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Precalculus Essentials (4th Edition)



Synopsis

Bob Blitzer has inspired thousands of students with his engaging approach to mathematics, making this beloved series the #1 in the market. Blitzer draws on his unique background in mathematics and behavioral science to present the full scope of mathematics with vivid applications in real-life situations. Students stay engaged because Blitzer often uses pop-culture and up-to-date references to connect math to students' lives, showing that their world is profoundly mathematical.

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Customer Reviews

Bob Blitzer has done a wonderful job of compiling a precalculus textbook that can teach a course better than many professors. The first thing that struck me about this book was the casual tone. Blitzer writes as if he were a friend explaining a concept. He is not afraid to show helpful acronyms or mnemonic devices (ASTC - all students take calculus - to help remember which trig functions were positive in which quadrants), and he often gives hints in the margin that clear things up or elucidate certain mathematical concepts. I know that these helpful tips have saved my skin on multiple occasions. The opposite of Blitzer's tone is one of a stern and serious math professor. It was a blessing in disguise that my precalculus teacher was just like this. She lectured from the textbook (and did a much poorer job of teaching than the book itself), so I was able to read ahead, take notes based on the book (instead of her lectures), and finish the homework assignments in class. Blitzer has identified many ways to apply the math to real life, whether it involves angular velocity in physics or population growth. Obviously, certain topics are begging to be applied (right triangle trigonometry, for instance), but Blitzer does a great job of making the math seem useful. Another

positive aspect about this book is the way Blitzer designed his list of problems. The answer to every odd problem is found in the back of the book, but every even problem is closely modeled after its odd predecessor. Thus, even without a definitive answer, you can be sure that you did the problem correctly because you saw an extremely similar one just a few seconds ago. Blitzer is also able to integrate the widespread technology of graphing calculators.

I'm a credentialed math teacher who moved into private tutoring, and my focus has always been on struggling students. Students who have a hard time with math need clear examples and lots of practice. One of my students has been using this book for her high school Precalc course, and the more familiar I became with it, the more I loved it (which is why it's on my wish list right now for helping students in the future). When a student starts a Precalc course, they never really know what they're going to get. It depends thoroughly on the book and the teacher. Sometimes it's just glorified Algebra 2. Sometimes it's Trig. Usually it's both, but there's so much material possible that what the teacher chooses to emphasize defines the course a great deal. This book begins with a solid review of Algebra 1 & 2 concepts. It has a few chapters on polynomial and rational functions (finding roots, minima/maxima, determining end behavior, graphing, solving equations, etc.) and one on exponentials and logs (likewise), that might be covered in an Algebra 2 course but are covered in more depth here, in preparation for the knowledge of functions students will need for Calculus. Theorems are presented as such, and often proven (in the way a good Calc book will). The Trig chapters likewise go into a lot of depth, first introducing the unit circle, radians, equivalent angles, the basic functions, the angles students should know by heart (multiples of 30, 45, 60, and 90 deg.), and reference angles, then moving to graphing the functions, to inverse functions, etc. The second trig chapter has several sections covering a few identities at a time, which build up to solving trig equations (sometimes using those identities). The third trig chapter then moves into polar coordinates.

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