

Basic Probability

Terminology

Outcome

Each thing that can occur in the experiment is called an outcome. In the example of tossing a coin we have two outcomes 'heads' or 'tails' which we can denote by the letters H and T respectively.

Sample Space

The set of all possible outcomes of an experiment is called the sample space. By convention we label it Ω . In our simple coin tossing scenario we would have $\Omega = \{H, T\}$. If we toss two coins our sample space would become $\Omega = \{HH, HT, TH, TT\}$.

Event

A subset of the probability space is called an event. We define an event using the following notation.

$A = \{\omega \in \Omega; \omega = H\}$ "This means the set of all outcomes ω such that ω is a head".

Probability Measure

A probability measure P is a function that assigns to each element ω in Ω a probability such that

$$\sum_{\omega \in \Omega} P(\omega) = 1$$

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Since an event A is a subset of Ω then the probability of an event is given by

$$P(A) = \sum_{\omega \in A} P(\omega)$$

Probability Space

A probability space $P(\Omega, P)$ consists of a sample space and a probability measure. The sample space is the set of outcomes and the probability measure is a function that assigns to each element ω in Ω a value in $[0,1]$ such that

$$\sum_{\omega \in \Omega} P(\omega) = 1$$

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Random Variable

A random variable x is a real valued function defined on Ω . Put another way a random variable maps each outcome from the sample space Ω to a real number.

Axioms

Conditional Probability

Given two events E and F

$$P(E | F) = \frac{P(EF)}{P(F)}$$

Independent Events

If $P(E | F) = P(E)P(F)$ then the events E and F are said to be independent. The occurrence of E does not change the probability of F occurring.

An example

Consider a game where we toss a fair coin and if it lands heads we receive one dollar and if it lands tails we lose one dollar. We have the following.

$$\Omega = \{H, T\} \quad (\text{Sample Space})$$

And our probability measure is then given by

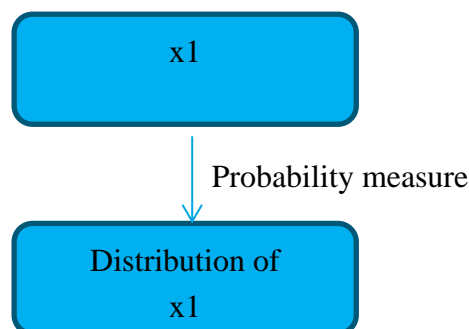
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$$P(H) = P(T) = 0.5 \quad (\text{Probability Measure})$$

We define a random variable, x_1 on the outcomes that takes the value of plus one dollar if we obtain a head and minus one dollar if we obtain a tail.

$$x_1(H) = 1, x_1(T) = -1 \quad (\text{Random Variable})$$

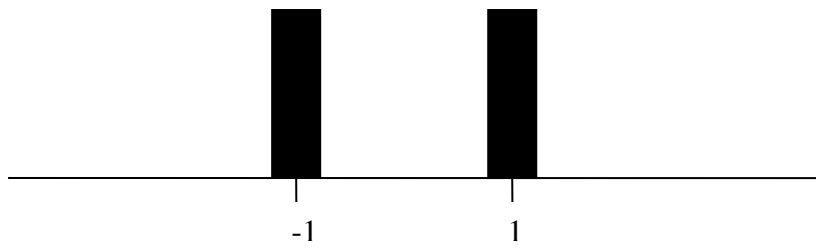
We now introduce one more important concept, that of a probability distribution. A random variable is a function defined on Ω whereas its distribution is a tabulation of the probabilities that the random variable takes its various values. A random variable is **not** a distribution.



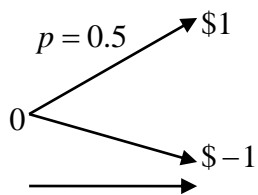
Under the probability measure P defined on Ω either a head or tail are equally likely so our distribution becomes

$$P(x_1 = 1) = 0.5, P(x_1 = -1) = 0.5$$

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We can then calculate the mean μ and the variance, σ^2 of our distribution.



- $\mu = 0$
- $\sigma^2 = 0.5(1-0)^2 + 0.5(-1-0)^2 = 1.0$

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Summing two Identical Independent random variables

We can create a new game by playing the original games twice. We define x_1 as the profit/loss from the first coin toss and x_2 as the profit/loss from the second toss. We can then define the random variable $X = x_1 + x_2$ giving the total profit or loss at the end of the two tosses.

We obtain the following sample space

$$\Omega = \{\omega_1 \omega_2\} = \{HH, HT, TH, TT\}$$

With the following measure

$$P(HH) = P(HT) = P(TH) = P(TT) = 0.25$$

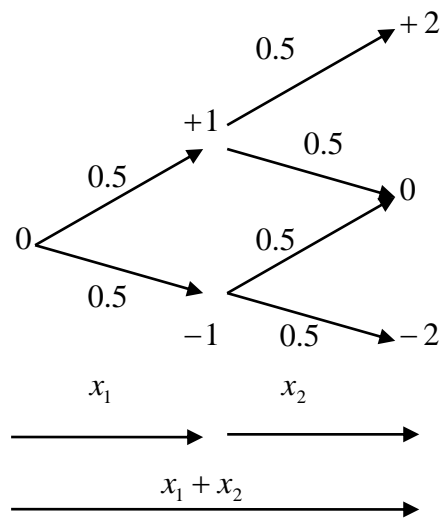
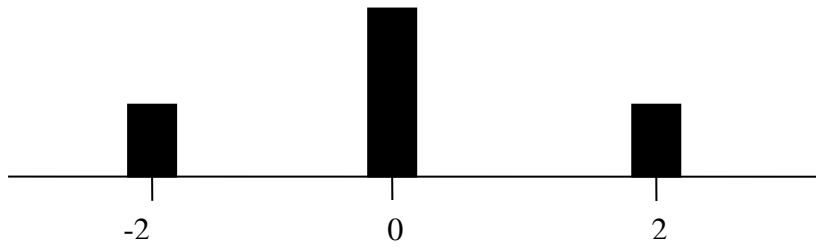
Giving us the random variable

$$X(HH) = 2, X(HT) = (TH) = 0, X(TT) = -2$$

Applying our measure to the random variable we get our probability distribution

$$P(X = 2) = 0.25, P(X = 0) = 0.5, P(X = -2) = 0.25$$

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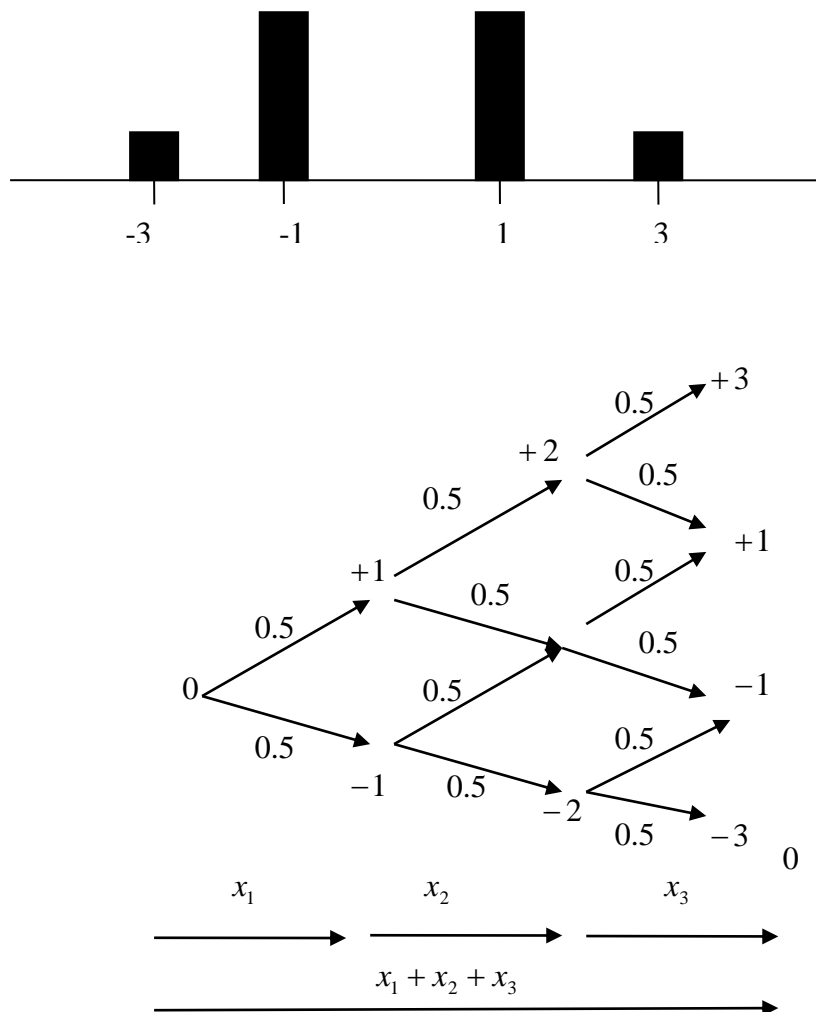


- $\mu = 0$
- $\sigma^2 = 0.25(2-0)^2 + 0.25(-2-0)^2 = 2.0$

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Summing three Identical Independent random variables

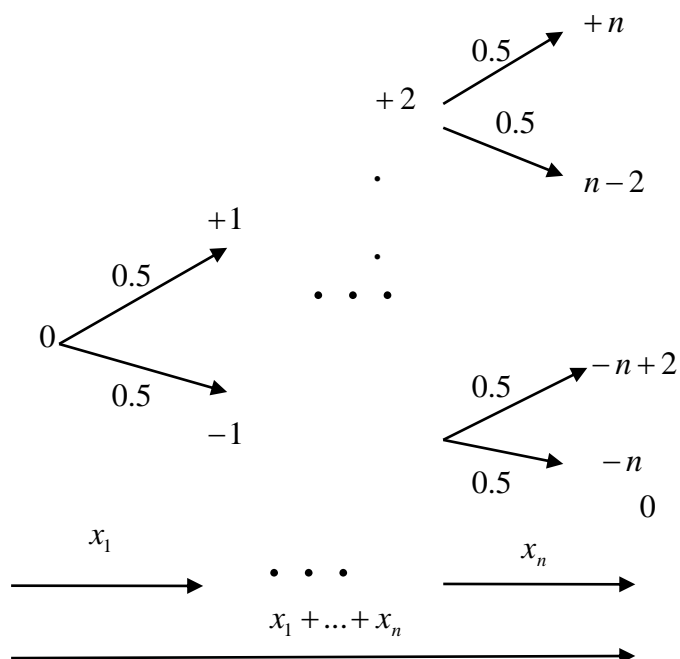
Let us go one-step further and look at the event obtained by summing three of the original events. $X_3 = x_1 + x_2 + x_3$ We get the following distribution, whose mean is zero and whose variance is three.



- $\mu = 0$
- $\sigma^2 = 0.125(3-0)^2 + 0.125(-3-0)^2 + 0.375(1-0)^2 + 0.375(-1-0)^2 = 3.0$

Sum of n identical Independent random variables

Taking this process to its logical conclusion by summing n of our independent, identically distributed random variables we obtain the random variable $X_n = x_1 + \dots + x_n$ which is distributed with mean zero and variance n .



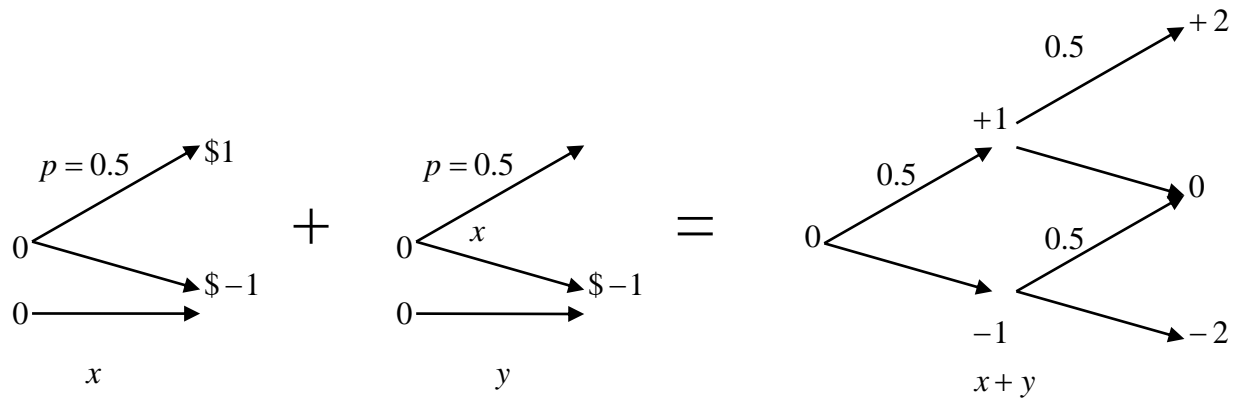
From a proof of why the sum of n independent, identically distributed random variables with mean μ and variance σ^2 is a random variable with mean $n\mu$ and variance $n\sigma^2$ see below

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Expectation of sum of I.I.D random variables

$$E[X + X + X + X + \dots + X] = NE[X]$$

Highlighting the principle



We have random variable x with sample space $\{x_1, x_2\} = \{1, 0\}$ and another identically distributed random variable y with sample space $\{y_1, y_2\} = \{1, 0\}$. The sample space of the joint distribution $x + y$ is given by the set of pairs

$$\{x_1, y_1\}, \{x_1, y_2\}$$

$$\{x_2, y_1\}, \{x_2, y_2\}$$

The expectation of the sum of the variables is then given by

$$\sum_{i=1}^2 \sum_{j=1}^2 (x_i + y_j) p(x_i, y_j)$$

Multiplying out

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$$\sum_{i=1}^2 \sum_{j=1}^2 x_i p(x_i, y_j) + \sum_{i=1}^2 \sum_{j=1}^2 y_j p(x_i, y_j)$$

Noting that $\sum_{j=1}^n p(x_i, y_j) = p(x_i)$ and $\sum_{i=1}^m p(x_i, y_j) = p(y_j)$

$$\sum_{i=1}^m x_i p(x_i) + \sum_{j=1}^n x_j p(y_j)$$

Therefore we can note that

$$E[X + Y] = E[X] + E[Y]$$

Generalising

If x is a random variable with sample space $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_m\}$ and y is an independent random variable with sample space $\{y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n\}$ then the sample space of the joint distribution will be given by a set of pairs

$$\{x_1, y_1\}, \{x_1, y_2\}, \dots, \{x_1, y_n\}$$

$$\{x_2, y_1\}, \{x_2, y_2\}, \dots, \{x_2, y_n\}$$

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$$\{x_m, y_1\}, \{x_m, y_2\}, \dots, \{x_m, y_n\}$$

The expectation of the sum of the two variables is then given by

$$\sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^n (x_i + y_j) p(x_i, y_j)$$

Multiplying out we get

$$\sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^n x_i p(x_i, y_j) + \sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^n y_j p(x_i, y_j)$$

Noting that $\sum_{j=1}^n p(x_i, y_j) = p(x_i)$ and $\sum_{i=1}^m p(x_i, y_j) = p(y_j)$

$$\sum_{i=1}^m x_i p(x_i) + \sum_{j=1}^n y_j p(y_j)$$

Therefore we can note that

$$E[X + Y] = E[X] + E[Y]$$

Furthermore

$$E[X + X] = E[X] + E[X] = 2E[X]$$

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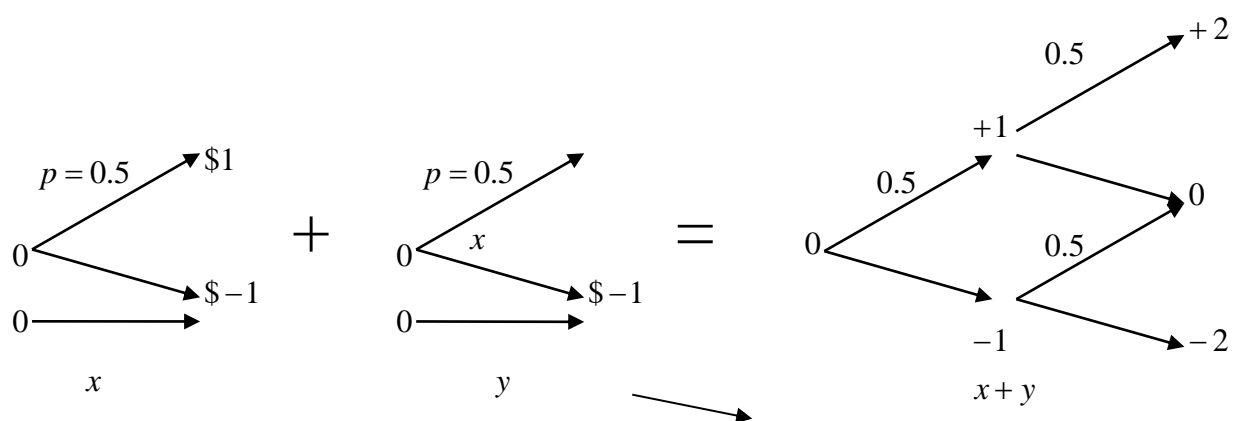
And

$$E[X + X + X + X + \dots + X] = NE[X]$$

Variance of sum of I.I.D random variables

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = \text{Var}[x] + \text{Var}[y]$$

Highlighting the principle



We have random variable x with sample space $\{x_1, x_2\} = \{1, 0\}$ and another identically distributed random variable y with sample space $\{y_1, y_2\} = \{1, 0\}$. The sample space of the joint distribution $x + y$ is given by the set of pairs

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$$\{x_1, y_1\}, \{x_1, y_2\}$$

$$\{x_2, y_1\}, \{x_2, y_2\}$$

Proof

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[(x + y)^2] - \{E[x + y]\}^2$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[(x^2 + 2xy + y^2)] - \{E[x] + E[Y]\}^2$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[x^2] + E[y^2] + E[2xy] - \{E[x] + E[Y]\}^2$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[x^2] + E[y^2] + E[2xy] - E[x]^2 - E[y]^2 - 2E[x][y]$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[x^2] + E[y^2] + 2E[x][y] - E[x]^2 - E[y]^2 - 2E[x][y]$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = E[x^2] - E[x]^2 + E[y^2] - E[y]^2$$

$$\text{Var}[x + y] = \text{Var}[x] + \text{Var}[y]$$