

## Re: The Double or One Half Paradox

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math/2004-07/1323.html>

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**From:** Carl Cotner (*cfc-usenet\_at\_tau.aauetiu.net*)

**Date:** 07/06/04

Date: Tue, 6 Jul 2004 11:50:37 -0400

On 2004-07-05, David C Ullrich <ullrich@math.okstate.edu> wrote:

> *On Mon, 5 Jul 2004 14:10:54 -0400, Carl Cotner*

>> *<cfc-usenet@tau.aauetiu.net> wrote:*

>>

>>*In any case, you are also missing the discussion of the definition of*

>>*the word "random", in which I gave it a standard definition that does*

>>*not depend on the word or concept "distribution".*

>

> *I didn't miss the definition you quoted from the OED. I*

> *don't see how that definition has any mathematical*

> *content – you said you assume that the word "random"*

> *usually means something like that in a colloquial*

> *description of a problem, but I don't think it*

> *usually does, I think it usually refers to*

> *the notion as in probability. (Or to a fuzzy*

> *understanding of that notion.)*

I do not recognize the meaning of my words in your paraphrase. :-)

Just to be clear: I was not making a statistical statement about the meaning of the word "random" in real math problems; I was attempting to make a cautionary statement about assuming too much into the meaning and implications of the word "random" in \*recreational\* math puzzles. It often leads to difficulties of one sort or another.

By the way, neither I nor the original poster used the word or concept "random" to describe the amounts in the envelope problems. Actually, you were the one who used the word with respect to the amounts in the second problem (in the middle of an incorrect statement).

Regards,

Carl