Contents

Foreword xi

Preface xiii

1 Dimensions 1

1.1 Economics: The power of multinational corporations 1
1.2 Newtonian mechanics: Free fall 3
1.3 Guessing integrals 7
1.4 *Summary and further problems* 11

2 Easy cases 13

2.1 Gaussian integral revisited 13
2.2 Plane geometry: The area of an ellipse 16
2.3 Solid geometry: The volume of a truncated pyramid 17
2.4 Fluid mechanics: Drag 21
2.5 *Summary and further problems* 29

3 Lumping 31

3.1 Estimating populations: How many babies? 32
3.2 Estimating integrals 33
3.3 Estimating derivatives 37
3.4 Analyzing differential equations: The spring–mass system 42
3.5 Predicting the period of a pendulum 46
3.6 *Summary and further problems* 54

4 Pictorial proofs 57

4.1 Adding odd numbers 58
4.2 Arithmetic and geometric means 60
4.3 Approximating the logarithm 66
4.4 Bisecting a triangle 70
4.5 Summing series 73
4.6 *Summary and further problems* 75

5 Taking out the big part **77**
5.1 Multiplication using one and few 77
5.2 Fractional changes and low-entropy expressions 79
5.3 Fractional changes with general exponents 84
5.4 Successive approximation: How deep is the well? 91
5.5 Daunting trigonometric integral 94
5.6 *Summary and further problems* 97

6 Analogy **99**
6.1 Spatial trigonometry: The bond angle in methane 99
6.2 Topology: How many regions? 103
6.3 Operators: Euler–MacLaurin summation 107
6.4 Tangent roots: A daunting transcendental sum 113
6.5 *Bon voyage* 121

Bibliography **123**

Index **127**