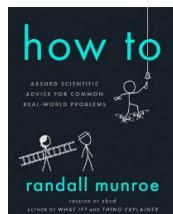


**How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems**  
By Randall Munroe, ISBN 978-0-525537090



*How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems* is the latest work from the mind of Randall Munroe, best known for his hysterical online comic strip *xkcd*. If you are a fan of Munroe's comics, you will certainly enjoy this book. It combines Munroe's iconic comic style with very scientific pseudo self-help advice.

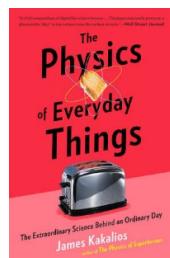
Mostly, Munroe takes real-world problems and scenarios and performs a reverse *reductio ad absurdum*, presenting the reader with the most absurd yet scientifically sound solutions to some terribly banal inquiries. Would they work in actuality? Possibly not, but they work in theory—and make for wildly entertaining hypothetical scenarios bolstered by delightfully sarcastic comic illustrations.

Some of the highlights include "How to Throw a Pool Party," "How to Move," "How to Play Tag," and "How to Build a Lava Moat." If you are thinking "one of these is not like the others," you are correct. "How to Build a Lava Moat" is an example of one of the chapters that answered a question I don't imagine most readers would have ever thought to ask, although the resulting response is highly entertaining. "How to Throw a Pool Party" was quite hilarious as well, as it operated under the initial assumption that one does not necessarily have a pool and needs to build one before hosting a party in it.

However, the best chapter was "How to Make an Emergency Landing." For this section, Munroe conducted a question-and-answer series with test pilot and astronaut Chris Hadfield. The contrast between Munroe's increasingly absurd queries, which include "How to Land on a Farm," "How to Land on an Aircraft Carrier," "How to Land on a Hostile Aircraft Carrier," and "How to Land a Space Shuttle in Downtown LA," and Hadfield's serious and scientifically sound expert responses, makes for a wildly entertaining departure from the typical format Munroe follows in his other chapters.

All in all, the book is a wonderfully comedic approach to everyday self-help grounded in very real but very absurd scientific solutions.

**The Physics of Everyday Things: The Extraordinary Science Behind an Ordinary Day**  
By James Kakalios, ISBN 978-0-7704-3775-6



James Kakalios' newest book is a delightful endeavor into the physics of everyday life. Kakalios does not take the time to explain the basic concepts of physics, but rather the basic physics (or not-so-basic physics) of mundane mechanisms. These range from alarm clocks and toasters to car engines and airplanes—all things that we largely take for granted in our everyday lives. At times, Kakalios leans towards oversimplification of certain concepts, but as he himself admits in the chapter where he explains how an MRI machine works, "if you know all this—why are you reading this book?"



*The Physics of Everyday Things* is not geared towards physicists or engineers, but rather physics enthusiasts. The ideal audience for this book might be a younger student of physics—perhaps a high school student or college freshman—or someone who hasn't studied physics since their earlier days. In order to enjoy the book and thoroughly appreciate it, the reader must have some knowledge of physics fundamentals. But someone who lives and breathes physics for a living might find it a little too trite to be entertaining.

*Reviews by Jeanette S. Ferrara, MA*