

PROBABILITY: THE LANGUAGE OF RISK ASSESSMENT

DIRECTIONS: After completion of the reading lesson answer the following questions in complete sentences. Use your own words whenever possible.

1. Besides using people's feelings about risk, what else do scientists do in order to "discuss and compare risks related to science and technology" in a more scientific manner?

2. What is "probability"? How are most probabilities about everyday activities determined?

3. Why are the probabilities of health and safety risks to humans more difficult to determine than those of everyday activities? Give two reasons.

4. What is the "common rule" used by regulators in determining the human health risks associated with a new technology? Discuss one reason why this rule may not always be accurate or certain.

5. Besides the "quantifiable" (countable) viewpoint provided by probabilities, how else is the "acceptability of risk" determined? (Use the example of the person and the umbrella for insight.)

6. Why are there limitations to using probability as a tool for discussing risk when it comes to making major societal decisions about risks?
