Basic Topology (Undergraduate Texts in Mathematics)

M.A. Armstrong

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I'm surprised that several previous reviewers have given this book low ratings. This book is far superior to the standard introductions. As someone who has studied topology for several years now, I have found that the greatest failing of many introductory texts is the inability to give a real 'feel' for the subject. By 'feel' I mean not only familiarity with the necessary tools and ways of thought needed to progress to higher levels of understanding but also experience with the kinds of problems that plague(excite?) topologists on a daily basis. Several texts proceed in the logical progression from point set topology to algebraic topology. Munkres is among the best of this style. But the logical order is not always pedagogically best, especially in topology. To start one's topology career by spending one or more semesters on point set topology is utterly ridiculous, given that such point set subtleties are to a large degree not used to study the beginnings of geometric or algebraic topology. This is how these texts fail to give students the 'feel' for topology; the student has no idea what it is that most topologists do, and in fact will not get a good idea until much later. Armstrong tries (and succeeds for the most part) in grounding concepts in real applications, the way the tools are actually used by research mathematicians. Perhaps this is part of why it may be confusing to the novice; introducing topological groups and group actions on spaces right after the section on quotient spaces may appear a bit much, but those concepts are a big part of *why* quotient spaces are so important! Incidentally, the material on quotient spaces is the most complete I've ever seen in an introductory book; Armstrong covers cones and also gluing/attaching maps.

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