Example

Box *I* contains 3 red and 2 blue marbles while Box *II* contains 2 red and 8 blue marbles. A fair coin is tossed. If the coin turns up heads, a marble is chosen from Box *I*; if it turns up tails, a marble is chosen from Box *II*.

i. Find the probability that a red marble is chosen.

Let R denote the event "a red marble is chosen" while I and II denote the events that Box I and Box II are chosen, respectively. Since a red marble can result by choosing either Box I or II, we can use the results of Problem 1.14 with $A = R, A_1 = I, A_2 = II$. Therefore, the probability of choosing a red marble is

$$P(R) = P(I)P(R \mid I) + P(II)P(R \mid II) = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\left(\frac{3}{3+2}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\left(\frac{2}{2+8}\right) = \frac{2}{5}$$

ii. Suppose that the one who tosses the coin does not reveal whether it has turned up heads or tails (so that the box from which a marble was chosen is not revealed) but does reveal that a red marble was chosen. What is the probability that Box *I* was chosen (i.e., the coin turned up heads)?

$$P(I \mid R) = \frac{P(I)P(R \mid I)}{P(I)P(R \mid I) + P(II)P(R \mid II)} = \frac{\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\left(\frac{3}{3+2}\right)}{\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\left(\frac{3}{3+2}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\left(\frac{2}{2+8}\right)} = \frac{3}{4}$$