

Statistics expert says consider the odds ahead of Friday's Mega Millions lottery

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Keep these ideas in mind when contemplating the odds of winning Friday's Mega Millions jackpot. Credit: Unsplash.

With Friday night's Mega Millions jackpot having ballooned to \$1.02 billion, people in eligible states across the country are no doubt

considering purchasing a ticket or two.

Virginia Tech statistics expert J.P. Morgan is available for [interview](#) and offers a few comparisons to keep in [mind](#) given the astronomical chance of winning the jackpot stands at 1 in 302,575,350.

"Now, 303 million seems like a pretty big number, but still, it can be hard to think about," Morgan said. "What does one chance in 303 million really mean?"

\$5 bills

"Suppose you travel to the equator and when you arrive, you lay a \$5 [bill](#) on the ground, right along the equatorial line. Then you lay down another, then another, and so on, end-to-end, until you go all around the earth and come back to your starting point. When you finish, someone will randomly select exactly one of those \$5 bills. It is your job to guess which one. If you are right, you get to keep all of the \$5 bills!"

"Your chance of a successful guess is just a little bit better than that of winning the Mega Millions jackpot. The amount you will win if correct is about \$1.3 billion, just a little more than Friday's Mega Millions lottery."

575 years

"Suppose it takes you one minute to fill out a Mega Millions entry form and pay to enter. Do this every minute, non-stop, 24 hours a day, until you have entered every possible combination. It will take you 575 years to enter them all."

Upping your odds, slightly

Morgan said there is one thing you should do if you're still unconvinced to forgo playing.

"Try to play a number combination that not many other people will play. That way, should by some fantastic improbability you win, the pot will not be divided among very many people. That is the only strategy that you can invoke to maximize your winnings. Nothing you can do will increase your chance of winning, but you can try to avoid a split pot."

Use your imagination instead

Morgan suggests a final strategy for satisfying your lotto urge while holding onto your cash.

"Perhaps the best way to play Mega Millions is to play in your imagination. Write down your number combination on a piece of paper, then put it in an envelope with a \$2 bill. When the drawing is made, open your envelope. Your combination will not match the winning combination, but you will have \$2! That's two dollars more than if you had actually played."

"Play imaginary Mega Millions twice a week for a year and you will have 'won' \$208! Use it to take your true love out to a nice dinner and count yourself the real winner."

Provided by Virginia Tech

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