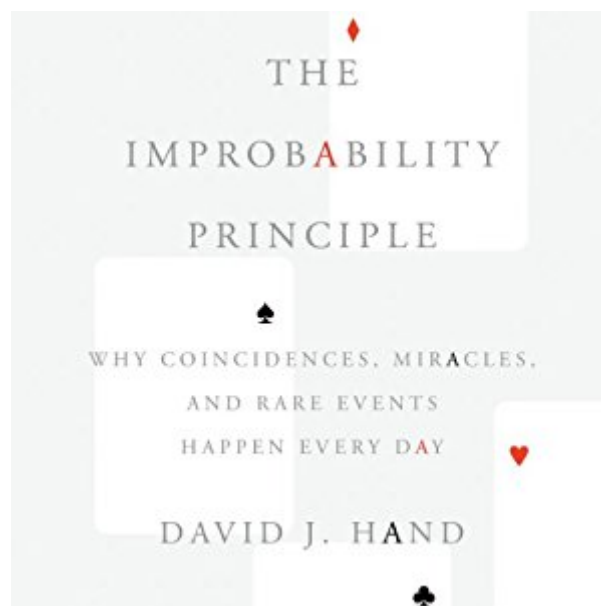




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# The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, And Rare Events Happen Every Day



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours 32 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Macmillan Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 11, 2014

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00I3LJA16

Best Sellers Rank: #88 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Mathematics #848

in Books > Business & Money > Education & Reference > Statistics #1813 in Books >

## Customer Reviews

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"

In the last year, I've read four or five books on probability. This one is the best of the lot. It's clear, entertaining, and easy to understand. People long for miracles. Everywhere you look there are charlatans ready to sell you a lottery ticket or a hot new stock and clean out your bank account. Even if no financial harm is involved, a belief in miracles and superstition can encourage an attitude of fatalism and passivity, diverting attention from real solutions to pressing problems. This book is the antidote to that kind of ignorance and passivity. It should be required reading in every high school. Five stars.

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

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.

Wonderfully enlightening! Wow, quite astonishing actually. The plain startling fact of the matter is, there is MUCH that is actually coincidence, not all that meaningful in a spiritually truthful sense. A rather sobering read for one if one only allows faith to be their guidance in life.

Thank you, Dr. Hand, for taking a subject about which I understood zilch and making it easy to learn. I enjoy trying to understand the world around me, and this book helped me do that. Hand rattles off the names of a ton of principles and rules (too many in my view), but still I was able to take away some of the over-arching themes for which I think he was going: that our intuition is often

wrong; that our inability to understand the basics of risk, chance and probability sometimes lead us to make bad choices because we under-estimate the risks of some things and over-estimate the likelihood of others. As Hand points out, this might not have far-reaching consequences when deciding whether to spend a few bucks buying a lottery ticket. But our inability to grasp basic statistics can have life-changing consequences: whether to have a second medical test performed before plunging forward with serious treatment or whether a jury convicts someone. This was a very interesting read. If this is "statistics for dummies," as some reviewers here have derisively called it, then I'm a dummy who is a little less dumb after reading the book!

This is an OK book, not a great book. The author fails to clearly identify a principle, but instead rehashes many of the issues common statistics present. It is an easy read, but is contrary to its title -- it does not prove nor address any principle.

The biggest point of the book was that our minds tend to be too square ... meaning we build these distribution models in our mind that just are too skinny...and we often exclude possibilities of the outer curve. For a trader, that is extremely important to realize. Other stuff, really a page filler. That is about it. Nevertheless, if you have not had any exposure to probability distribution, I would still encourage you to read it.

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