



# Clinical Versus Statistical Prediction: A Theoretical Analysis and a Review of the Evidence

*Paul E Meehl*

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*Clinical versus Statistical Prediction* is Paul Meehl's famous examination of benefits and disutilities related to the different ways of combining information to make predictions. It is a clarifying analysis as relevant today as when it first appeared.

A major methodological problem for clinical psychology concerns the relation between clinical and actuarial methods of arriving at diagnoses and predicting behavior. Without prejudging the question as to whether these methods are fundamentally different, we can at least set forth the obvious distinctions between them in practical applications. The problem is to predict how a person is going to behave: What is the most accurate way to go about this task?

*Clinical versus Statistical Prediction* offers a penetrating and thorough look at the pros and cons of human judgment versus actuarial integration of information as applied to the prediction problem. Widely considered the leading text on the subject, Paul Meehl's landmark analysis is reprinted here in its entirety, including his updated preface written forty-two years after the first publication of the book.

This classic work is a must-have for students and practitioners interested in better understanding human behavior, for anyone wanting to make the most accurate decisions from all sorts of data, and for those interested in the ethics and intricacies of prediction. As Meehl puts it, "*When one is dealing with human lives and life opportunities, it is immoral to adopt a mode of decision-making which has been demonstrated repeatedly to be either inferior in success rate or, when equal, costlier to the client or the taxpayer.*"

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