

the brain a very short introduction

[#human brain](#) [#brain introduction](#) [#neuroscience basics](#) [#brain functions](#) [#cognitive science](#)

Unlock the fascinating world of the human brain with this very short introduction. Discover fundamental neuroscience concepts, understand basic brain functions, and gain a quick overview of our most complex and vital organ.

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The Brain: A Very Short Introduction

How does the brain work? How different is a human brain from other creatures' brains? Is the human brain still evolving? In this fascinating book, Michael O'Shea provides a non-technical introduction to the main issues and findings in current brain research, and gives a sense of how neuroscience addresses questions about the relationship between the brain and the mind. Chapters tackle subjects such as brain processes, perception, memory, motor control and the causes of 'altered mental states'. A final section discusses possible future developments in neuroscience, touching on artificial intelligence, gene therapy, the importance of the Human Genome Project, drugs by design, and transplants. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

The Brain

This volume describes the new field of cognitive neuroscience - the study of what happens in the brain when we perceive, think, reason, remember, and act. Focusing on the human brain, Passingham looks at the most recent research in the field, the modern brain imaging technologies, and what the images can and can't tell us.

Cognitive Neuroscience

Up to the 1960s, psychology was deeply under the influence of behaviourism, which focused on stimuli and responses, and regarded consideration of what may happen in the mind as unapproachable scientifically. This began to change with the devising of methods to try to tap into what was going on in the 'black box' of the mind, and the development of 'cognitive psychology'. With the study of patients who had suffered brain damage or injury to limited parts of the brain, outlines of brain components and processes began to take shape, and by the end of the 1970s, a new science, cognitive neuroscience, was born. But it was with the development of ways of accessing activation of the working brain using imaging techniques such as PET and fMRI that cognitive neuroscience came into its own, as a science cutting across psychology and neuroscience, with strong connections to philosophy of mind. Experiments involving subjects in scanners while doing various tasks, thinking, problem solving, and remembering are shedding light on the brain processes involved. The research is exciting and new, and often makes media headlines. But there is much misunderstanding about what brain imaging tells us, and the interpretation of studies on cognition. In this Very Short Introduction Richard Passingham,

a distinguished cognitive neuroscientist, gives a provocative and exciting account of the nature and scope of this relatively new field, and the techniques available to us, focusing on investigation of the human brain. He explains what brain imaging shows, pointing out common misconceptions, and gives a brief overview of the different aspects of human cognition: perceiving, attending, remembering, reasoning, deciding, and acting. Passingham concludes with a discussion of the exciting advances that may lie ahead. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Cognitive Neuroscience: A Very Short Introduction

"In this lively Very Short Introduction, Tim Bayne explores the nature of thought. Drawing on research from philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and anthropology, he examines what we know--and what we don't know--about one of the defining features of human nature: our capacity for thought."--P. [2] of cover.

Thought: A Very Short Introduction

"Why can we sometimes remember events from our childhood as if they happened yesterday, but not what we did last week? How are memories stored in the brain, and how does our memory change as we age? What happens when our memory goes wrong, and how easy is it for others to manipulate our memories?" "This fascinating Very Short Introduction brings together the latest research in psychology and neuroscience to address these and many other important questions about the science of memory - revealing how our memory works, why we couldn't live without it, and even how we may learn to remember more."--BOOK JACKET.

Memory: A Very Short Introduction

What is dreaming, and what causes it? Why are dreams so strange and why are they so hard to remember? Replacing dream mystique with modern dream science, J. Allan Hobson provides a new and increasingly complete picture of how dreaming is created by the brain. Focusing on dreaming to explain the mechanisms of sleep, this book explores how the new science of dreaming is affecting theories in psychoanalysis, and how it is helping our understanding of the causes of mental illness. J. Allan Hobson investigates his own dreams to illustrate and explain some of the fascinating discoveries of modern sleep science, while challenging some of the traditionally accepted theories about the meaning of dreams. He reveals how dreaming maintains and develops the mind, why we go crazy in our dreams in order to avoid doing so when we are awake, and why sleep is not just good for health but essential for life. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Dreaming: A Very Short Introduction

As more of us live longer, the fear of an old age devastated by brain diseases like dementia is growing. Many people are already facing the challenges posed by these progressive and terminal conditions, whether in person or because they are caring for loved ones. Dementia is now the fifth most common cause of death across the world. It is a small wonder that understanding, preventing, and finally curing these illnesses is now a global priority. Recent advances in brain research have given scientists a better chance than ever of finding ways to help patients, carers, and clinicians dealing with dementia. Yet there is still no effective treatment. Why has progress been so slow? And what can we all do to reduce our chances of getting the disease? In this Very Short Introduction Kathleen Taylor offers a guide to the science of dementia and brain ageing. Never forgetting the human costs of brain disorders - movingly illustrated throughout the book - she also discusses their costs to society. Clearly explaining the research, she sets out the main ideas which have driven dementia science, and the new contenders hoping to make a breakthrough. Taylor also looks at risk factors, and how to lower our chances of succumbing to dementia. Assessing current and potential treatments, including both drugs and other approaches, she explains, clearly and gently, what help is available for someone who is diagnosed with dementia, and how to boost the chances of living well with the condition. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every

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Dementia: a Very Short Introduction

Psychology is part of everyone's experience: it influences the way we think about everything from education and intelligence, to relationships and emotions, advertising and criminality. People readily behave as amateur psychologists, offering explanations for what people think, feel, and do. But what exactly are psychologists trying to do? What scientific grounding do they have for their approach? This book provides an understanding of some of psychology's leading ideas and their practical relevance, making it a stimulating introduction for anyone interested in understanding the human mind. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Psychology: A Very Short Introduction

Consciousness, the last great mystery for science, remains a hot topic. How can a physical brain create our experience of the world? What creates our identity? Do we really have free will? Could consciousness itself be an illusion? Exciting new developments in brain science are continuing the debates on these issues, and the field has now expanded to include biologists, neuroscientists, psychologists, and philosophers. This controversial book clarifies the potentially confusing arguments, and the major theories, whilst also outlining the amazing pace of discoveries in neuroscience. Covering areas such as the construction of self in the brain, mechanisms of attention, the neural correlates of consciousness, and the physiology of altered states of consciousness, Susan Blackmore highlights our latest findings. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Consciousness

Was love invented by European poets in the Middle Ages or is it part of human nature? Will winning the lottery really make you happy? Is it possible to build robots that have feelings? These are just some of the intriguing questions explored in this guide to the latest thinking about the emotions. Drawing on a wide range of scientific research, from anthropology and psychology to neuroscience and artificial intelligence, *Emotion: The Science of Sentiment* takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the human heart. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Emotion: A Very Short Introduction

What is 'nothing'? What remains when you take all the matter away? Can empty space - a void - exist? This Very Short Introduction explores the science and the history of the elusive void: from Aristotle who insisted that the vacuum was impossible, via the theories of Newton and Einstein, to our very latest discoveries and why they can tell us extraordinary things about the cosmos. Frank Close tells the story of how scientists have explored the elusive void, and the rich discoveries that they have made there. He takes the reader on a lively and accessible history through ancient ideas and cultural superstitions to the frontiers of current research. He describes how scientists discovered that the vacuum is filled with fields; how Newton, Mach, and Einstein grappled with the nature of space and time; and how the mysterious 'aether' that was long ago supposed to permeate the void may now be making a comeback with the latest research into the 'Higgs field'. We now know that the vacuum is far from being empty - it seethes with virtual particles and antiparticles that erupt spontaneously into being, and it also may contain hidden dimensions that we were previously unaware of. These new discoveries may provide answers to some of cosmology's most fundamental questions: what lies outside the universe, and, if there was once nothing, then how did the universe begin? ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These

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Nothing: A Very Short Introduction

Every atom of our bodies has been part of a star. Our very own star, the Sun, is crucial to the development and sustainability of life on Earth. This Very Short Introduction presents a modern, authoritative examination of how stars live, producing all the chemical elements beyond helium, and how they die, sometimes spectacularly, to end as remnants such as black holes. Andrew King shows how understanding the stars is key to understanding the galaxies they inhabit, and thus the history of our entire Universe, as well as the existence of planets like our own. King presents a fascinating exploration of the science of stars, from the mechanisms that allow stars to form and the processes that allow them to shine, as well as the results of their inevitable death. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Stars: A Very Short Introduction

Some people appear to be smarter than others, but how do we measure intelligence? Why do some people have better thinking powers than others? What does intelligence predict about people's health and social outcomes? This "Very Short Introduction" uses the best, large-scale psychological data to answer important questions about intelligence, such as how environment, genes, brain structure, gender, and age affect people's thinking skills. It asks whether intelligence increased over the 20th century. Ian Deary also considers the new field of cognitive epidemiology, which discovers links between higher intelligence and better health, lower rates of illness, and longer life. -- From publisher's description.

Intelligence

In this introduction, Chris Shilling considers the social significance of the human body, and the importance of the body to individual and collective identities. He examines how bodies not only shape but are shaped by the social, cultural, and material contexts in which humans live.

The Body

What is time? What does it mean for time to pass? Is it possible to travel in time? What is the difference between the past and future? Until the work of Newton, these questions were purely topics of philosophical speculation. Since then we've learned a great deal about time, and its study has moved from a subject of philosophical reflection to instead became part of the subject matter of physics. This Very Short Introduction introduces readers to the current physical understanding of the direction of time, from the Second Law of Thermodynamics to the emergence of complexity and life. Jenann Ismael charts the line of development in physical theory from Newton, via Einstein's Theory of Relativity, to the current day. Einstein's innovations led to a vision of time very different from the familiar time of everyday sense. In this new vision, time is one of the dimensions in which the universe is extended alongside the spatial dimensions. The universe appears as a static block of events, in which there is no more a difference between past and future than there is between east and west. Discussing the controversy and philosophical confusion which surrounded the reception of this new vision, Ismael also covers the contemporary mixture of statistical mechanics, cognitive science, and phenomenology that point the way to reconciling the familiar time of everyday sense with the vision of time presented in Einstein's theories. Very Short Introductions: Brilliant, Sharp, Inspiring ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Time: a Very Short Introduction

Are we born with our fears or do we learn them? Why do our fears persist? What purpose does anxiety serve? In this Very Short Introduction we discover what anxiety is, what causes it, and how it can be treated. Looking at six major anxiety disorders, the authors introduce us to this most ubiquitous and essential of emotions.

Anxiety: A Very Short Introduction

An understanding of the structure and function of the human body is vital for anyone studying the medical and health sciences. In this book, Leslie Klennerman provides a clear and accessible overview of the main systems of the human anatomy, illustrated with a number of clear explanatory diagrams.

Human Anatomy

In 1893 a Swiss neuroscientist called Theodore Flournoy conducted an interview with an individual known only as "Madame L"

Synaesthesia

An exploration of how far neuroscience may go to help provide understanding of the structure, workings, and possibilities of the human brain.

The Future of the Brain

This volume tracks child development from birth to early adolescence. Exploring the process of attachment and psychological relationships, as well as methods of active learning, including language and reasoning, Usha Goshwami explains how children develop as they do and how we can understand developmental differences.

Child Psychology

What is knowledge? Is it the same as opinion or truth? Do you need to be able to justify a claim in order to count as knowing it? How can we know that the outer world is real and not a dream? Questions like these have existed since ancient times, and the branch of philosophy dedicated to answering them - epistemology - has been active for thousands of years. In this thought-provoking Very Short Introduction, Jennifer Nagel considers the central problems and paradoxes in the theory of knowledge and draws attention to the ways in which philosophers and theorists have responded to them. By exploring the relationship between knowledge and truth, and considering the problem of scepticism, Nagel introduces a series of influential historical and contemporary theories of knowledge, incorporating methods from logic, linguistics, and psychology, using a number of everyday examples to demonstrate the key issues and debates. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Knowledge

One of the most powerful frameworks for understanding human behaviour is evolutionary psychology. Evolutionary psychology takes the view that the brain, just like any other part of our body such as teeth or hands, has been shaped by the processes of natural and sexual selection. How we think, and the way we use logic or assess problems, has its roots in behaviour which enabled our ancestors to survive and reproduce successfully. Using this perspective, the divide between nature and nurture evaporates, as humans are shown to be the product of their genes and biology, as well as their environment, social groups, and families. In this Very Short Introduction Maryanne Fisher shows how examining the historic lives of our ancestors can provide insight into our modern psychology, especially when we add data from modern-day hunter-gatherer societies, comparative studies on the great apes, and the fossil record. Surprisingly, alongside these traditional data sources, evolutionary psychology can also use surveys from university students, romance novels, and even patterns in online shopping behaviour. Throughout, Maryanne Fisher discusses how drawing together this diverse data allows us to understand the complexity of humans in a powerful manner. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert

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Evolutionary Psychology: a Very Short Introduction

Annotation Adolescence can be a turbulent period. Encompassing both classic and modern research, Smith explores its cultural and historical context, the biological changes to the adolescent brain, and the difficulties - the search for identity, relationship changes, risk-taking and anti-social behaviours - that adolescence brings.

Adolescence

In this Very Short Introduction, Sebastian Amyes explores the nature of bacteria. As a fundamental branch of life, they inhabit every part of the Earth's surface. Amyes examines their origin and evolution, bacteria in the environment, and bacteria and disease, to demonstrate the fundamental role they play in our existence.

Bacteria: A Very Short Introduction

Music has been examined from multiple perspectives: as a product of human history, for example, or a product of human culture. But there is also a long tradition, intensified in recent decades, of thinking about music as a product of the human mind. Whether considering composition, performance, listening, or appreciation, the constraints and capabilities of the human mind play a formative role. The field that has emerged around this approach is known as the psychology of music. Written in a lively and accessible manner, this volume connects the science to larger questions about music that are of interest to practicing musicians, music therapists, musicologists, and the general public alike. For example: Why can one musical performance move an audience to tears, and another compel them to dance, clap, or snap along? How does a "hype" playlist motivate someone at the gym? And why is that top-40 song stuck in everyone's head? ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Psychology of Music

In this Very Short Introduction, Michael Land introduces all aspects of the eye and vision in both human and animals. He looks at the features of the human eye and retina, explores the evolution of eyes, and considers aspects of visual perception, including eye movements, vision in three dimensions, colour vision, and visual recognition.

The Eye

Is the neurophysiology of pain all there is to pain? How do words and mental pictures come to represent things in the world? Do computers think, and if so, are their thought processes significantly similar to our thought processes? Or is there something distinctive about human thought that precludes replication in a computer? These are some of the puzzles that motivate the philosophical discipline called "philosophy of mind," a central area of philosophy. This Very Short Introduction introduces the philosophy of mind, and looks at some of the most interesting and important topics in this fascinating field, including the mind-body problem and dualism. Barbara Montero also discusses minds other than our own, and the problems associated with defining consciousness in animals, aliens and machines. Considering these and other such thorny issues such as physicalism and intentionality, she demonstrates how questions of the philosophy of mind also infiltrate disciplines outside of philosophy, including psychology, neuroscience, economics, evolutionary biology, and linguistics. As she observes, most everyone, at some time or another, has ruminated over the relation between mind and matter. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Philosophy of Mind

"A concise account of what we know about development discusses the first vital steps of growth and explores one of the liveliest areas of scientific research."--P. [2] of cover.

Developmental Biology: A Very Short Introduction

The twentieth century saw a remarkable upsurge of research on drugs, with major advances in the treatment of bacterial and viral infections, heart disease, stomach ulcers, cancer, and mental illnesses. These, along with the introduction of the oral contraceptive, have altered all of our lives. There has also been an increase in the recreational use and abuse of drugs in the Western world. This Very Short Introduction, in its second edition, gives a non-technical account of how drugs work in the body. Reviewing both legal (alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine) and illegal drugs, Les Iversen discusses why some are addictive, and whether drug laws need reform. ABOUT THE SERIES The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Drugs

Linguistics falls in the gap between arts and science, on the edges of which the most fascinating discoveries and the most important problems are found. Rather than following the conventional organization of many contemporary introductions to the subject, the author of this stimulating guide begins his discussion with the oldest, 'arts' end of the subject and moves chronologically through to the newest research - the 'science' aspects. A series of short thematic chapters look in turn at such areas as the prehistory of languages and their common origins, language and evolution, language in time and space (the nature of change inherent in language), grammars and dictionaries (how systematic is language?), and phonetics. Explication of the newest discoveries pertaining to language in the brain completes the coverage of all major aspects of linguistics from a refreshing and insightful angle. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Linguistics: A Very Short Introduction

Was love invented by European poets in the Middle Ages or is it part of human nature? Will winning the lottery really make you happy? Is it possible to build robots that have feelings? In this Very Short Introduction Dylan Evans explores these and many other intriguing questions in this guide to the latest thinking about the emotions. Drawing on a wide range of scientific research, from anthropology and psychology to neuroscience and artificial intelligence, Evans takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the human heart, discussing the evolution of emotions and their biological basis, the science of happiness, and the role that emotions play in memory and decision making. Greeted by critics as a pop science classic when it was first published in 2001, the book has now been thoroughly revised and updated to incorporate new developments in our understanding of emotions, including new sections addressing the neural basis of empathy and the emotional impact of films. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Emotion

"Describes the latest scientific research on smell, and explores its place in culture and history"--

Smell

"What is autism and Asperger syndrome? What are the core symptoms, and what causes them? How early can autism be recognised and what can be done? Why does autism seem to be more and more common? Are we all a little bit autistic?" "This Very Short Introduction offers a clear statement on what is currently known about autism and Asperger syndrome. Looking at symptoms from the full spectrum of autistic disorders, and evaluating current evidence from neuroscience and genetics, this

authoritative and accessible book explores the source and nature of social impairment and exceptional talent. Autism: A Very Short Introduction gives a glimpse of life seen through the eyes of autism."--BOOK JACKET.

Autism: A Very Short Introduction

Explores the philosophical notion of love, and argues that love is more complex than conventional thought would have us believe.

Love

"Fully updated new edition"--Label on cover.

Psychology: A Very Short Introduction

Viruses are big news. From pandemics such as HIV, swine flu, and SARS, we are constantly being bombarded with information about new lethal infections. In this Very Short Introduction, Dorothy Crawford demonstrates from their discovery and the unravelling of their intricate structures, how clever these entities really are.

Viruses

Applied mathematics plays a role in many different fields, especially the sciences and engineering. Goriely explains its nature and its relationship to pure mathematics, and through a variety of applications - such as mathematical modelling to predict the effects of climate change - he illustrates its power in tackling very practical problems.

Applied Mathematics

Mottier examines the questions around what shapes our sexuality asking if it is a product of our genes, or of society, culture or politics. The changing views of sexual norms are dealt with as are issues surrounding feminism, religion, eugenics, and HIV / AIDS.

Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction

The immune system is central to human health and the focus of much medical research. Growing understanding of the immune system, and especially the creation of immune memory (long lasting protection), which can be harnessed in the design of vaccines, have been major breakthroughs in medicine. In this Very Short Introduction, Paul Klenerman describes the immune system, and how it works in health and disease. In particular he focuses on the human immune system, considering how it evolved, the basic rules that govern its behavior, and the major health threats where it is important. The immune system comprises a series of organs, cells and chemical messengers which work together as a team to provide defence against infection. Klenerman discusses these components, the critical signals that trigger them and how they exert their protective effects, including so-called innate immune responses, which react very fast to infection, and adaptive immune responses, which have huge diversity and a capacity to recognize and defend against a massive array of micro-organisms. Klenerman also considers what happens when our immune systems fail to be activated effectively, leading to serious infections, problems with inherited diseases, and also HIV/AIDS. At the opposite extreme, as Klenerman shows, an over-exaggerated immune response leads to inflammatory diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and Rheumatoid Arthritis, as well as allergy and asthma. Finally he looks at the Immune system v2.0 - how immune therapies and vaccines can be advanced to protect us against the major diseases of the 21st century. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

The Immune System

