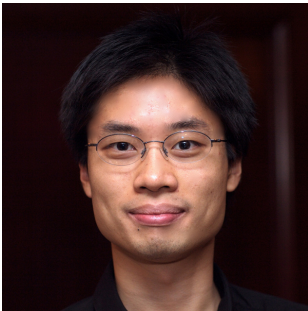


## Polymaths in Public: Po-Shen Loh

*Every so often, we post a story about a public figure who's been described as a polymath. This story's about what a math professor who's determined to rebuild America's confidence in math.*

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"He is a **polymath** who sees, well, math in everything, from politics and the Super Bowl to Gondor (the fictional castle in *The Lord of the Rings*), and draws upon his eclectic hobbies to come up with math problems." - Tony Wan, [Edsurge.com](http://Edsurge.com), February 12, 2016



Po-Shen Loh spends most of his time teaching mathematics at Carnegie-Mellon University, but he is best known today as the coach of the U.S. International Math Olympiad team that led the Americans to the 2015 championship, their first in 21 years.

Unlike most polymaths, the professor's polymathic propensities are explicitly math-related: his interests run across the entire math spectrum, from theoretical research to mass education.

Loh wants to help American students, especially those who think they're bad at math, realize what he calls "the amazing beauty" of the subject. In addition to giving talks to both math specialists and the lay public, he has developed [Expii Solve](#), a weekly series of thought-provoking online math-related problem sets that require critical and creative thinking rather than rote memorization or number crunching. "What makes these problems hard," he says, is that "you have to combine logic and a different way of thinking."

Loh told *The Washington Post* that his national team faced similar challenges in the Olympiad. "The questions . . . are not anything like school questions," he explained. "It's not like going into college math. It's like thinking harder."

