



# Gravity: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

*Timothy Clifton*

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Gravity is one of the four fundamental interactions that exist in nature. It also has the distinction of being the oldest, weakest, and most difficult force to quantize. Understanding gravity is not only essential for understanding the motion of objects on Earth, but also the motion of all celestial objects, and even the expansion of the Universe itself. It was the study of gravity that led Einstein to his profound realizations about the nature of space and time and all astrophysical bodies within it.

In this *Very Short Introduction*, Timothy Clifton looks at the development of our understanding of gravity since the early observations of Kepler and Newtonian theory. He discusses Einstein's theory of gravity, which now supplants Newton's, and shows how it allows us to understand why the frequency of light changes as it passes through a gravitational field, why GPS satellites need their clocks corrected as they orbit the Earth, and why the orbits of distant neutron stars speed up. Today, almost 100 years after Einstein published his theory of gravity, we have even detected the waves of gravitational radiation that he predicted. Clifton concludes by considering the testing and application of general relativity in astrophysics and cosmology, and looks at dark energy and efforts such as string theory to combine gravity with quantum mechanics.

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