Random Experiment

A procedure with several possible outcomes.

Sample Space

The set of all possible outcomes of a random experiment.

Sample Point

An individual possible outcome from a random experiment.

Event

A subset of the sample space.

Probability (Kolmogorov Definition)

Let S be a sample space. A probability $\mathbb{P}$ is a function that assigns to each event E a positive number with the following properties:

Axioms of Probability

1. $0 \leq \mathbb{P}(E) \leq 1$
2. $\mathbb{P}(S) = 1$
3. If $E_1, E_2, E_3, \ldots$ are events with $E_i \cap E_j = \emptyset$ for all $i \neq j$, then $\mathbb{P}(E_1 \cup E_2 \cup \ldots) = \mathbb{P}(E_1) + \mathbb{P}(E_2) + \ldots$

Probability Space

A pair $(S, \mathbb{P})$, where S is a sample space and $\mathbb{P}$ is a probability.

Complement

Let E be an event. Then the complement of E, denoted $\overline{E}$ or E^{c}, is the set which contains all elements in S which are not in E.

$\mathbb{P}(\overline{E}) = 1 - \mathbb{P}(E)$.

Discrete Uniform Distribution

Suppose $|S| = n$, so $S = \{x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n\}$. The discrete uniform distribution is the probability $\mathbb{P}$ which assigns to each simple event the number $\frac{1}{n}$.

Thus, $\mathbb{P}(E) = \frac{|E|}{|S|}$.

Permutation

Assume you have n items. The ways these items can be arranged in order are called permutations.

There are $\frac{n!}{(n-k)!}$ permutations of n unique items.

Choose

Without caring about order, the number of ways to choose k items from a group of n items is $\binom{n}{k}$.

$\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!}$.

Conditional Probability

Let $(S, \mathbb{P})$ be a probability space, and A, B be two events with $\mathbb{P}(B) > 0$.

The conditional probability of A given B, denoted $\mathbb{P}(A|B)$, is defined as $\mathbb{P}(A|B) = \frac{\mathbb{P}(A \cap B)}{\mathbb{P}(B)}$.

Independence

A and B are independent, denoted $A \perp\!\!\!\perp B$ if $\mathbb{P}(A \cap B) = \mathbb{P}(A)\mathbb{P}(B)$.
(Also true for more than 2 events)

Random Variable

A random variable is a function which assigns a real number to each sample point:
$X : S \to \mathbb{R}$
$(X(\text{sample point}) = \#)$
Notation: $\mathbb{P}(X = k) = P_X(k)$.

Probability Mass Function (Distribution Function)

$P_X(k) : \mathbb{R} \to [0, 1]$ is called the probability mass function.
Note that $0 \leq P_X(k) \leq 1$.
$\sum_k P_X(k) = 1$.
(Assuming that X takes a countable number of possible values.)
When X has a countable number of possible values, it is called a discrete random variable.

Binomial Random Variable

Let $X = \#$ of successes in n independent trials of an experiment with two possible outcomes. Let p denote the probability of success in each independent trial. (often $q = 1-p$ denotes the probability of failure) Then X is a binomial random variable if $P_X(k) = \mathbb{P}(X = k) = \binom{n}{k}p^k(1-p)^{n-k}$ for all integers $0 \leq k \leq n$.

Example: Let X be a binomial random variable with parameters n and p. (Denoted $X \sim \text{Binomial}(n, p)$, where $\sim$ means “is distributed as”)

The PMF of X is then $P_X(k) = \binom{n}{k}p^k(1-p)^{n-k}$. $(0 \leq n \leq k)$ This is called the binomial distribution.

Geometric Random Variable

Let $X = \#$ of independent trials of an experiment with two possible outcomes up to and including the first success. Then, X is a geometric random variable wih parameter p, denoted $X \sim \text{Geometric}(p)$.

$P_X(k) = \mathbb{P}(X = k) = (1-p)^{k-1}p$.

Bayes' Theorem

$\mathbb{P}(A|B) = \frac{\mathbb{P}(B|A)\mathbb{P}(A)}{\mathbb{P}(B)}$.

Expected Value

Let $X : S \to I = \{x_1, x_2, \ldots\} \subseteq \mathbb{R}$ be a discrete random variable. The expected value of X, denoted $\mathbb{E}[X] = \mathbb{E}X$, is defined as

$$\mathbb{E}X = \sum_{x_k \in I} \mathbb{P}(X = x_k) \cdot x_k.$$

If Y is a binomial random variable with parameters n, p, then $\mathbb{E}[Y] = np$.
If Z is a geometric random variable with paremeter p, then $\mathbb{E}[Z] = \frac{1}{p}$.

Linearity of Expectation

Let $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_n$ be random variables and $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_n \in \mathbb{R}$.
Then define $X = \alpha_1 X_1 + \alpha_2 X_2 + \ldots + \alpha_n X_n = \sum_{k=1}^{n} \alpha_k X_k$.
Then, $\mathbb{E}X = \mathbb{E}[\alpha_1 X_1 + \ldots + \alpha_n X_n] = \alpha\mathbb{E}X_1 + \ldots + \alpha_n \mathbb{E}X_n$.

A Helpful Trick

When you're trying to do a complicated expected value, try breaking up the complicated variable into a sum of many simple variables. (Hat check problem, sock problem)

Variance

Let $X : S \to \mathbb{R}$ be a discrete random variable. The variance of X, denoted $\mathbb{V}[X]$, is a number describing the spread of possible values:

$$\mathbb{V}[X] = \mathbb{E}[(X - \mathbb{E}[X])^2].$$

The standard deviation is given by

$$\sqrt{\mathbb{V}[X]}.$$

This will sometimes be denoted σ_X.

To compute variance directly:

$$\mathbb{V}[X] = \sum_k \mathbb{P}(X = k) \cdot (k - \mathbb{E}[X])^2.$$

But the actual way you will calculate variance is this:

$$\mathbb{V}[X] = \mathbb{E}[X^2] - (\mathbb{E}[X])^2.$$

Variance of Geometric Random Variable

Let Y be a geometric random variable with parameter p. Then,

$$\mathbb{V}[Y] = \frac{1-p}{p^2}.$$

Variance of Binomial Random Variable

Let X be a binomial random variable with parameters n, p. Then,

$$\mathbb{V}[X] = np(1-p).$$

Independence of Random Variables

Let $X, Y : S \to \mathbb{R}$ be discrete random variables. We say X and Y are independent if $\mathbb{P}(X = a \text{ and } Y = b) = \mathbb{P}(X = a)\mathbb{P}(Y = b)$ for all $a, b, \in \mathbb{R}$.

Breaking up sums of independent random variables in variances

If X and Y are independent, then $\mathbb{V}[X + Y] = \mathbb{V}[X] + \mathbb{V}[Y]$.

Breaking up products of independent random variables in expected values

If X and Y are independent, then $\mathbb{E}[XY] = \mathbb{E}[X]\mathbb{E}[Y]$.

Scaling and Shift

Let $a \in \mathbb{R}$ and X be a discrete random variable. Then,

$$\mathbb{V}[aX] = a^2\mathbb{V}X$$
$$\mathbb{V}[a + X] = \mathbb{V}X$$

Markov's Inequality

Let X be a nonnegative random variable. Then, $\mathbb{P}(X \geq a) \leq \frac{\mathbb{E}X}{a}$ for all $a > 0$.

Chebyshev's Inequality

Let X be a random variable. Then, $\mathbb{P}(|X - \mathbb{E}X| \geq a) \leq \frac{\mathbb{V}X}{a^2}$ for all $a > 0$.

Weak Law of Large Numbers

Let $X_1, X_2, \ldots$ be independent, identically-distributed random variables. Then, for all $\epsilon > 0$,

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} \mathbb{P}\left(\left|\frac{X_1 + X_2 + \ldots + X_n}{n} - \mathbb{E}[X_n]\right| \geq \epsilon\right) = 0.$$

In other words, the average of the first n trials of an experiment approach the expected value of the n^{th} trial in the long run.

Poisson Random Variable

Let X be the number of events which occur in a fixed time interval $(0, T)$.

If X satisfies:

1. The number of events in two disjoint subintervals are independent.

2. The number of successes per unit of time, usually referred to as the rate λ, is independent of time.

3. In an infinitesimal interval, $[t, t + \delta t)$, there is at most one event.

then X is a Poisson distributed random variable with parameters λ, T.

$\mathbb{P}(X = k) = \frac{e^{-\lambda T}(\lambda T)^k}{k!}$ for $k \in \mathbb{N}_0$.

$\mathbb{E}X = \lambda T$.

$\mathbb{V}X = \lambda T$.

Sometimes, since λ and T are always a product, this is shortened to having only one parameter, λ, which is actually λT.

Hypergeometric Random Variable

Suppose you have N items of which K are special. From N total items, you pick n uniformly at random. Let X by the number of special items picked. Then, X is said to be a hypergeometric random variable with parameters N, K, n.

$\mathbb{P}(X = k) = \frac{\binom{K}{k}\binom{N-K}{n-k}}{\binom{N}{n}}$ for $\max\{0, n + K - N\} \leq k \leq \min\{K, n\}$

Fact about continuous random variables

If $X : S \to \mathbb{R}$ is continuous, then $\mathbb{P}(X = x) = 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}$.

Cumulative Distribution Function

The cumulative distribution function of a random variable X is the function $F(x) = \mathbb{P}(X \leq x)$.

Every CDF is non-decreasing.

The CDF of a discrete random variable is a step function.

$\mathbb{P}(a \leq X \leq b) = F(b) - F(a)$ for any $a < b$.

$\lim\limits_{x \to \infty} F_X(x) = 1$, and $\lim\limits_{x \to -\infty} F_X(x) = 0$.

Continuous Random Variable

A random variable is continuous if its CDF is continuous.

Probability Density Function (PDF)

The probability density function of a continuous random variable X with CDF $F_X(x)$ is the function

$$f(x) = \frac{d}{dx} F_X(x)$$

for all x such that $F_X(x)$ is differentiable.

$$f_X(x) \geq 0$$

$$\int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_X(x) dx = 1$$

$$\int\limits_{a}^{b} f_X(x) dx = F_X(b) - F_X(a) = \mathbb{P}(a < X \leq b)$$

Expected value and variance of a continuous random variable

Let X be a continuous random variable with PDF f_X. The expected value of X is given by

$$\mathbb{E}X = \int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_X(x) \cdot x \, dx$$

The variance of X is given by the same formula as before. All previously-stated properties of expectation and variance still hold.

CDF of Geometric Random Variables

$$1 - (1-p)^{\lfloor x \rfloor}$$

Uniform Distribution

A random variable X is uniformly distributed on (Θ_1, Θ_2), denoted

$$X \sim \text{Uniform}(\Theta_1, \Theta_2),$$

if density is given by

$$f_X(x) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{\Theta_2 - \theta_1} & \Theta_1 < x < \Theta_2, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

Then,

$$F_X(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & x < \Theta_1, \\ \frac{x - \Theta_1}{\Theta_2 - \Theta_1} & \Theta_1 \leq x \leq \Theta_2, \\ 0 & x > \Theta_2. \end{cases}$$

If (c, d) is a subinterval of (Θ_1, Θ_2), then $\mathbb{P}(c < X < d) = \int\limits_c^d \frac{1}{\Theta_2 - \Theta_1} \, dx = \frac{d-c}{\Theta_2 - \Theta_1}$. This is also obvious.

$$\mathbb{E}X = \frac{\Theta_1 + \Theta_2}{2}.$$

$$\mathbb{V}X = \frac{1}{12}(\Theta_2 - \Theta_1)^2.$$

Normal (Gaussian) Distribution

We say X is a Gaussian (normal) random variable if its density (PDF) is given by

$$f_X(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}.$$

We say $X \sim$ Normal(μ, σ^2).

$\mathbb{E}X = \mu$.

$\mathbb{V}X = \sigma^2$.

If $X \sim$ Normal(μ_X, σ_X^2) and $Y \sim$ Normal(μ_Y, σ_Y^2) are independent, then $X+Y =$ Normal$(\mu_X + \mu_Y, \sigma_X^2 + \sigma_Y^2)$.

$aX + b \sim$ Normal$(a\mu_X + b, a^2\sigma_X^2)$.

If you combine many sources of randomness, you get a normal distribution (Central Limit Theorem)

Normal distribution maximizes entropy (???)

If you don't know anything about a random variable, Normal is a decent guess.

$\sim 68\%$ of probability is within one standard deviation.

$\sim 95\%$ for two standard deviations.

$\sim 99.7\%$ for three.

Standard Normal Distribution

If X is a Guassian random variable, then

$$Z = \frac{X - \mu_X}{\sigma_X} \sim \text{ Normal}(\mu = 0, \sigma^2 = 1)$$

is a standard normal random variable. To compute probabilities for X, convert to probabilities involving Z and use precomputed values for standard normal.

Exponential Random Variable

The random variable X is exponentially distributed with parameter $\lambda > 0$, if its density is

$$f_X(x) = \begin{cases} \lambda e^{-\lambda x} & x > 0, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

Then, its CDF is

$$F_X(x) = \begin{cases} 1 - e^{-\lambda x} & x \geq 0, \\ 0 & x < 0. \end{cases}$$

Sometimes parameterized using $\beta = \frac{1}{\lambda}$.

X is the waiting time until first event when events occur at rate λ per unit time.

This is kind of like the continuous version of the geometric distribution.

$$\mathbb{E}X = \frac{1}{\lambda}$$

$$\mathbb{V}X = \left(\frac{1}{\lambda}\right)^2$$

The exponential distribution is the only continuous distribution with memorylessness:

$$\mathbb{P}(X > t + s \mid X > t) = \mathbb{P}(X > s)$$

In other words, if no event occurs by time t, the probability of the event occurring s time units in the future is the same as the probability of it occurring after waiting s from the outset.

Gamma Random Variable

X is said to be Gamma distributed with parameters $r \in \mathbb{N}$ and $\lambda > 0$ if its density is

$$f_X(x) = \begin{cases} \frac{\lambda^r}{(r-1)!} x^{r-1} e^{-\lambda x} & x > 0, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

X is the waiting time until r events have occurred when events occur at a constant rate λ.

$$\mathbb{V}X = \frac{r}{\lambda^2}$$

Joint Distribution for Discrete Random Variables

Let $X : S \to \{x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots\}$ and $Y : S \to \{y_1, y_2, y_3, \ldots\}$ be discrete random variables on the same sample space S. The joint distribution of the random vector (X, Y) is given by

$$\mathbb{P}(X = x_k, Y = y_l),$$

sometimes denoted $P_{X,Y}(x_k, y_l)$.

CDF of a Random Vector

Let $X, Y : S \to \mathbb{R}$ be random variables. The CDF of the random vector (X, Y) is given by

$$F_{X,Y}(x, y) = \mathbb{P}(X \leq x, Y \leq y).$$

Joint Distribution for Continuous Random Variables

Let $X, Y : S \to \mathbb{R}$ be continuous random variables. The joint distribution or joint density of (X, Y) is the function

$$f_{X,Y}(x, y) = \frac{\delta^2}{\delta x \delta y} F_{X,Y}(x, y).$$

$$f_{X,Y}(x, y) \geq 0 \, \forall x, y \in \mathbb{R}$$

$$\int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{X,Y}(x, y) \, dy dx = 1$$

Marginal Distribution of Discrete a Random Variable

Let X, Y be discrete random variables with joint distribution $P_{X,Y}(x,y) = \mathbb{P}(X = x, Y = y)$. The marginal distribution of Y, denoted $P_Y(y)$, is defined by

$$P_X(x) = \sum_y P_{X,Y}(x,y).$$

Conditional Distribution of Discrete a Random Variable

The conditional distribution of X given $Y = y$ is

$$P_{X|Y}(x) = \frac{P_{X,Y}(x,y)}{P_Y(y)}.$$

Independence for Joint Distributions of Discrete Random Variables

X and Y are independent if and only if $P_{X,Y}(x,y) = P_X(x)P_Y(y)$ for all x, y.

Marginal Distribution of a Continuous Random Variable

Let X, Y be continuous random variables with density $f_{X,Y}(x,y)$. The marginal distribution of X is

$$f_X(x) = \int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{X,Y}(x,y)\, dy,$$

and the marginal distribution of Y is

$$f_Y(y) = \int\limits_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{X,Y}(x,y)\, dx.$$

Conditional Distribution of Continuous Variables

The conditional distribution of X given $Y = y$ is

$$P_{X|Y}(x) = \frac{f_{X,Y}(x,y)}{f_Y(y)}.$$

Independence for Joint Distributions of Continuous Random Variables

X and Y are independent if and only if $f_{X,Y}(x,y) = f_X(x)f_Y(y)$ for all $x, y \in \mathbb{R}$.

Expected Value of a Function of Discrete Random Variables

Let (X, Y) be a discrete random vector and $P_{X,Y}(x,y)$ their joint distribution. Let

$$g(x,y) \to \mathbb{R}$$

be a function. Then,

$$\mathbb{E}[g(X,Y)] = \sum_x \sum_y P_{X,Y}(x,y)g(x,y).$$

Expected Value of a Function of Continuous Random Variables

Let (X, Y) be a continuous random vector and $P_{X,Y}(x, y)$ their joint distribution. Let

$$g(x, y) : \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{R}$$

be a function. Then,

$$\mathbb{E}[g(X, Y)] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{X,Y}(x, y) g(x, y) \, dy \, dx.$$