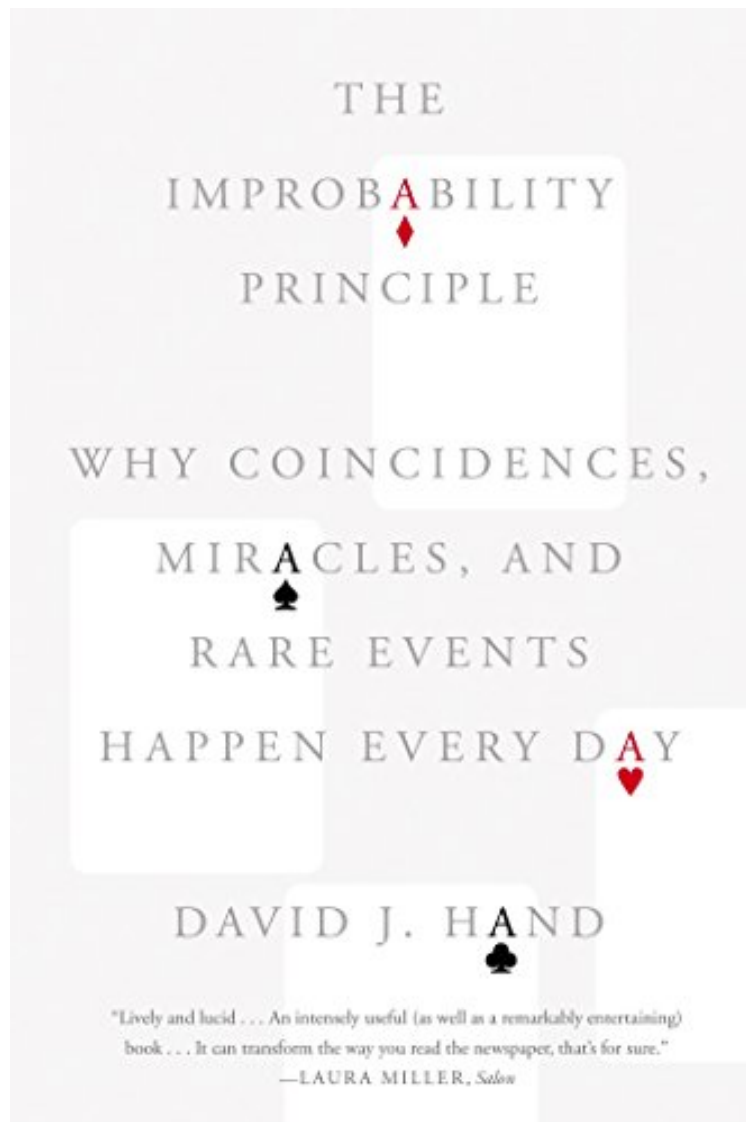


(Download pdf) The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day

The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day

David J. Hand

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David J. Hand : The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Do You Gamble? This Book is for You. By Frank Scoblete author of Confessions of a Wayward Catholic You are at the craps table and the 12 rolls four times in a row. The odds of that

happening are immense. At blackjack, two people come to the table at the same time and both get blackjacks --- back to back. After that you watch their play and they are not advantage players. They don't even know basic strategy. A guy hits two inside numbers in a row at roulette. Then he bets the outside red and black and wins six in a row! The same woman wins two lotteries in New Jersey. Two people, a father and a son, have train accidents on the same day in two separate years. Someone is hit by lightning not twice but three times. You are thinking of a friend from years back and the next day that friend contacts you on Facebook. These all seem to be amazing events. Yet, how amazing are they --- how amazing are they really? Not as amazing as you think. A great new book "The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day" by David J. Hand tackles the math behind "improbable events" and even supposedly "impossible" events. Let me give you some examples from our casino gambling world: A self-proclaimed dice controller (no not me) learns the skill from a class he took and for several trips to the casino, after practicing for several weeks, he wins --- session after session for several days. He has never won more than one trip in a row in his life. That streak must prove he has dice control ability, right? No, not really. Pure chance has wild swings in fortune for casino gamblers. A blackjack player comes upon the simplest card counting method of all time; he studies goes to the casino and loses session after session --- about 10 in a row. The card counting system must not work. No, not really. Pure chance has wild swings in fortune for casino gamblers. I can go on and on. Wild streaks; wild wins and wild losses occur in casinos; they occur all the time. Why is that so? This book will explain it all. Are there advantage players in craps and blackjack (and video poker and poker and Pai Gow Poker)? Yes. But the proof of the pudding is not a few wild streaks even if those streaks are seemingly mind-boggling. To establish advantage takes far more proof than just "improbable" events occurring. I think readers on this web site will enjoy the book and if you aren't schooled in improbability theory the book will open your eyes. Is the book so mathematically difficult that the average reader such as me will be at a loss to understand it? No. Author David Hand has been able to make the concepts in the book totally understandable. If you are interested in the improbable (or gambling) I think this book will speak to you. Frank Scoblete author of "I Am a Card Counter: Inside the World of Advantage-Play Blackjack" 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Now you'll know why the strangest coincidences can happen mathematically. By Caleb Besides just an overall understanding of mathematical probabilities this book will help apply that understanding to daily life with numerous examples. There are also references to many other great thinkers and concepts which can lead to further research and understanding. It is well researched and thought out. The organization makes sense. The book manages to never be boring despite being about a math topic. It's dumbed-down enough to appeal to a wide audience but has enough smarts in it to keep intellectuals interested as well. It helps explain things like why you might run into 6 people you know in a foreign country within a 30 minute time period, which is something that actually happened to my friend, and I recommended this book to him. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If the title intrigues you, buy it. By Eric Very interesting read. What I love about it is that it's a great read for someone who's not keen of math and someone who's a math nerd. Anyone will love this book if they are curious. It offers some very interesting insight into why seemingly uncommon events are actually all too common. At the very least it'll fill you with some fun facts to share with friends, but it could change your view on how a lot of things work.

In *The Improbability Principle*, the renowned statistician David J. Hand argues that extraordinarily rare events are anything but. In fact, they're commonplace. Not only that, we should all expect to experience a miracle roughly once every month. But Hand is no believer in superstitions, prophecies, or the paranormal. His definition of "miracle" is thoroughly rational. No mystical or supernatural explanation is necessary to understand why someone is lucky enough to win the lottery twice, or is destined to be hit by lightning three times and still survive. All we need, Hand argues, is a firm grounding in a powerful set of laws: the laws of inevitability, of truly large numbers, of selection, of the probability lever, and of near enough. Together, these constitute Hand's groundbreaking Improbability Principle. And together, they explain why we should not be so surprised to bump into a friend in a foreign country, or to come across the same unfamiliar word four times in one day. Hand wrestles with seemingly less explicable questions as well: what the Bible and Shakespeare have in common, why financial crashes are par for the course, and why lightning does strike the same place (and the same person) twice. Along the way, he teaches us how to use the Improbability Principle in our own lives --- including how to cash in at a casino and how to recognize when a medicine is truly effective. An irresistible adventure into the laws behind "chance" moments and a trusty guide for understanding the world and universe we live in, *The Improbability Principle* will transform how you think about serendipity and luck, whether it's in the world of business and finance or you're merely sitting in your backyard, tossing a ball into the air and wondering where it will land.

From Booklist Multiple lottery wins. Unexpected financial meltdowns. Lightning striking the same person several times. These events, while astounding, are nonetheless to be expected, as mathematics professor Hand capably explains in this well-plotted book. The principle hinges on the idea that seemingly improbable events, from the individual to the cosmic level, are commonplace due to several factors. Academic but not dry, the concepts are

presented in a relevant way and at a good clip, with some eye-catching examples. Hand notes the counterintuitive nature of certain aspects of probability, as well as the history of how understanding in the field has developed. A touch of levity goes a long way toward making the subject engaging. As Hand shows, probabilities are also about people—what we view as remarkable and why. Far from being disillusioning or removing the magic from these events, the elegant framework beneath marvelous events is something worth marveling at in itself. For those interested in an understanding of the principles of probability, this account is sure to be an odds-on favorite, even for those without much background in the subject. --Bridget Thoreson

“Human beings are a superstitious lot; we see patterns everywhere. But as Hand makes clear in this enlightening book, it all comes down to the math.” Jennifer Ouellette, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Very engaging . . . If you wish to read about how probability theory can help us understand the apparent hot hand in a basketball game, superstitions in gambling and sports, prophecies, parapsychology and the paranormal, holes in one, multiple lottery winners, and much more, this is a book you will enjoy. I will go further. The statistician Samuel S. Wilks (paraphrasing H.G. Wells) said that ‘statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write.’ With that laudable goal in mind, *The Improbability Principle* should be, in all probability, required reading for us all.” John A. Adam, *The Washington Post*

“[A] lucid overview of the mathematics of chance and the psychological phenomena that can make probability seem counter-intuitive to so many . . . Hand has written a superlative introduction to critical thinking, accessible to everybody, regardless of mathematical ability.” *New Scientist*

“[An] ingenious introduction to probability that mixes counterintuitive anecdotes with easily digestible doses of statistics . . . Hand offers much food for thought, and readers willing to handle some simple mathematics will find this a delightful addition to the ‘why people believe weird things’ genre.” *Publishers Weekly*

“Lively and lucid . . . an intensely useful (as well as a remarkably entertaining) book . . . It can transform the way you read the newspaper, that’s for sure.” *Salon*

“[Hand] leads readers through this unfamiliar land of probability and statistics with wit and charm, all the while explaining in layman’s terms the laws that govern it . . . We predict there’s a very good chance you’ll enjoy this book.” *Success*

“Enlightening and entertaining . . . an erudite but utterly unpretentious guide . . . ably and assuredly demystifies an ordinarily intimidating subject.” *Kirkus*

“In my experience, it is very rare to find a book that is both erudite and entertaining. Yet *The Improbability Principle* is such a book. Surely this cannot be due to chance alone!” Hal R. Varian, chief economist at Google and professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley

“Considering that *The Improbability Principle* comes from the keyboard of David J. Hand, it was perhaps inevitable that it would be a certain winner!” John Pullinger, president of the Royal Statistical Society

“Written by one of the world’s preeminent statisticians, *The Improbability Principle* provides you with a sense of what chance and improbability really mean, and engenders an understanding that uncertainty rests at the core of nature. I highly recommend this book.” Joseph M. Hilbe, president of the International Astrostatistics Association and ambassador for the NASA/Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology

“As someone who happened to meet his future wife on a plane, on an airline he rarely flew, I wholeheartedly endorse David J. Hand’s fascinating guide to improbability, a subject that affects the lives of us all, yet until now has lacked a coherent exposition of its underlying principles.” Gordon Woo, catastrophist at Risk Management Solutions and author of *Calculating Catastrophes*

“*The Improbability Principle* is an elegant, astoundingly clear, and enjoyable combination of subtle statistical thinking and real-world events. David J. Hand really does explain why ‘surprising’ things will happen and why statistics matters.” Andrew Dilnot, coauthor of *The Numbers Game: The Commonsense Guide to Understanding Numbers in the News, in Politics, and in Life*

About the Author David J. Hand is an emeritus professor of mathematics and a senior research investigator at Imperial College London. He is the former president of the Royal Statistical Society and the chief scientific adviser to Winton Capital Management, one of Europe’s most successful algorithmic-trading hedge funds. He is the author of seven books, including *The Information Generation: How Data Rules Our World* and *Statistics: A Very Short Introduction*, and has published more than three hundred scientific papers. Hand lives in London, England.