

PLAYING THE ODDS

Each of the questions below asks you to imagine a hypothetical situation. Use the statistics provided in each example to answer the questions. Round all answers off to the nearest whole number.

1. Imagine that everyone in your classroom is a smoker. Recent studies show that 88 percent of smokers will develop some form of emphysema, a lung disorder that makes breathing difficult. How many classmates will be affected by some form of emphysema?
Studies also show that 27 percent of all smokers will develop severe emphysema, making it hard for them to do simple things like walking or blowing out a match. How many classmates will develop severe emphysema?

2. Imagine that everyone in your classroom smokes a cigarette for the first time. Studies show that one out of every three first-time smokers will become a long-term smoker. How many people in your class will become long-term smokers?
Studies also show that 52 percent of long-term smokers will die early because of tobacco. How many people in your class will die because of a habit that started with that first cigarette?

3. Nearly 500,000 people die each year from tobacco-related diseases. Consider the population of your school. How many student bodies the size of your school's would it take to equal the number of people who die each year because of tobacco?

4. If the people who die each year because of tobacco were placed in a line, how many miles long would the line be? Allow two feet for each person. One mile equals 5,280 feet.

5. If someone asked you to bet a dollar on a million-dollar lottery, you would probably do it without even asking about the odds. If someone asked you to bet everything you own on a lottery, you probably wouldn't do it unless you knew your chances. On a separate sheet of paper, write an essay in which you answer these questions:
 - Why do you think people try cigarettes without knowing the odds of their survival?
 - Why do people continue to smoke after they know the odds?
 - Why do so many young people seem unconcerned about the health risks of smoking?
 - Why do you think the damage caused by cigarettes is easy to ignore?
 - Do you think smoking is worth the risk?