



Interpreting correlations

This activity will help you to...

- Interpret correlations in terms of the underlying relationships they represent
- Consider directionality and third variables as sources of difficulty when interpreting correlations

How can we explain these relationships?

In the table below are some real correlational relationships that have been established through research. For each one, suggest the underlying nature of the relationship. This first one is easy, but the remainder are a bit more challenging.

A moderate positive correlation between the number of times a student is praised by a teacher and her/his final mark in that subject.

A weak positive correlation between the number of violent films a person has watched and their own level of aggression.

A strong positive correlation between ice cream sales and accidental deaths by drowning (in the UK).

An almost perfect correlation between the number of Christian churches in a city and the number of crimes committed each year.