

## Student Worksheet

### DIRECTIONS

Read the following news story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions. Use additional paper if necessary.

### STORY

**Math Madness: Statistics Might Help Choose NCAA Brackets**, 03/17/08

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june08/ncaa\\_3-17.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june08/ncaa_3-17.html)

### READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. **What happens each March that allows fans to participate indirectly in college basketball?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. **What are the odds of choosing the winner of each and every game in the tournament? Has this ever happened?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. **What is one way of improving your bracket? What information should you consider?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. **What can limit a statistician's ability to predict a winning bracket?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **What must you do in order to have a better chance of winning a pool with a large number of people?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

**1. What are some problems statisticians face when trying to predict real-world outcomes?**

**2. What are some parallels between the ways the statisticians in the article try to predict the outcome the men's NCAA basketball tournament and how political analysts try to predict the outcome of an election? Using this year's presidential election as an example, make a list of ways an analyst might use past elections to predict the upcoming one.**

**3. What other types of real-world events can be better understood by looking at statistics? How do economists, advertisers and business analysts use statistics?**

**4. Interview adults in different jobs—do they make predictions at work? Do they use statistics, intuition or something else to make predictions?**

**Extension Activity**

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra ([extra@newshour.org](mailto:extra@newshour.org)). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.