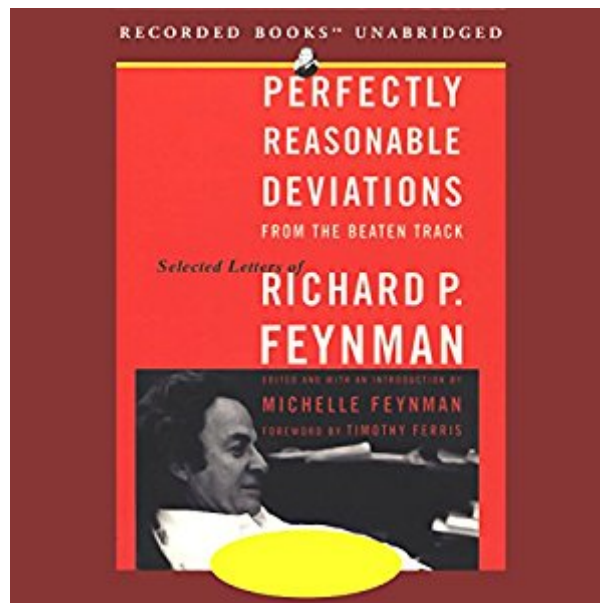




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# Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From The Beaten Track: Selected Letters Of Richard Feynman



## Synopsis

"Few books really are 'a joy to read.' This one, full of charm and wisdom, truly is." (New Scientist) A Nobel Prize-winning physicist, a loving husband and father, an enthusiastic teacher, a surprisingly accomplished bongo player, and a genius of the highest caliber---Richard P. Feynman was all these and more. *Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From the Beaten Track*--collecting over forty years' worth of Feynman's letters--offers an unprecedented look at the writer and thinker whose scientific mind and lust for life made him a legend in his own time. Containing missives to and from such scientific luminaries as Victor Weisskopf, Stephen Wolfram, James Watson, and Edward Teller, as well as a remarkable selection of letters to and from fans, students, family, and people from around the world eager for Feynman's advice and counsel, *Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From the Beaten Track* not only illuminates the personal relationships that underwrote the key developments in modern science, but also forms the most intimate look at Feynman yet available. Feynman was a man many felt close to but few really knew, and this collection reveals the full wisdom and private passion of a personality that captivated everyone it touched. *Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From the Beaten Track* is an eloquent testimony to the virtue of approaching the world with an inquiring eye; it demonstrates the full extent of the Feynman legacy like never before. Edited and with additional commentary by his daughter Michelle, it's a must-read for Feynman fans everywhere, and for anyone seeking to better understand one of the towering figures--and defining personalities--of the twentieth century. "This collection of letters shows us for the first time the son caring for his father and mother, the father caring for his wife and children, the teacher caring for his students, the writer replying to people throughout the world who wrote to him about their problems and received his full and undivided attention." (Freeman Dyson, *New York Review of Books*) "With the publication of *Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From the Beaten Track*, we get Feynman direct-from his mind to the stationery and into the envelope. Compiled by his daughter, Michelle Feynman, the result is a labor of love and, at times, too much of a good thing.... Feynman often insisted that he couldn't write. Now we know better. It was another of his jokes." (*Los Angeles Times Book Review*) "*Perfectly Reasonable Deviations From the Beaten Track: The Letters of Richard P. Feynman* makes palpable the legend that surrounds this Nobel laureate and Caltech physics professor nonpareil. His correspondence affords the intimate yet respectful conversation with a genius usually reserved for a close friend or member of the family." (*Christian Science Monitor*) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I won't repeat the many good points other reviewers have made. This book is truly a gem. One more cool thing I noticed is that Feynman's letters provide a wonderful glimpse into how he kept others from wasting his valuable time. Turns out Feynman was a master of "begging off" when he didn't see value in doing things -- a key skill for a Nobel Prize winner who got far more requests than he could ever take up! And, not surprisingly, he did this with candor, brevity and often with humor. Though his beg-off letters aren't grouped together, the many examples in this volume could round out a Feynman "how to" guide for declining unwanted offers. Here are just a few samples of Feynman's prose when saying NO:...in response to an inquiry about returning to Los Alamos as a summertime consultant, he writes: "My plans for the summer are not definite. I expect to loaf around a great deal...I would just as soon not bother about filling out all the blanks for the contract until there is some definite reason for it."...declining a request to contribute to a book about Hans Bethe, he offers: "I like Hans so very much that I feel I 'ought' to do what you want--but who invented this infernal idea of writing an article for a guy when he gets to be 60? Isn't there an easier way to show friendship and regard? I feel like I feel on Mothers Day."...and declining a request to visit a colleague and well-wisher shortly after receiving the Nobel prize, he says: "I am sorry I shall not be able to stop in New York, either coming or going as I have a letter from a professor [the person requesting the visit] suggesting that I take very good care of my time." There are a number of other examples, but you get the idea. It's just one more way to enjoy this great collection!

This compilation of letters of the Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman was compiled by his daughter. It

gives some unique insight into the thoughts and opinions of a great mind. In some cases Feynman displays compassion for common people, but in others, he displays an arrogance that can be unsettling. Nonetheless, these letters make Feynman to be a more real person than his legendary persona. His daughter has done a service for the history of science. Reminds me of those letters between Galileo and his daughter, that were so revealing when they were first published.

For fans of Feynman this will be a rewarding read; the human side of a unique genius. The book is a compilation of the many letters between Feynman and not only his peers but letters he got from young people in high school and others from the general public. It begins with his early marriage to his first wife that died from TB while he was working at Los Alamos on the first Atomic Bomb, a very sad and very human story we can all relate to. So from the early 1940's up through his illness and death in 1988 we get a marvelous story of a very decent man who had a serious love for life and humanity. This is a book I will read again. We lost a very unique mind and soul in 1988, way too early, in my opinion.

No author ever wrote books about the deeper aspects of physics, which could be easily understood by any highschool graduate, before Feynman or after Feynman. He was the master "story teller" and "guru" of physics during his lifetime. Many short subjects are covered in this excellent publication, including most of his best magazine articles and lectures. His review of math text books, near the end, could stand up even today, since most current math textbooks used in schools nationwide have the same problems he detailed in his great critique. Once you start reading this tome, it is difficult to put it down, even when you need to get some sleep. It is that good.

This was a book that I bought off here and as soon as I received it I diligently read it over the course of a few days. It was interesting to see how he responded to people personally because I have only read the stories he had to tell from his books. I would recommend this book to anyone seeking more information about the personal life of Richard Feynman and will note that it is a very worthwhile read if you're interested in his life. It takes his life from 21 years old up (it was weird reading it because I am 21 now) to a year before his death, I think. Life goes by so fast and he made the most of it as you will see from reading his letters.

Starting the book I was fascinated by the stories the letters tell of a most extraordinary man. I continued to read with enthusiasm, but after a while the letters seemed to repeat quite a bit,

especially in the responses to congratulatory letters. A fantastic man, a too-long collection.

Anyone reading the Feynman books should start with Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman. What an extraordinary likeable person he was. This book gives so much insight into just how much so. The book consists of letters he both wrote and received from other people. It is a book that will never leave my house. Many kudos to his daughter for compiling it to share with the world. And also many thanks to her

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