**Barron’s Let’s Review Regents – Algebra II**

# Chapter 11: Statistics

## 11.1 Types of Statistical Studies

**Key Ideas**

Three ways to collect data for statistical study are , *observational study*, and *experiment*. *Bias* in a statistical study is when something about how the data are collected may have caused inaccurate results. Causes of this bias should be identified and, if possible, eliminated before collecting the data.

**Statistical Survey**

A survey is a question or series of questions that participants, also called subjects, in the study are asked to answer. The survey can have a simple yes/no question like “Do you like pistachio ice cream?” or a question with a numerical answer like “How much time did you spend on homework last night?” A survey is the simplest way of collecting data, but there are many ways that it can lead to bias.

The wording of the survey question can cause bias. For example, if the question says “Do you not hate pistachio ice cream?” rather than “Do you like pistachio ice cream?” the negative phrasing of the question could change the results even if the questions are supposed to mean the same thing.

The participants of the survey should be randomly selected, otherwise the results can also be distorted. The results of a survey about pop music, for example, will not be accurate if most of the people asked to complete the survey are under 20 years old. If the participants in the survey do not accurately reflect the total population, the survey has *selection bias*.

If the survey is voluntary, there is a chance that people who respond to the survey are more likely to answer the question a certain way. A survey that is conducted by text messaging, for example, might be answered more by younger people, causing bias in the results.

**Observational Study**

An *observational study* is like a survey. Instead of subjects being asked to answer questions, the person conducting the study observes the behavior of the participants and records the results. To learn about whether or not people like pistachio ice cream, the observer could go to an ice cream shop and watch what different people order. An important aspect of an observational study is that the person conducting the study cannot do anything that could interfere with or control what the subjects do.

An observational study could have bias if the subjects are not randomly selected. For example, if the ice cream shop observations happen during school hours, people under 18 will not be adequately represented.

**Experimental Study**

In an experimental study, the person conducting the study randomly chooses some of the subjects and exposes them to some kind of treatment. An example is a study to see if taking vitamin C prevents colds. Fifty-people are randomly selected and then, from those fifty, twenty-five are randomly selected to take vitamin C pills daily while the other twenty-five are not given the pills.

It is important in an experimental study to choose the group of people getting the treatment randomly. If there is some kind of bias in who receives the treatment, the experiment might lead to an inaccurate conclusion.

### Check Your Understanding of Section 11.1

1. *Show how you arrived at your answers*.
2. You want to find out what type of movie is the favorite among the residents of New York City. If you want to do this by conducting a survey, what are some ways you can reduce bias.

Randomly select people. Two approaches come to mind. A random selection of people with phone numbers having an New York City area code could be called and asked what their favorite type of movie is.

You could go to a movie theatre and count the number of people in each movie, and determine the type of movie that might be their favorite.

1. You want to study how the amount of sleep a student gets the night before the Regents relates to his or her Regents score. How can this be studied as an observational study? How can this be studied as an experiment?

For an observational study, one could either perform a sleep study the night before a Regents test, or ask the student just prior to taking the test. The teacher scoring the students test would have to provide test results with the student’s permission, or the student would have to provide test results.

For an experimental study, we could randomly choose 50 students scheduled to take a Regents test, a party could be scheduled for half the class that keeps them up to 2 am in the morning, while the other half is sent home and asked to get a good night’s sleep.

1. There are 500 10th graders at Regentsville High School. You want to do an experiment where 20 students study for the Regents with just the red Barron’s book and 20 other students study the Regents with both the blue and red Barron’s books. How can the groups be chosen to reduce the chance of skewed data through bias?

It would be possible to get a list of 40 students willing to take part in the study, and randomly assign the students to either the red Barron’s book or both books group.

1. A survey is conducted to learn what subjects students enjoy most at school. One question reads, “What is your most boring subject?”. Could the wording of this question skew the results of the survey? Explain.

First, the question is worded negatively and change the results.

Secondly, and more importantly, it does not identify what subjects enjoy most, just what subjects students are bored with.

1. Is this describing a survey, an experiment, or an observational study? Explain.

A teacher teaches two Algebra II math classes, one during period 5 and another during period 6. In the period 5 class, the temperature in the room is set to 70 degrees for a two-week period. In the period 6 class, the temperature in the room is set to 85 degrees for the same two-week period. At the end of the two weeks, the students are given a test to see how well they learned the math. The results are collected an analyzed.

This is an experimental study, where the person conducting the study randomly chooses some of the subjects and exposes them to some kind of treatment.