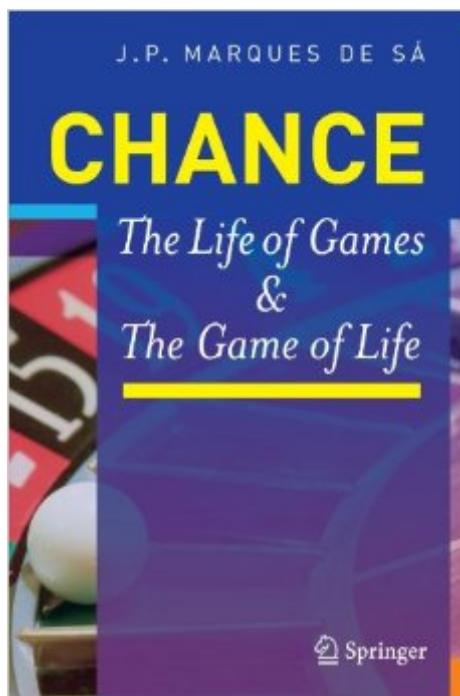


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Chance: The Life Of Games & The Game Of Life



Synopsis

This is a unique book on how probability affects our everyday lives. It guides the reader in an almost chronological trip through the fascinating and amazing laws of chance, omnipresent in the natural world and in our daily lives. Along the way many fascinating topics are discussed. These include challenging probability paradoxes, "paranormal" coincidences, game odds, and causes and effects. Finally the author discusses possibilities and limitations of learning the laws of a Universe immersed in chance events. This charming book, with its many easy-to-follow mathematical examples, will inform and entertain the scientist and non-scientist alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This valuable book explains the mathematics of chance in a broad variety of contexts. The author is an Engineering Professor, and has included plenty of charts and graphs and elementary math formulas -- this style is certainly OK for readers who have taken College courses in mathematics or engineering or physics but might deter other readers. The first half (Chapters 1 - 5) covers rather standard material covered in many other popular expositions (Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities or Chance Rules: An Informal Guide to Probability, Risk and Statistics) and in introductory college textbooks. Specific topics: the basic math set-up and rules, binomial distribution, combinatorial examples like poker hands and "derangements", familiar paradoxes (Monty Hall, two envelopes, St Petersburg), law of large numbers, chance of winning a specified amount at roulette, normal distribution, confidence intervals for opinion polls, correlation and "correlation is not causation". The second half is more distinctive, in that it includes a little mathematics in discussing

less elementary topics that are typically discussed only verbally in "popular science" style books (e.g. *The Jungles of Randomness: A Mathematical Safari*).

This book gives a delightful overview of Probability, that is, Chance, as a phenomenon in both games and life. The writing style is clear and engaging. Concepts of probability theory are presented in a way that helps the reader realize why we would want to understand these ideas. As a mathematician who teaches probability and statistics courses from time to time, I found this book to be filled with examples that I will use in class the next time I teach Probability. When the author uses the usual examples of flipping coins, rolling dice, and drawing balls from an urn, he makes it clear how these probability experiments can be used to model real life. In ten chapters, this book presents an intuitive overview of the theory of probability, including both the classical notion of probability, and use of relative frequencies to estimate probabilities. There are chapters on conditional probability (Amazing Conditions), mathematical expectation (Expecting to Win), the normal and binomial distributions, and the law of large numbers (The Wonderful Curve), inference (Probable Inferences), chance and determinism (The Nature of Chance), and sequences and random processes (Noisy Irregularities). Games of chance that are played in casinos (roulette, craps, card games, slot machines) and state-sponsored lottery games are introduced early, and recur throughout the book as examples that bring light to concepts that can be difficult to explain. These games form the backdrop for explaining mathematical expectation; after all, a casino does not stay in business unless the House is winning in the long run. The author consistently connects these examples to probabilities that I care about in daily life, such as the probability of having cancer given the outcome of a screening test.

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