

## QUESTION #5

# I'm Not Going to Be a Statistician—Why Should I Be Taking a Course in Statistics?

**T**his answer goes beyond the most obvious one—that you may need to take a statistics course to fulfill degree requirements, or you are studying for a major exam and part of your knowledge is supposed to be in this area.

Actually, there are at least four other good reasons for taking a course in statistics.

First, this is a challenging and intellectually interesting topic that you may not have experienced in your previous educational efforts. It is probably a discipline that you have not yet encountered, and it can challenge you and help stretch your skills—always a praiseworthy endeavor.

Second, in a society that increasingly bases decisions on data and other evidence, an understanding of statistics is invaluable. It will prepare you to adeptly understand patterns and trends in the data and use them to make informed decisions. You will be the one who asks whether data are available to understand which medical treatment might be best, why one way of approaching math instructions is better than another, or whether electronic textbooks are more effective than print ones. Statistics is a set of tools that shows you how to pose and answer any research-based question you might want to ask.

Third, you will be a better-informed citizen who is ready to interact intelligently and capably with your fellow students, your teachers, and others. When the results from a journal article are discussed or when a conclusion is offered regarding an interesting social, medical, or behavioral (among others) outcome, you will understand what is being said and be able to respond perceptively and in an informed way.

Finally, statistics coursework is a terrific way to prepare for further educational and professional opportunities such as graduate work or, if you are already a graduate student, future work activities. All done with your schooling? Then understanding statistics gives you more potential for advancement in your professional field.

*More questions? See questions #1, #2, and #6.*