



Fifty Challenging Problems in Probability with Solutions (Dover Books on Mathematics)

By Frederick Mosteller



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Can you solve the problem of "The Unfair Subway"?

Marvin gets off work at random times between 3 and 5 p.m. His mother lives uptown, his girlfriend downtown. He takes the first subway that comes in either direction and eats dinner with the one he is delivered to. His mother complains that he never comes to see her, but he says she has a 50-50 chance. He has had dinner with her twice in the last 20 working days. Explain.

Marvin's adventures in probability are one of the fifty intriguing puzzles that illustrate both elementary and advanced aspects of probability, each problem designed to challenge the mathematically inclined. From "The Flippant Juror" and "The Prisoner's Dilemma" to "The Cliffhanger" and "The Clumsy Chemist," they provide an ideal supplement for all who enjoy the stimulating fun of mathematics.

Professor Frederick Mosteller, who teaches statistics at Harvard University, has chosen the problems for originality, general interest, or because they demonstrate valuable techniques. In addition, the problems are graded as to difficulty and many have considerable stature. Indeed, one has "enlivened the research lives of many excellent mathematicians." Detailed solutions are included. There is every probability you'll need at least a few of them.



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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Charles Frederick Mosteller (1916–2006) was one of the eminent statisticians of the 20th century. He was the founding chairman of Harvard's Statistics department. Dr. Mosteller wrote more than 50 books and more than 350 papers, with over 200 coauthors.

Frederick Mosteller: Harvard Man

Frederick Mosteller (1916–2006) founded Harvard University's Department of Statistics and served as its first chairman from 1957 until 1969 and again for several years in the 1970s. He was the author or co-author of more than 350 scholarly papers and more than 50 books, including one of the most popular books in his field, first published in 1965 and reprinted by Dover in 1987, *Fifty Challenging Problems in Probability with Solutions*.

Mosteller's work was wide-ranging: He used statistical analysis of written works to prove that James Madison was the author of several of the Federalist papers whose authorship was in dispute. With then-Harvard professor and later Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, he studied what would be the most effective way of helping students from impoverished families do better in school — their answer: to improve income levels rather than to simply spend on schools. Later, his analysis of the importance to learning of smaller class sizes buttressed the Clinton Administration's initiative to hire 100,000 teachers. And, as far back as the 1940s, Mosteller composed an early statistical analysis of baseball: After his team, the Boston Red Sox, lost the 1946 World Series, he demonstrated that luck plays an enhanced role in a short series, even for a strong team.

In the Author's Own Words:

"Though we often hear that data can speak for themselves, their voices can be soft and sly." — Frederick Mosteller

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