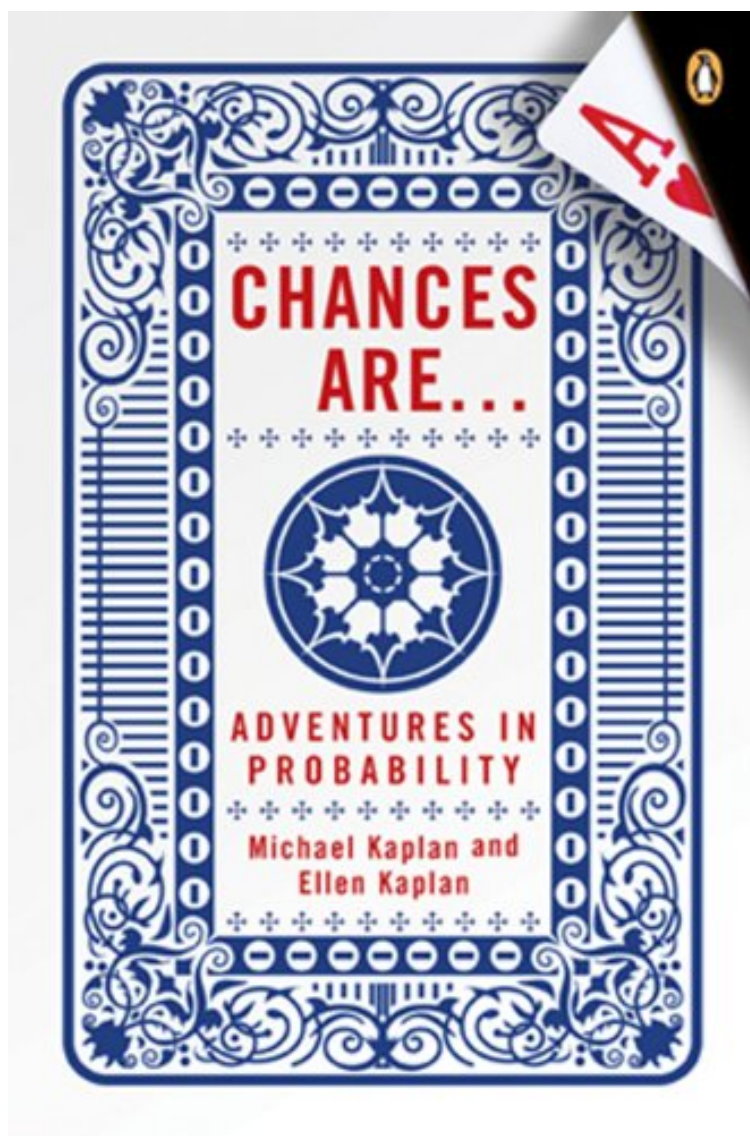


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# Chances Are . . . : Adventures in Probability



*Par Michael Kaplan, Ellen Kaplan  
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**Description :** Description du produit A compelling journey through history, mathematics, and philosophy, charting humanity's struggle against randomness. Our lives are played out in the arena of chance. However little we recognize it in our day-to-day existence, we are always riding the odds, seeking out certainty but settling reluctantly for likelihood, building our beliefs on the shadowy props of probability. Chances Are is the story of man's millennia-long search for the tools to manage the recurrent but unpredictable to help us prevent, or at least mitigate, the seemingly random blows of disaster, disease, and injustice. In these pages, we meet the brilliant individuals who developed the first abstract formulations of probability, as well as the intrepid visionaries who recognized their practical applications from gamblers to military strategists to meteorologists to medical researchers, from blackjack to our own mortality.

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From Publishers Weekly: "Everything is possible, yet only one thing happens": this is the essence of probability, quantifying what could happen. Filmmaker Michael Kaplan and Ellen Kaplan (coauthor of *The Art of the Infinite*) trace probability back to its original conception in the 1660s (by a gambler, of course) and show how it affected not only science, which would be impossible without it, but also religion and philosophy. Many pioneers of the math that grew into statistics were trying to define the divine; the inventor of combinatorics, for example, was a medieval missionary seeking to convert Muslims by showing that any statement combining the qualities of God was true in the Christian faith. This book rigorously develops its math from first principles with a passion that would make even an amateur heady with the possibilities contained within a bell curve. The authors explore the promise of the math of probabilities through its most powerful modern applications, from determining the effectiveness of new drugs to weighing the merits of combat strategies. In all these cases, the authors place the study of probability firmly in the context of humanity's ongoing struggle to assign meaning to randomness. Never before has statistics been treated with such awe and devotion.

From *The New Yorker*: "This fascinating layman's trek through probability theory, from its roots in dice games in the seventeenth century to its role in modern-day thermodynamics, tackles humanity's innate need to seek order in even the most chaotic phenomena. The authors, a mother-and-son team, address simple problems (How many shuffles make a deck of cards truly random? At least seven) and more complex ones (Can time move backward? Yes, but it's unlikely). They do not avoid mathematical equations, but both have backgrounds in the humanities, and their sense of whimsy—"Once you know that daisies usually have an odd number of petals, you can get anyone to love you" allows them to draw stimulating conclusions. Copyright 2006 The New Yorker