



Fall 2026

WEEK 2 STUDY GUIDE

The Big Picture

We continue to develop the basic toolkit: the rules of probability, how to work with numerical random quantities and collections of events.

- In Data 8 you saw a *statistic* defined as a number that you compute based on a sample. The more general concept is that of a *random variable*, which is a function on the outcome space.
- *Distributions* describe how probability is spread over a set of values. Every random variable has a distribution; pairs and larger groups have *joint distributions*.
- There is a formula for the chance of the union of overlapping events, with a famous application.
- If there is a complicated dependence structure, you might not be able to calculate exact or even approximate chances. Sometimes the best you can do is find *bounds* for a chance.
- *Symmetry* in random permutations and simple random samples greatly simplifies calculations.

Week At a Glance

Mon 8/31	Tue 9/1	Wed 9/2	Thu 9/3	Fri 9/4
	Lecture	Sections	Lecture	Mega Sections
HW 1 Due 5 PM HW 2 (Due 12 noon Tue 9/8)				HW 2 Party 1-4
Lab 1 (Part A due 12 noon Tue 9/8)			Lab 1A Party (+ office hours) 4-6	
Skim Sec 3.1, 3.2	Work through Chapter 3, skim Chapter 4	Work through Chapter 4, skim Sec 5.1	Work through Sec 5.1 and Sec 5.4, skim Sec 5.2 and Sec 5.3	Work through Ch 5

Reading, Practice, and Class Meetings

Book	Topic	Lectures: Prof. A.	Sections: TAs	Optional Additional Practice
Ch 3	Random variables - 3.1 has the definition - 3.2 defines the distribution of the random variable, and shows how to find probabilities of events based on the random variable - 3.3 shows how random variables can have two kinds of equality	Tuesday 9/1 - Some discussion about ideas seen in Chapter 2 (see the Week 1 Guide) - The key ideas in Chapters 3 and 4, focusing more on the math than the code	Wednesday 9/2 - Worksheet of selected HW 2 problems, with discussion of problem-solving principles and reasoning. This is crucial for recognizing when to use similar methods.	Chapter 3 3, 4, 5, 7
Ch 4	Pairs of random variables - 4.1 is the two-variable version of 3.2: joint distributions, and finding probabilities - 4.2 has examples you should study - 4.3 shows how to extract the behavior of one random variable from the combined behavior of two - 4.4 shows how to update chances for one random variable given the value of another - 4.5 looks at how joint distributions help us understand dependence and independence; note the acronym “iid”			Chapter 4 Do as much as you can of all five exercises.

Chapters 3-4 aren't difficult technically, but they contain many basic concepts and essential terminology.

(continued below)

Reading, Practice, and Class Meetings

Book	Topic	Lectures: Prof. A.	Sections: TAs	Optional Additional Practice
Ch 5	- 5.1: Simple bounds for the chance of an overlapping union, to be used when we can't find the chances of the overlaps - 5.2: The exact chance of a union, overlapping or not. This is called the <i>inclusion-exclusion</i> formula and requires that we be able to find the chances of the overlaps. - 5.3: One of the most famous applications of inclusion-exclusion is to <i>fixed points of a random permutation</i>, also known as <i>matches</i> - 5.4: Summary of results on symmetry in random permutations and simple random sampling, some of which we'll have used earlier	Thursday 9/3 - Some discussion of bounds and symmetry - Main focus on inclusion-exclusion and the matching problem	Friday 9/4 - Bounds, symmetry, and inclusion-exclusion: Chapter 5 Ex 3, 1, 12, 9; comparisons with other exercises	Chapter 5 5, 6, 10, 13

Chapter 5 is more technically detailed than Chapters 3-4.