

Same word, different meaning

These words are used every day AND in mathematics, and the two meanings are not the same. Mixing them up is the most common reason a good answer goes wrong.

WORD	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	WHAT IT MEANS IN MATHS	WATCH OUT
fair	Kind. Treating people equally.	Every outcome has the same chance.	<i>A fair die is not a nice die.</i>
chance	A possibility, or an opportunity.	A number between 0 and 1 measuring how likely something is.	<i>"No chance" means 0.</i>
likely	Probably. A vague guess.	Above $\frac{1}{2}$ on the probability scale.	<i>Say the number, not just the word.</i>
even	A number divisible by 2.	In "even chance", it means equally likely — nothing to do with even numbers.	<i>The classic trap.</i>
random	Strange, unexpected, out of nowhere.	Every outcome has a known chance, and none is chosen on purpose.	<i>Random does not mean unpredictable.</i>
expected	What I reckon will happen.	Probability multiplied by the number of trials.	<i>You will not get exactly this.</i>
average	Ordinary, or typical, or "not very good".	A single number summarising a data set. In Year 6 this is the mode.	<i>Say which average you mean.</i>
range	A set of things to choose from.	The gap from the smallest value to the largest.	<i>It is one number, not two.</i>
mode	A way of doing something. A setting.	The value that appears most often.	<i>Mode = most.</i>
trial	A test, or something in a courtroom.	One spin, one roll, one draw or one toss.	<i>2000 trials is 2000 rolls.</i>