

LEARNING and TEACHING POINTS

for Chapter 29 Probability

Introduce probability by getting children in small groups to write down events that might occur in the next 12 months and then to rank them in order from least likely to most likely. Focus on the language of comparison: *more likely than* and *less likely than*.

'One die; two or more dice.' You might as well get it right!

Get children to describe events that might occur with such labels as *impossible*, *almost impossible*, *not very likely*, *evens*, *fairly likely*, *almost certain*, *certain*.

Emphasize the idea that probability does not tell you anything about what will happen next, but predicts what will happen in the long run.

You can introduce the idea of measuring probability on a numerical scale informally to primary children, by getting them subjectively to assign points out of 100 (that is, percentage scores) to various events that might occur, with 0 points for impossible and 100 points for certain.

One obvious application of probability is to betting and lotteries. Be aware that some parents will hold strong moral views about gambling, so handle discussion of probability in a way that is sensitive to different perspectives on this subject.

The material discussed here on experimental and theoretical probability would be excellent as extension material for children at the top end of a primary school.

Children in primary school can discuss the risk associated with various actions and can begin to understand how an assessment of the probability of a particular outcome and the value of the reward associated with it might modify their behaviour and choices.