



# Turning Numbers into Knowledge: Mastering the Art of Problem Solving

*Jonathan G. Koomey (Foreword), John P. Holdren (Foreword by)*

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**Turning Numbers into Knowledge: Mastering the Art of Problem Solving** Jonathan G. Koomey (Foreword) , John P. Holdren (Foreword by)

Full of tools, tricks, and tips for solving problems in the real world, this book serves as an ideal training manual for those who are new to or intimidated by quantitative analysis and acts as an excellent refresher for those who have more experience but want to improve the quality of their data, the clarity of their graphics, and the cogency of their arguments. In addition to containing numerous updates to the contents—references, URLs, and reading lists—this second edition includes a new foreword, revised chapters, and an epilogue. Mastering the art of problem solving takes more than proficiency with basic calculations; it requires understanding how people use information, recognizing the importance of ideology, learning the art of storytelling, and acknowledging the important distinction between facts and values. Intended for executives, professors, and students, this guide addresses these and other essential skills.

## Turning Numbers into Knowledge: Mastering the Art of Problem Solving Details

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# From Reader Review Turning Numbers into Knowledge: Mastering the Art of Problem Solving for online ebook

## Stuart Bobb says

This works well as both a reference and a good reminder of just how low the quality is for most data that you see presented - and how you can do better. If you have ever pondered just how it is that really stupid claims like "the Internet accounted for 8% of all electricity used in the US around the year 2000" ever got off the ground, much less lived as long as it has, this book is your guide to the answer.

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## Nate says

Koomey's book "Turning Numbers into Knowledge" is definitely far more concerned about the process of analyzing data and presenting data than it is about mastering the art of problem solving. That is, Koomey does a fine job drawing together topics on research, analyzing data, presenting data, and introductory critical thinking skills. However, those looking for heuristics to use as approaches to solving problems will not find any here (at least not in the strict sense of, say, something like those found in works by Gyorgy Polya-- though props must be given to Koomey for at least mentioning Polya).

For what this books does provide, Koomey does a not only a very nice job of presenting the his techniques and information, but it is also an incredibly well-written book. Koomey does provide both good and bad examples and explains how they contrast and what makes the good examples effective. There is some repetition relevant to certain principles Koomey is trying to reinforce throughout the book, and while I understand the purpose of such reinforcement, I did find it tiresome at times. Also, no statistical methods or rigorous mathematical examples are covered; these are left to other books, I suppose. That is, anyone looking for something akin to what they would find in a statistical "Design of Experiments" class will not find any such treatment here.

Overall, though, Koomey's book is a good one in that it does provide some business-esque (read: math-lite) approach to data analysis, and it does focus on the general craft of data analysis and presentation. It aims to being an introduction with breadth, and it does this nicely. There is an extensive "Further Reading" section for those that wish to peruse other sources Koomey uses and references.

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## Luke Lavin says

There's plenty of very good advice in this book. But if you've been through some academic training, you've probably heard a fair bit of it before. That said, the book compiles this knowledge in a more organized manner than I've seen elsewhere. Further, while many have heard admonishments about how to present research, make comprehensible figures, etc., the advice is not always taken to heart.

However, two broad shortcomings.

1. The book is a bit dated on internet topics and research, which have progressed significantly since 2007/2008.

2. Koomey's examples of good/bad research are not so clear cut as he makes them out to be, and involve a bit of nepotism & the values-masquerading-as-numbers he so ardently warns to be careful of. Koomey's principles are fine, but one has to wonder if J. Holdren's critique of Lomborg is really the best example of exposing the flaws of poor research/numerology. It's too long to get into the details, but one could easily argue Koomey's choice of examples is more about the values of his environmental left cohort and former professors than pure numbers. At the very least, and example centering on the problematic predictions made by Holdren, Ehrlich, and other colleagues in the 60's/70's would have been just as good an example, but Koomey instead chooses to needle center/center-right ecomodernists like Lomborg, P. Huber, and M. Mills.

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### **John says**

Not a bad guide to writing good quantitative reports, and consuming other's reports in an intelligent way.

I do wish it had more on statistics though.

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### **Will DeKrey says**

Simple, straightforward, right on. Koomey compiles a great set of principles and practices to follow in constructing and presenting research. Full of provocative quotes and entertaining graphics. NOT a joy read, but an enjoyable exploration of a topic that otherwise could have been maddingly pedantic.

As I was reading this book, I immediately noticed improvement in my day-to-day analytic performance.

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### **Kevin says**

never under estimate the importance of your data to ink ratio!

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### **Ruthpaget says**

The art of making numbers talk so that non-numeric folk can understand it is rare. This book shares some of the techniques for doing that.

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### **Mills College Library says**

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