

Discussion Article – Coincidences

Please read one of the articles about coincidences that are posted on the course web site. Last names A–M: read Stefanski; last names N–Z, read Diaconis/Mosteller. Consider the appropriate question below and write a brief response. Bring this sheet to class.

Stefanski: The author describes a wide sense and a narrow sense of understanding coincidences. Be prepared to describe the difference. Do you prefer one perspective or the other? Why or why not?

Diaconis/Mosteller: The authors state that “in many problems our intuitive grasp of the odds is far off. We are surprised by things that turn out to be fairly likely occurrences.” Be prepared to describe the coincidences they explore and explain. Which was the most surprising to you?

To be answered in class:

After today’s discussion of coincidences, how do you think non-statisticians understand coincidences or events of very small probabilities? How do you think that should affect your role as a statistical consultant?
