

What Are My Chances?

Grades 2-5

Playing games that involve chance is one way to introduce children to the meaning of probability.

What You Need

- * Two coins
- * Paper and pencil

What to Do

Play these coin games with your child:

- * Flip one coin. Every time it comes up heads, your child gets 1 point. Every time it comes up tails, you get 1 point. Flip it 50 times. Tally by 5s to make it easier to keep track of scores. The player with the most points wins. If one player has 10 points more than the other person does, he scores an extra 10 points. Ask your child to notice how often this happens. (*Not very often!*)

- * Flip two coins. If the coins come up two tails or two heads, your child scores 1 point. If it comes up heads and tails, you get 1 point. After 50 flips, see who has more points. Ask your child if he thinks this game is fair. What would happen if one player received 2 points for every double heads and the other player received 1 point for everything else. Would that be fair?

- * Flip one coin. Then flip the other. If the second coin matches the first coin, your child scores 1 point. If the second coin doesn't match the first coin, you receive 1 point. Try this 50 times. Is the result the same as in the previous game?

Call attention to the role that probability plays in everyday life by pointing out how it is used in TV weather forecasts or sports stories.