

Jane's Children

History and provenance

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September 7, 2026

The two-children problem

The question belongs to the *two-children* or *boy-or-girl* probability-puzzle family. Paindaveine's historical introduction discusses Martin Gardner's 1959 presentation and the role of later variants [1]. Engbers and Hammett give a mathematical treatment of related n -children questions [2].

Why the ambiguity is intentional

Selecting a family known to have a boy and selecting a particular child who turns out to be a boy are different sampling procedures. Changing the observation procedure can change the conditional probability without changing the literal sentence "one child is a boy."

Philip Thomas explicitly intends the camp wording to provoke discussion about that missing observation model. It has therefore been preserved rather than repaired into a single-answer probability exercise. The solution explains several possible completions of the story.

Gardner is an important documented popularizer of the family. I did not establish who first used this exact encounter-at-a-boys'-camp variant, and the note does not attribute it to Gardner without evidence.

Sources

- [1] Davy Paindaveine, Revisiting the Name Variant of the Two-Children Problem (2022), arXiv:2205.12804.
<https://arxiv.org/abs/2205.12804>
- [2] John Engbers and Adam Hammett, The n -Children Problem (author manuscript, 2019).
<https://www.mssc.mu.edu/~john/Research/nChildren.pdf>

Sources checked September 7, 2026. A documented appearance is not necessarily the earliest appearance.