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# Mode

By [Robert Niles](#)

The **mode** is the value in a set that occurs the most often. That's it.

Pretty easy, huh? No math here, no need to drag out the calculator. Just count 'em up, and whoever has the most tally marks wins. That's the mode.

So when would you use this in a story? Almost never.

Sorry about that. Yeah, I know, it stinks - the easier the math, the less useful it is to you. But there are times when you can slip the mode into a story. Let's say you were writing about Halloween costumes, for example. Wouldn't it be nice to include which costume was the most popular at a given store, or something like that?

That's when you would use the mode in a story - as the most popular example from a list of... whatever. (Halloween costumes sold in a store, candy brands collected trick or treating, brands of toilet paper used to TP houses, etc.)

So, to wrap this up, here's when you would use the [median](#), the [mean](#) and the mode in a news story.

*Use the median* to describe how much money the typical customer spent at a Halloween costume shop.

*Use the mean* to describe how much money the Halloween costume shop collected per customer this season. (This number usually will be larger than the median, because it is skewed upward by a few big customers - rich guys who want to dress up their whole office like the cast of "Star Wars" or something equally weird.)

*Use the mode* to describe what was the most popular single costume sold at the shop this season.

I hope that wasn't too scary.

## About Robert Niles

Robert Niles lives in Southern California, where he works as a journalist and website editor.

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