



Cook, Alan

**A TRIP TO THE
NUMBER YARD**

*A Fun and Easy Guide
to the Math You Need
for Construction...And
Nothing Else*

Freshwater (113 pp.)

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This step-by-step guide to mastering basic construction math utilizes the building of a hypothetical bungalow as an occasion to lightheartedly relate mathematical thinking to practical application.

The need for one more book in a market where a dozen books on basic math for construction workers have been published appears initially questionable. Yet Cook's book earns a place of distinction for bringing a gently humorous tone and an engaging sense of storytelling to what could be the driest of subjects. Organizing his book around the building of a hypothetical bungalow, Cook brings essential grade-school level mathematical concepts (how to solve for unknowns, distinguishing numbers and units and dealing with fundamental algebra and geometry) into play in the sequence you would need to use them if you were building your own home. This is a particularly engaging read for anyone suffering math phobia. "Solving for an unknown is like traveling to a new destination," opens the book, and, through the author's clearheaded examples of construction problems mathematically solved, math becomes a thoroughly charming form of intellectual recreation. Each chapter concludes with a helpful review of key concepts. And sprinkled through the text are Mary E. Scott's cartoons achieving a remarkable balance between adult sophistication and childlike playfulness. In Cook's chapter on reviewing how to solve fractions, decimals and percent, the author gives the all-too-gripping math problem of calculating the cost of filling up your truck's gas tank, a skyrocketing cost of doing construction work. Levity is introduced through Scott's cartoon showing a depressed consumer pondering which button to press on a gas pump with buttons labeled "Barely Afford," "Second Mortgage" and "Buy a Bike." The book's 17 compact chapters conclude with a helpful list of conversion factors and handy equations.

Cook successfully establishes the mathematical foundation needed for construction with a witty, conversational tone that clarifies math while instilling confidence in a reader's capacity to practically apply numbers.