



What Are the Chances?: Voodoo Deaths, Office Gossip, and Other Adventures in Probability

Bart K. Holland

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Our lives are governed by chance. But what, exactly, is chance? In this book, accomplished statistician and storyteller Bart K. Holland takes us on a tour of the world of probability. Weaving together tales from real life—from the spread of the bubonic plague in medieval Europe or the number of Prussian cavalrymen kicked to death by their horses, through IQ test results and deaths by voodoo curse, to why you have to wait in line for rides at Disneyworld? Holland captures the reader's imagination with surprising examples of probability in action, everyday events that can profoundly affect our lives but are controlled by just one number.

As Holland explains, even chance events are governed by the laws of probability and follow regular patterns called statistical laws. He shows how such laws are successfully applied, with great benefit, in fields as diverse as the insurance industry, the legal system, medical research, aerospace engineering, and climatology. Whether you have only a distant recollection of high school algebra or use differential equations every day, this book offers examples of the impact of chance that will amuse and astonish.



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