



Fall 2026

WEEK 1 STUDY GUIDE

The Big Picture

We begin the course with a formal mathematical framework for defining and combining probabilities.

- The basic rules of probability are the same as those for proportions. To find a probability, you have to figure out an appropriate combination of rules to use.
- Numerical calculations quickly get large. Even in this age of powerful computers, mathematical approximation is often important for computation and insight.
- One of the rules enables you to update probabilities in the light of new information. This is a fundamentally important skill in data science.
- Assumptions matter, for identifying the right methods to use as well as for interpreting results.

Week At a Glance

Wed 8/26	Thu 8/27	Fri 8/28
[No sections]	Lecture	Mega Sections
	HW 1 (Due 5 PM Mon Aug 31)	HW 1 Party 1 PM - 4 PM
	Work through Chapter 1 Skim Sections 2.1, 2.3, 2.5	Work through Chapter 2, especially the examples

Reading, Practice, and Class Meetings

Book	Topic	Lecture: Professor	Sections: TAs	Optional Additional Practice
1.1, 1.2	Probability as a function - 1.1 defines the domain - 1.2 shows how to find probabilities under the assumption of equally likely outcomes	Thursday 8/27 1.3-1-5 with an emphasis on the math more than the computation Intro to 2.1, 2.3, 2.5: The rules; these are just the rules of proportions, which you will mostly self-study for now.	Friday 8/28 - Conditioning and Bayes: review of Data 8 ideas; assumptions and their consequences - “Balls in boxes”: how this helps with visualization in numerous problems - Exponential approximation - Discussion will be based on Chapter 2 Ex 8, and Chapter 1 Ex 7 and 4 (yes, in that order).	Chapter 1 1, 2, 10
1.3, 1.4	An example of an exact calculation, using the product rule of counting - 1.3 has the general calculation - 1.4 has the numerical computation in a special case, and a graph that inspires a search for an identifiable functional form			Chapter 2 1, 5, 6 If you have time, try 14. It’s popular with quant interviewers.
1.5	The first of many exponential approximations in the course			
2.1, 2.3	The axioms and basic rules - 2.1 is about addition, and hence also subtraction - 2.3 is about multiplication, and hence also division which is a way to calculate conditional probabilities			
2.5	Bayes’ Rule: updating probabilities by conditioning			
2.2, 2.4	Examples. Don’t just read them – work them out			