

# Homework 1 - Error Analysis

## Chapter 3

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L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X File name: *HW\_1\_Error\_Analysis\_Owen\_Fitzgerald.tex*

<https://github.com/Fitzzy1293/latex-school/blob/main/HW1.tex>

<https://github.com/Fitzzy1293/latex-school/blob/main/HW1.pdf>

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## 1 Problem 1

To measure the activity of a radioactive sample, two students count the alpha particles it emits. Student A watches for 3 minutes and counts 28 particles; Student B watches for 30 minutes and counts 310 particles. (a) What should Student A report for the average number emitted in 3 minutes, with his uncertainty? (b) What should Student B report for the average number emitted in 30 minutes, with her uncertainty? (c) What are the fractional uncertainties in the two measurements? Comment.

### Solution 3.1

#### Section 3.2: The Square-Root Rule for a Counting Experiment

$$student_{A\,Time} = 3 \text{ minutes} \quad student_{A\,emitted\,3\,minutes} = 28 \text{ particles} \quad (1.1)$$

$$student_{B\,Time} = 30 \text{ minutes} \quad student_{B\,emitted\,30\,minutes} = 310 \text{ particles} \quad (1.2)$$

(a) Student A's measurement

Using eq. 3.2 from the textbook: *Avg. events measurement* =  $\nu \pm \sqrt{\nu}$  where  $\nu$  - the greek letter *nu* - is the best average.

$$student_{A\,emitted\,3\,minutes} = 28 \text{ particles} \quad (1.3)$$

$$student_{A\,uncertainty} = \sqrt{28} \approx 5.29150262212918 \quad (1.4)$$

$$student_{A\,uncertainty} = \pm 5 \text{ particles} \quad (1.5)$$

$$\boxed{student_{A\,emitted\,3\,minutes} = 28 \pm 5 \text{ particles}} \quad (1.6)$$

(b) Student B's measurement

$$student_{B\,emitted\,30\,minutes} = 310 \text{ particles} \quad (1.7)$$

$$student_{B\,uncertainty} = \sqrt{310} \approx 17.6068168616590 \quad (1.8)$$

$$student_{B\,uncertainty} = \pm 18 \text{ particles} \quad (1.9)$$

$$\boxed{student_B \text{ emitted 30 minutes} = 310 \pm 18 \text{ particles}} \quad (1.10)$$

(c) What are the fractional uncertainties? Comment, i.e interpret, the fractional uncertainties

Using eq .2.21 from the textbook:  $\text{fractional uncertainty} = \frac{\delta_x}{|x_{best}|}$  , we can use eq. (1.11) with Students A and B.

$$\text{fractional uncertainty} = \frac{\delta_\nu}{|\nu_{best}|} = \frac{\sqrt{student_{particle \text{ count best}}}}{student_{particle \text{ count best}}} \quad (1.11)$$

$$student_A \text{ fractional uncertainty} = \frac{5}{28} \approx 0.178571428571429 \quad (1.12)$$

$$student_B \text{ fractional uncertainty} = \frac{18}{310} \approx 0.0580645161290323 \quad (1.13)$$

$$\begin{aligned} student_A \text{ fractional uncertainty} &= 18\% \\ student_B \text{ fractional uncertainty} &= 6\% \end{aligned}$$

Student B's total uncertainty is higher than student A's, however B has a lower fractional uncertainty. Counting more events will always reduce your fractional uncertainty in these cases. A lower fractional uncertainty implies a more accurate measurement, so B has a better measurement.

## 2 Problem 2

Most of the ideas of error analysis have important applications in many different fields. This applicability is especially true for the square-root rule (3.2) for counting experiments, as the following example illustrates. The normal average incidence of a certain kind of cancer has been established as 2 cases per 10,000 people per year. The suspicion has been aired that a certain town (population 20,000) suffers a high incidence of this cancer because of a nearby chemical dump. To test this claim, a reporter investigates the town's records for the past 4 years and finds 20 cases of the cancer. He calculates that the expected number is 16 (check this) and concludes that the observed rate is 25in claiming that this result proves that the town has a higher than normal rate for this cancer?

### Solution 3.3

#### Section 3.2: Abnormal number of cancer cases?

$$town_{expected \text{ cases}} = 16 \quad town_{actual \text{ cases}} = 20 \quad (2.1)$$

$$\sqrt{town_{actual \text{ cases}}} = \sqrt{20} \approx 4.47213595499958 \quad (2.2)$$

$$\sqrt{town_{actual \text{ cases}}} = \pm 4 \text{ cases} \quad (2.3)$$

The fewest possible cases are seen by subtracting the uncertainty  $20 - 4 = 16$ . This is within the expected range, so he is not justified in his claim.

### 3 Problem 3

The binomial theorem states that for any number  $n$  and any  $x$  with  $|x| < 1$ ,  $(1 + x)^n = 1 + nx + \frac{n(n-1)}{2!}x^2 + \frac{n(n-1)(n-2)}{3!}x^3 + \dots$  (a) Show that if  $n$  is a positive integer, this infinite series terminates (that is, has only a finite number of nonzero terms). Write the series down explicitly for the cases  $n = 2$  and  $n = 3$ . (b) Write down the binomial series for the case  $n = -1$ . This case gives an infinite series for  $1/(1 + x)$ , but when  $x$  is small, you get a good approximation if you keep just the first two terms:  $1/(1 + x) \approx 1 - x$ . Problems for Chapter 3 as quoted in (3.6). Calculate both sides of this approximation for each of the values  $x = 0.5$ ,  $0.1$ , and  $0.01$ , and in each case find the percentage by which the approximation  $(1 - x)$  differs from the exact value of  $1/(1 + x)$ .