

## ROUNDING

*First time AP stats teacher; I had a student ask me today "What should we round off to on the AP test?" she was referring to a free response question on a standard YMS test I gave where the answer was .1967 and it asked for a percent and I accepted 20%... How precise should students be?*

Rounding - there's no standard. We round off to reasonable values that preserve the meaning we're looking for without overstating what we know.

\* It's silly to report percents to more than one decimal place and usually whole numbers suffice. If I report that 78% of drivers wear seatbelts, do you gain any greater insight by knowing it's 77.68%?

\* If we have measured heights to the nearest inch, it makes no sense to say the mean is 67.247 inches. It's common to report means to one more decimal place than the data, and SDs to one more than that – but there's no set rule.

\* We generally give z-scores to 2 decimal places, probably a carryover from the olden days when we had to use tables. Students need to learn to recognize answers that are "close" as okay-different rounding decisions, use of tables vs technology, and working thru formulas rather than using calculator procedures can all make minor differences in answers. We have a saying in my class - "Close enough for statisticians."

Dave Bock  
bock@htva.net