



# Luck and chance

## Introduction

**Explore your child's thinking about events in their world.**

We all take slightly different views about luck and chance and why things happen the way they do. These views can influence how we feel about ourselves and play a part in our feelings of happiness. As children get older they construct their own views about why things turn out the way they do.

## You'll need

Dice or a coin.

## Activity

Find a time when your child is relaxed and happy to talk with you. Show your child the dice or coin and explain to them how people play guessing games about what will happen when the dice are rolled or the coin tossed.

- Ask your child whether they think they can get two equal numbers when they roll the dice or toss a coin to get three 'heads' in a row.
- Get them to roll the dice or toss the coin.
- Ask why they think they did, or did not get the target. Follow this up with questions like: whether they were just unlucky/lucky? Could they do this again? Is there anything they can do to help them get their target?
- See whether they would like another try, and ask some similar questions.

- Lastly, talk about whether they think some children could do better at rolling the dice or tossing the coin than others. Ask them why this is, are some children luckier than others?

Before you start the game try to predict what your child will answer.

### **The explanation**

Let's imagine you asked a mathematician the questions you asked your child about the dice or coin. The mathematician would say that we cannot 'make' our own luck and we can't do anything to make a particular number come up. He or she might compare rolling dice to trying to win the lottery; we can't do anything to make our numbers come up, but of course the person who wins is 'lucky' because by chance they win the prize. According to the mathematician's view, the outcome of rolling dice is random, just another example of the unpredictable world in which we live.

Not everyone feels this is the case. Some people feel lucky, they either feel luckier than others, or that for a special period of time they will have a 'run' of luck. People often think they can make this happen by doing something, like blowing on the dice, rolling them a special way, or even thinking hard about the number they want. However, most experiments that have investigated this possibility haven't been able to show these effects.

- What do you think about these two different explanations?
- Do you think your views have influenced those of your child?

Your child's answers should give you a better idea about the way they think about luck and chance. Their views are part of learning about what things they can change and what they can't. Children learn from observation and from the things people say. This is why it's interesting to see how much your child's views agree with yours. Remember, it takes a long time for children (and adults) to understand issues about chance, luck and whether we can change the outcome of things – and we, just like children, are learning more about these things as we go through our life.