

# The Goldilocks Principle

## Advanced

While I did credit you with a [halfway decent education](#), I'm not sure if the **Goldilocks principle** is covered by that. The root for the principle is an old fairy tale, recorded in writing by the British author and poet Robert Southey in 1837, converted to a poem by George Nicol in 1837, and improved upon by Joseph Cundall in 1849 by substituting the original old woman by the little girl Goldilocks.

This is the story:

Three anthropomorphic good-natured, trusting, harmless, tidy, and hospitable bears live together in a house in the woods. We have "a Little, Small, Wee Bear, a Middle-sized Bear, and a Great, Huge Bear", and each one has his own porridge bowl, chair, and bed. One day, waiting for their porridge to cool, they take a walk in the woods. While they are out, ~~an impudent, bad, foul-mouthed, ugly, dirty woman~~ Goldilocks finds their house. She trespasses and gets in, tries the porridge, finds the first one too hot, the second one too cold, and the third one "just right". Same thing with the chairs and the bed. After she has produced a big mess she falls asleep.

The bears return and cry out "Somebody has eaten my porridge" and so on, until finally Wee Bear cries out "Somebody has been lying in my bed, – and here she is!" The climax of the tale! Then Goldilocks runs away.

The British have strange fairy tales. In German fairy tales somebody usually gets killed so that somebody else can live happily ever after. That's a clear and satisfying ending. But just running away? Not even Bollywood has turned that weak plot into a movie yet.

There are some versions where Goldilocks vows to be a good child, and in some she returns home. In others she is *almost* eaten by the bears but her mother rescues her.

Well. Drop the almost and you have a plot, I say.

Of course, parts are snatched from "Snow White" (a proper German fairy tale). There the fugitive princess comes to the dwarves' house and also generates a mess by tasting their food, sitting on their stools and so on before she falls asleep in one of their beds. The dwarves cry, "Who's been sitting on my stool?", "Who's been eating off my plate?", and "Who's been lying in my bed?". So far so similar.

But now look at the ending of Snow White! The evil queen is forced to step into red-hot iron shoes and to dance until she drops dead, so Snow White, freshly deflowered, can live happily ever after with her prince. That's the stuff for movies!

Of course psychologists, having no shame, debased themselves to the point where they even attach some psychological interpretation to Goldilocks. To quote Wikipedia: "Alan C. Elms in Handbook of Psychobiography views Southey's tale not as one of Bettelheimian post-Oedipal ego development but as one of Freudian pre-Oedipal anality". Nothing more needs to be said.

Nevertheless, this weak tale is the source of the powerful "*Goldilocks Principle*", applied in disciplines like engineering, astronomy, biology, economics and psychology.

The Goldilocks Principle states that something must be "**just right**", meaning that it must be contained within certain margins and not reach extremes.

For example, the [fundamental constants](#) are neither too large nor too small and thus allow a Universe with us in it. A Goldilocks planet is neither too close to nor too far from a star to rule out life. Tax rates should not be too high nor too low but just right, and too little ~~beer~~ stress in your life is just as bad as too much. A Goldilocks hyperscript like this one is neither too technical nor too shallow.

You get the point. It's time now to send me some money. Neither too little nor too much. Make it just right.