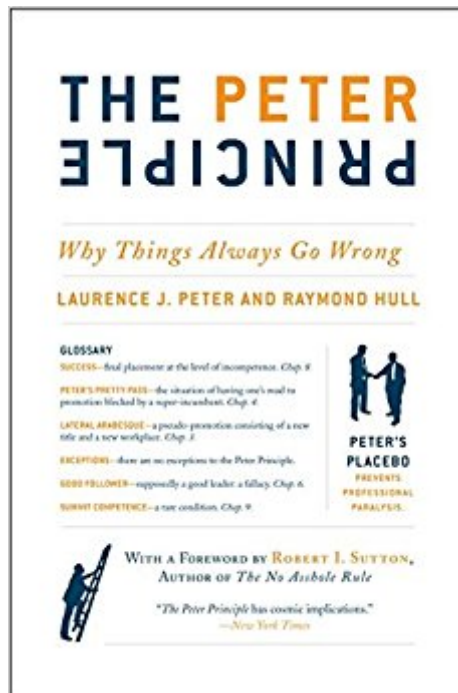




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# The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong



## Synopsis

“The Peter Principle has cosmic implications.” —New York Times  
Back in 1969, Lawrence J. Peter created a cultural phenomenon with his brilliant, outrageous, hilarious, and all-too-true treatise on business and life, *The Peter Principle*—and his words and theories are as true today as they were then. By posing—and answering—the eternal question, “Why do things always go wrong?” Peter explores the incompetence that runs so rampant through our society, our workplace, and our world in an outrageously funny yet honest and eye-opening manner. With a new foreword by Robert I. Sutton, bestselling author of *The No Asshole Rule*, this twenty-first century edition of Peter’s classic is set to shake up the business world all over again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“The Peter Principle has cosmic implications.” —(The New York Times)  
“Ruefully delightful ... excruciatingly applicable—and fun to read” —(Playboy)  
“[The Peter Principle] has struck a throbbing public nerve... a minor cultural phenomenon and its title phrase, like Parkinson’s Law, is certain to enter the language.” —(Life magazine)

The classic #1 New York Times bestseller that answers the age-old question Why is incompetence so maddeningly rampant and so vexingly triumphant? The Peter Principle, the eponymous law Dr.

Laurence J. Peter coined, explains that everyone in a hierarchy – from the office intern to the CEO, from the low-level civil servant to a nation's president – will inevitably rise to his or her level of incompetence. Dr. Peter explains why incompetence is at the root of everything we endeavor to do – why schools bestow ignorance, why governments condone anarchy, why courts dispense injustice, why prosperity causes unhappiness, and why utopian plans never generate utopias. With the wit of Mark Twain, the psychological acuity of Sigmund Freud, and the theoretical impact of Isaac Newton, Dr. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull's *The Peter Principle* brilliantly explains how incompetence and its accompanying symptoms, syndromes, and remedies define the world and the work we do in it.

A crossover between humour and a self help business treatise. This book is for any fan of *Yes Minister* or *Yes, Prime Minister*. The thing that makes it humorous is that it's so real, but explained as if people were not the rational, logical people we all know them to be. (hint, hint) I get to laugh on the inside at my job every day because of this book, while extracting the things I need to have the life I want.

Revisiting this work after many years, it is as insightful, absurd, accurate, and hilarious as it is possible to be when it is about "why things always go wrong."

Mr. Peter hits the mark. This should be required reading for high school graduation! He articulates what many of us have been thinking but never had reason or opportunity to put into words.

If you have ever reflected (whether in detached bemusement or disgust) on the sheer incompetence which seems to pervade your world, from your place of employment, to the businesses from which you purchase your everyday goods and services, to the financial and political spheres, you will very likely enjoy this book. Even if you know its basic premise, this little tome is worth a read. Though the work was first published more than forty years ago, hardly any part of it is dated. Quite to the contrary, the arrival of the latest edition in 2009 could not have been more timely. Indeed, some of its insights, for example the power of information technology to magnify the effects of incompetence, astonish, now more than ever, by their prescience. My favorite chapter explains the tendency of our political system to propel to the top politicians with minimal governing skills. You will probably find some agreement with Prof. Peter's observations on this point, whatever your political stripes. Finally, while its nomenclature and "case studies" are over the top, the book is, in my view, very

funny, much as it is meant to be. One tip: read the introduction and the glossaries first; it'll add to the overall experience.

I had heard about the Peter principle many years ago, and thought it was an easy thing to understand, you are born with a given set of talents and you would rise in the ladder based on your performance according to those talents and skills until they will be not sufficient to keep you growing. I enjoyed reading the book and was surprised with its humor and simplicity, yet the wisdom contained is lots. I have had a very successful career and had experienced myself the effect of growing and moving into higher positions without thoughtful analysis of what the consequences of new jobs will be. The analysis of Hierarchies is interesting and was the first attempt to think of what happened to individuals who had grown to their level of incompetence. I made a research of later writings from researchers who studied the validity of the principle. "In a Hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence" - in a study made in the 1970's in the UK, researchers found that executives which had grown to their level of incompetency, were exposed to a variable component of a new job, without giving the executive any training for the new position, this creates a greater challenge for the executive and this tension and anxiety becomes the fire starter for odd behaviour and mistakes of judgement. If we take for example the great Steve Jobs' case when he was fired from Apple in the 1980's, many people thought he was done, and his companies were silently moving in strategic directions, while the press critiqued and ridiculed his efforts and made people believe he was in a crash course. We all know what happened afterwards, he rose again to greater heights and was capable to lead Apple to what it is today. His ability to learn from mistakes is what distinguished him from people who have already arrived to their level of incompetence, we all know examples which really confirm all the findings in the principle. The challenge for us is to study ourselves and make the best of what we were given by nature!

The whole 2 to 3 hours I was reading this book I was either laughing or groaning at the painful realities that it represents. A very enjoyable read that provided a different and fun perspective on life and work after reading it. My college aged son also enjoyed it, even though he has only experienced Corporate America from an intern perspective. Definitely should be on the list of required reading for anyone working within any hierarchy, which includes for-profit, not-for-profit, corporate America or church. Especially funny how little has really changed since this was written in 1969!!!

Satirical relief from any obnoxious job. I'm sure anyone who is fed up with their job can appreciate this book. It definitely helps understand some of the psychology behind the corporate ladder in a laughable manner. Fun words to share around the office. Ex. Tabulatory Gigantism; Someone obsessed with having a larger desk than anyone else. lol! Reading this book gives you something to look forward to at the office. Just try to pinpoint individuals with the characteristics found in this book. Every job has them, and you just might be one of listed characteristics. This book is definitely worth the read.

Excellent book. I read it many years ago and now is almost disintegrated. This new revision is a keeper. Even the time it has being written is still accurate to our times and is fun to read it.

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