

A Popular Statistical Term Coined with the Formula X's Y

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Our language is sprinkled with terms coined with the formula X's Y. There is baker's dozen and bull's eye, and deadman's hand (a poker hand). There are diseases and syndromes and body parts named after physicians (Parkinson's disease); there are theorems, laws, and numbers named after scientists (Avogadro's number); there are plants named after botanists (Ahnfelt's seaweed); and there are places named after explorers, though some are named after no one ("no man's land" :-).

A popular statistical term coined with the formula X's Y is Occam's razor. I provide all there is to know about it, below.

Ockham's razor or Occam's razor

PRONUNCIATION:

(OK-ehmz RAY-zuhr)

MEANING:

noun: The maxim that the simplest of explanations is more likely to be correct.

ETYMOLOGY:

After William of Ockham (c. 1288-1348), a logician, and theologian, who is credited with the idea.



NOTES:

Ockham's razor states "entities should not be multiplied needlessly". It's also called the principle of parsimony. It's the idea that other things being equal, between two theories the simpler one is preferable. Why razor? Because Ockham's razor shaves away unnecessary assumptions. Ockham's razor has applications in fields as diverse as medicine, religion, crime, and literature. Medical students are told, for example, "When you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras."

REFERENCE:

http://wordsmith.org/words/ockhams_razor.html

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