



Lying by Approximation: The Truth about Finite Element Analysis (Synthesis Lectures on Engineering)

Vincent C. Prantil, Christopher Papadopoulos, Paul D. Gessler

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In teaching an introduction to the finite element method at the undergraduate level, a prudent mix of theory and applications is often sought. In many cases, analysts use the finite element method to perform parametric studies on potential designs to size parts, weed out less desirable design scenarios, and predict system behavior under load. In this book, we discuss common pitfalls encountered by many finite element analysts, in particular, students encountering the method for the first time. We present a variety of simple problems in axial, bending, torsion, and shear loading that combine the students' knowledge of theoretical mechanics, numerical methods, and approximations particular to the finite element method itself. We also present case studies in which analyses are coupled with experiments to emphasize validation, illustrate where interpretations of numerical results can be misleading, and what can be done to allay such tendencies. Challenges in presenting the necessary mix of theory and applications in a typical undergraduate course are discussed. We also discuss a list of tips and rules of thumb for applying the method in practice.

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