

**Math 425, Section 7, Winter, 2003: Introduction to Probability
Writing Supplement**

Fifth Assignment:

This assignment might be a hard one because it is directed somewhat away from where we have been heading with our previous writing exercises. This time I want you to start on a project from another genre of writing, akin to a laboratory notebook. This is writing that will be addressed to you and your immediate co-workers.

I would you like you to write a brief, about four pages, notebook on how you worked out the problems in the third group problem set. In general, you should approach such a set of problems in layers or stages. First, look at them yourself, away from the group. Evaluate each problem in your notebook: say what you think it is about, inventory what you think you know that might be relevant to solving it, and record any first attempts you have to solve it. Then, as you meet as a group, keep notes on how the solution progresses: who makes comments that clarify things for you, why did they add anything different which you might have missed. Try analyzing other people's solution strategies. Finally, attach a copy of the solution set the group turns in. You don't have to be the secretary, but you do have to look at the writing before it is turned in. The last part of the notebook should be your quick evaluation of whether the written record captures the thinking of yourself or the group on the problems. If you like, you could add a few lines of critique of the group process at the end. This is certainly allowed to be favorable or negative as you see fit. In either case please support your comments.

You are free here to develop a style which you think fits what you are trying to do in this project. One possibility is simply to keep a scientific diary. This does have the advantage that it makes it easy to keep track of the sequential nature of things as you progress on the problems. Most of this effort can help not only to elucidate stages along the way (partial solutions, or first ideas) so that you can come back to them later in an effective and efficient manner, but also to give you an opportunity to reflect on how you solve problems, your thought processes, and perhaps to give you a sense of what things help you in this process.