

BIOSTATS 640 – Intermediate Biostatistics

Frequently Asked Questions

Topic 1 FAQ 2 – Review of BIOSTATS 540 Introductory Biostatistics

Review of Logarithms and Exponents

An example of logarithms in everyday life

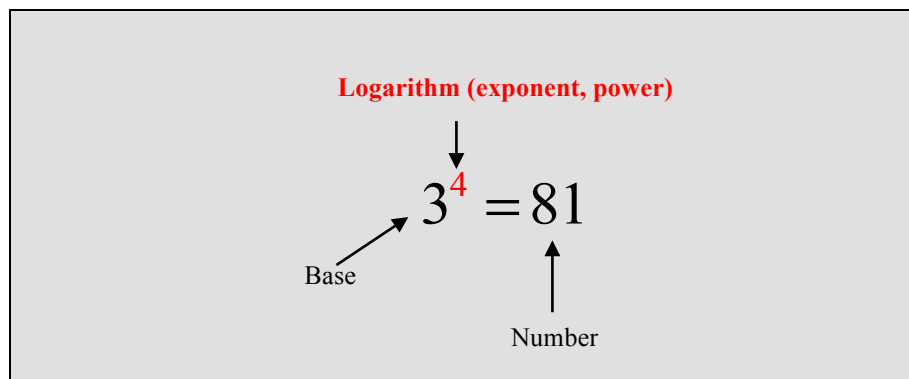
- In the Richter scale for earthquakes, an increase of one point on the scale corresponds to an increase of 10 times more energy released. The Richter scale for earthquakes is a base 10 logarithmic scale.

Logarithms and Exponents are Useful in Biostatistics

- When a distribution is skewed (as for example when it has a long right tail), it is sometimes hard to see the structure in the data. In such instances, taking logarithms of the data and visualizing the data on the logarithmic scale will make it much easier to identify structures in the data.
- Sometimes, the mathematical calculations required in an analysis of data are easier to do using techniques of logarithms and exponents.
- Maximum likelihood estimation (briefly introduced in this course) utilizes the natural logarithm of likelihood functions.

Introduction to the language and structure of logarithms

- The word “logarithm” is just another word for “exponent” or “power”. For example, in the expression $3^4 = 81$, the digit “4” can be called a logarithm.



- We live in the world of **base 10**. We work with 10 digits (they are 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9). Thus, when we count, we count 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and we want to increment again, the next count has to be 10.
- Computers live in the world of **base 2**. They work with two digits (they are 0 and 1). When they count, they count 0, 1 and when they want to increment again, the next count has to be 10. So here's how it proceeds.

Number in Base 10	Its representation in Base 2
0	0
1	1
2	10
3	11
4	100
5	101
6	110
7	111
8	1000
9	1001

Some Examples

		Base	Logarithm (exponent)	Number (antilogarithm)
$2^3 = 8$	$\log_2 [8] = 3$	2	3	8
$7^2 = 49$	$\log_7 [49] = 2$	7	2	49
$b^0 = 1$	$\log_b [1] = 0$	b	0	1

Laws of Logarithms

1. $\log_b(MN) = \log_b(M) + \log_b(N)$
2. $\log_b(M/N) = \log_b(M) - \log_b(N)$
3. $\log_b(M^p) = (p) \log_b(M)$
4. **Common** logarithms are those for which the base $b = 10$. There are two notations:

$$\begin{array}{l} \log_{10} [\] \\ \log [\] \end{array} \quad \leftarrow \text{Hint: This is the better notation to use.}$$

5. **Natural** logarithms are those for which the base $b = e = 2.71828$. There are two notations:

$$\begin{array}{l} \log_e [\] \\ \ln [\] \end{array} \quad \leftarrow \text{Hint: This is the better notation to use.}$$

Laws of Exponents

1. $[a^p][a^q] = [a^{p+q}]$
2. $a^p / a^q = a^{p-q}$
3. $(a^p)^q = a^{pq}$
4. $a^0 = 1$ provided a is not zero.
5. $a^{-p} = 1/a^p$
6. $(ab)^p = (a^p)(b^p)$

Worked Examples

1. **Q – Find the common logarithm (base 10) of 36. Call it x .**

A - 1.5563

Solution:

“common logarithm (base 10) of 36. Call it x ”. $\rightarrow \log_{10}[36] = x \rightarrow 10^x = 36$

From a table of logarithms, or using a calculator, obtain $x=1.5563$

2. **Q - In base 10, what is the antilogarithm of 0.91166? Call this x .**

A - 8.1651

Solution:

“antilogarithm of 0.91166” $\rightarrow \text{antilog}_{10}(0.91196) = x \rightarrow 10^{0.91196} = x$

Using a calculator, obtain $x=8.1651$