Statistics: A Very Short Introduction

By David J. Hand

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Statistical ideas and methods underlie just about every aspect of modern life. From randomized clinical trials in medical research, to statistical models of risk in banking and hedge fund industries, to the statistical tools used to probe vast astronomical databases, the field of statistics has become centrally important to how we understand our world. But the discipline underlying all these is not the dull statistics of the popular imagination. Long gone are the days of manual arithmetic manipulation. Nowadays statistics is a dynamic discipline, revolutionized by the computer, which uses advanced software tools to probe numerical data, seeking structures, patterns, and relationships. This Very Short Introduction sets the study of statistics in context, describing its history and giving examples of its impact, summarizes methods of gathering and evaluating data, and explains the role played by the science of chance, of probability, in statistical methods. The book also explores deep philosophical issues of induction--how we use statistics to discern the true nature of reality from the limited observations we necessarily must make.

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David J. Hand is Professor of Mathematics, Imperial College, London, and the author of *Information Generation: How Data Rule Our World; Pattern Detection and Discovery*; and many other works.

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