

# Consecutive heads in coin tossing

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Suppose that a coin with probability  $p$  of heads is tossed repeatedly.

Let  $A_k$  be the event that a sequence of  $k$  (or more) consecutive heads occurs amongst tosses numbered  $2^k, 2^k + 1, 2^k + 2, \dots, 2^{k+1} - 1$ . Prove that

$$P(A_k, \text{ i.o.}) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } p \geq \frac{1}{2} \\ 0, & \text{if } p < \frac{1}{2} \end{cases}.$$

*Proof.* Let  $E_{ki}$  be the event that there are  $k$  consecutive heads beginning at toss numbered  $2^k + i$ . There is  $P(E_{ki}) = p^k$  for all  $i$ . We have

$$A_k = \bigcup_{i=0}^{2^k-k} E_{ki}.$$

By inclusion-exclusion formula,

$$P(A_k) \leq \sum_{i=0}^{2^k-k} P(E_{ki}) = (2^k - k + 1)p^k.$$

And if we consider the disjoint blocks from  $2^k + ik$  to  $2^k + (i+1)k - 1$  for  $i = 0, 1, \dots, \left\lfloor \frac{2^k}{k} \right\rfloor$ , namely  $E_{k0}, E_{kk}, \dots$ .

We have  $\bigcup_{j=0}^{\left\lfloor \frac{2^k}{k} \right\rfloor} E_{k(jk)} \subseteq A_k$ , thus

$$P(A_k^c) \leq P\left(\left(\bigcup_{j=0}^{\left\lfloor \frac{2^k}{k} \right\rfloor} E_{k(jk)}\right)^c\right) = (1 - p^k)^{\left\lfloor \frac{2^k}{k} \right\rfloor}.$$

Therefore,

$$1 - (1 - p^k)^{\left\lfloor \frac{2^k}{k} \right\rfloor} \leq P(A_k) \leq (2^k - k + 1)p^k.$$

If  $p < \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\sum_k P(A_k) \leq \sum_k (2p)^k < \infty$ . By BC1, we know that  $P(A_k, \text{i.o.}) = 0$ .

If  $p \geq \frac{1}{2}$ ,

$$\begin{aligned}
 \sum_k P(A_k) &\geq \sum_k (1 - (1 - p^k)^{\frac{2^k}{k}}) \\
 &= \sum_k (1 - \exp(\frac{2^k}{k} \ln(1 - p^k))) \\
 &= \sum_k (1 - \exp(-\frac{2^k}{k} p^k)) \\
 &\geq \sum_k (1 - \exp(-\frac{1}{k})) \\
 &\geq \sum_k \frac{1}{k} \rightarrow \infty.
 \end{aligned}$$

And apparently all events  $A_k, k \in \mathbb{N}$  are independent. By BC2,  $P(A_k, \text{i.o.}) = 1$ .

As a conclusion,

$$P(A_k, \text{i.o.}) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } p \geq \frac{1}{2} \\ 0, & \text{if } p < \frac{1}{2} \end{cases}.$$

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