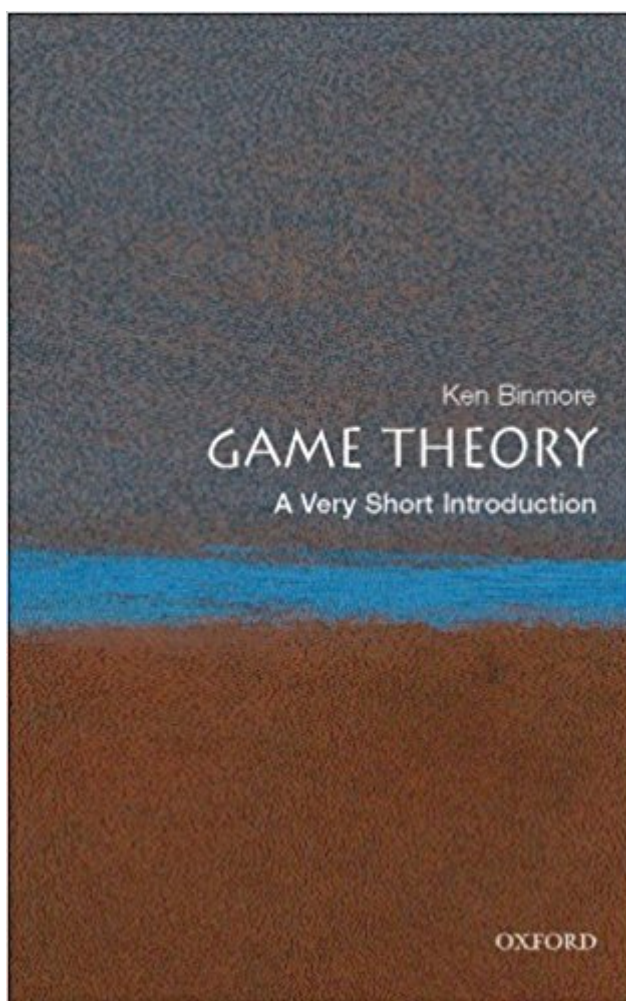


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Game Theory: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

Games are everywhere: Drivers manoeuvring in heavy traffic are playing a driving game. Bargain hunters bidding on eBay are playing an auctioning game. A firm negotiating next year's wage is playing a bargaining game. The opposing candidates in an election are playing a political game. The supermarket's price for corn flakes is decided by playing an economic game. Game theory is about how to play such games in a rational way. Even when the players have not thought everything out in advance, game theory often works for the same reason that mindless animals sometimes end up behaving very cleverly: evolutionary forces eliminate irrational play because it is unfit. Game theory has seen spectacular successes in evolutionary biology and economics, and is beginning to revolutionize other disciplines from psychology to political science. This Very Short Introduction introduces the fascinating world of game theory, showing how it can be understood without mathematical equations, and revealing that everything from how to play poker optimally to the sex ratio among bees can be understood by anyone willing to think seriously about the problem. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Customer Reviews

If this book was designed to be read by students of economics, I'd say it's a great nontechnical explanation of Game Theory. Fortunately for me, I am a grad student in economics and have studied economic theory pretty intensely for the past few years. I think the author does a good job of explaining the ideas covered in normal game theory courses and explaining the ideas in nontechnical language. I would recommend this to anybody studying economics/game theory (undergrads, grad students, profs, researchers). Sometimes we get lost in all of the mathematics of game theory and I think it's a good explanation of what we study in everyday language. However, I would probably not recommend this to people who do not formally study game theory. Some of the author's explanations are terse or convoluted. Since I formally study this stuff, I typically understand what he's trying to say, even if his explanation is not great. I can't imagine his explanations being sufficient for the everyday reader.

This book deserves a much higher score than it's received. The reason why it has such an even distribution between 1-5 stars is that Binmore's book is written for a person who doesn't necessarily know much about game theory but is reasonably well read in other fields related to game theory. This is what allows Binmore to write such a short book on this complex field. A good way to mitigate this problem in reading the book is to also read the VSIs on Causation, Social Psychology, Risk, Networks, Statistics, Information and Probability.

This is not a replacement for an academic level textbook, nor is it recommended for readers looking for some fluffy hand wavy book of charming non-mathematical anecdotes. If you are a math/cs/statistics/engineering graduate looking for some lightweight technical reading to expand your understanding, this is a very good book.

Confusing - striving to simplify, this book does not really deliver what's necessary to understand the topic

Nice combination of professional and applied writings. How math or probability can be applied to games and evolutionary theories is the power of the book.

LOST ME AT THE NASH EQUILIBRIUM, THAT WAS NOT EXPLAINED AT ALL!

I avoid writing negative reviews, but am willing to do so when there is a need to warn other readers about wasting time and money on a book. This book presents one such occasion. The problem is simply that this book works very poorly as an introduction. The early parts of the book fail to provide the lay of the land, definitions of terms are unclear, many topics are poorly explained, and all sorts of necessary details are missing. I see that another reviewer loved the book, but I also get the impression that this reviewer already has some background in game theory (which I don't). Readers with that background might find this book to be a fun and breezy review since they can fill in the missing content but, again, the problem is that this book purports to be an introduction. Lest anyone think that the real problem was that this book was over my head, I'll just note that I'm an engineer, and I've done fine with plenty of books dealing with math, science, and other analytic subjects, many of which are a good bit more advanced than Binmore's. I had to cut my losses and abandon this book about a third of the way through, and I'll now be looking again for a game theory book which is genuinely a proper introduction. After reading such a book, perhaps I'll come back to Binmore's book and see if I can get more out of it.

From Binmore I expected more quality material. He is best in writing difficult subjects in simple and clear language. This one is written clearly but simple material.

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