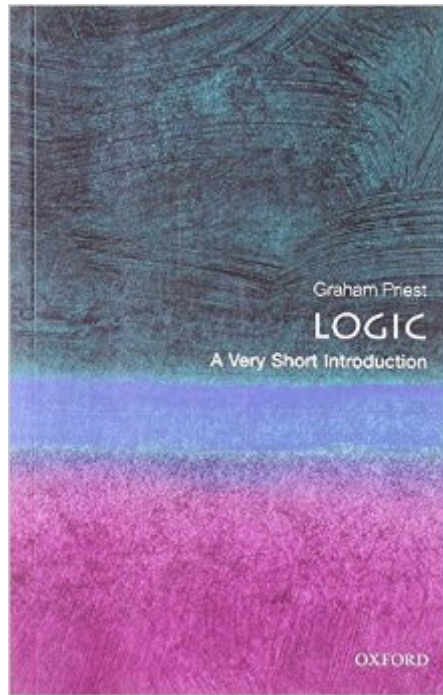


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Logic: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Logic is often perceived as having little to do with the rest of philosophy, and even less to do with real life. In this lively and accessible introduction, Graham Priest shows how wrong this conception is. He explores the philosophical roots of the subject, explaining how modern formal logic deals with issues ranging from the existence of God and the reality of time to paradoxes of probability and decision theory. Along the way, the basics of formal logic are explained in simple, non-technical terms, showing that logic is a powerful and exciting part of modern philosophy.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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Customer Reviews

I am a novice in logic. But I need logic--some of it sophisticated--to understand a philosophy paper I am working with. I found Graham Priestly's Logic, a Very Short Introduction superb and immensely helpful. I searched full-length texts, but I knew I would never wade through them. I didn't want to take the time for a college course. I searched the Web and found some excellent material, ...

However, Graham's book proved far and away the simplest and best. Here are the advantages I found. Some advantages are simply due to the brevity of the book that suited my needs, but some stand out in any context.

1. The book goes into topics early-truth tables and modal logic, for example. Copi's Introduction to Logic, while undoubtedly very good, and used in many logic

courses, does not get to truth tables until Chapter 10 while Priest starts using truth tables in Chapter 2, page 9. Another text, Stephan Layman's *The Power of Logic*, did not get to modal logic until about page 450. Graham starts the topic in chapter 6, page 38, about 1/3 of the way through his book.² The book had every single logic symbol that I needed. I found no one book, full-length text or web source that did this. Equally important every symbol was used and discussed somewhere in the book. Some symbols were missing or introduced very late in other books.³ Graham doesn't spoon feed the reader with great detail like other books, nor employ elaborate introduction to a topic.⁴ *Logic, a Very Short Introduction* is about 10% the length of other books I looked at (Copi & Layman were about 550-650 pages, for example)-considering Graham's page size is probably $\frac{1}{3}$ that of a normal book. Other books cost roughly 3 to 8 as much.⁵ Graham has a very clear, engaging, and often humorous, style. The book is very well organized and written.⁶ It is easy to get into meat quickly.⁷ In a little over 100 pages, Priest uses a given chapter's logic to analyze a variant form of several classical philosophical questions. For example: the Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God, fatalism, the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God, the Argument from Design for God's existence, etc.⁸ The book has an unusual amount of supplemental material-brief history of logic, glossary, list of symbols, problems ..., bibliography, general index and index of names.⁹ Every chapter ends with a simple summary of the ideas it covers. There were numerous figures.¹⁰ There were 13 illustrations ranging from cartoons, to art, to famous philosophers. Of course, this is a short survey and so no one should think that any one topic is covered in depth. Breadth rather than depth is the book's objective. The book could be used by:¹. Self learners². People taking a logic course who want a quick overview or supplement³. People, who would like rudimentary familiarity with logic for their work, but do not need a college course or a full-length logic book....

For its length and breadth, I'd recommend this little book to most people. I teach a course on Logic, and even I learned a bit from this short introduction. The worry, however, is that Priest takes this book as an opportunity to push his own non-standard view on formal logic, which is why a better title for this book would be '*A short Introduction to Priest's Logic*'. Most immediately evident is that Priest uses many of the chapters as a place to show how an argument for the existence of god. For example, much of the chapter on predicate logic is devoted to showing the fallacy inherent in the cosmological argument for the existence of god. His chapter on decision theory is in part devoted to showing how Pascal's wager goes wrong. Probably even more subversive is that, in an introductory level logic book, Priest presents his own unorthodox solutions to paradoxes in logic. For example, to

solve the problem of self-reference, he presents his own view regarding four valued logics, without even a word explaining that not only is this not the standard view, it's not even a very popular one. He also offers fuzzy logic as a solution of vagueness and sorites paradoxes. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and would offer it to any friend interested in a brief introduction to some advanced topics in logic. But I'll be sure to emphasize that much of what he offers for solutions is hardly accepted by mainstream analytic philosophy. Priest took advantage of this chance to write an introductory level text as an opportunity to push his own views, and anyone reading this should be aware of this fact before beginning.

This is just the book to whet one's appetite for a deeper engagement in logic. Priest's little book has short, clearly written chapters on validity, truth functions, quantifiers, descriptions, self-reference, modal operators, conditionals, tenses, identity, vagueness, inductive logic, and decision theory. Virtually every chapter shows how interesting philosophical problems arise from or are tied in with logic. The only possible drawback to the book is that new initiates to the philosophical foundations of logic are likely to never again have a good night's sleep after Priest introduces them to some of the classic puzzles.

I've never studied logic before so this seemed like a good place to start. I don't know how you could possibly get more information into a little book this size! It's possibly the best value in a book that I've ever seen. If there's anything else to the field of logic that isn't here then I don't want to know. But be prepared to spend some time reading it.....you'll need to keep a notepad handy and you'll definitely need to re-read many sections more than once to get the full understanding. BUT....when done I can guarantee you that you'll be glad you did it. This is an excellent little book and is worth more than \$10.

This is a lucid introduction to logic, ideal to introduce the interested high-school student or non-specialist in the field, or as a refresher for anyone who has already dipped a toe into the field. It contains plenty of interesting examples and puzzles, and as always, with Priest's work, points you to important philosophical issues tied up with the notions of logical consequence. It's short, it's clear, it's written by an expert, and it contains pictures! What more could you want? Graham Priest taught me logic (so perhaps I'm biased), and I'm delighted that his clarity and expertise are made available to a really wide audience with this book. If you want to know what's been going on in logic in the last few hundred years, and you don't know where to start, I'd unhesitatingly recommend this book.

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