



Assumption

English

FUTURES DEFINITION

Assumptions are implicit or explicit ideas that are taken for granted. Serving as building blocks of the models or frames that humans use when considering an issue, they influence how we act in the present. Assumptions about the future are usually called anticipatory assumptions. These assumptions can be imagined, although they are often rooted in the implicit or explicit ideas of the past and the present. They are important objects of investigation in the futures field.

FULL ENTRY

2. General definition****s

The dictionary definition of assumption or *assume* uses the verb *take* in the description: Something is taken for granted or true without proof, such as a fact or statement, a proposition (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a).

In mathematics, a tacit or implicit assumption is an idea that underlies a logical argument or decision that is “not explicitly voiced nor necessarily understood by the decision maker” (Wikipedia English, n.d.). Both the dictionary definition and the mathematics interpretation of assumption relate closely to the futures use of the term.

For theoretical work in *social science*, the SAGE Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research (Beck et al., 2004) defines assumptions as “the starting axioms and postulates that yield testable implications spanning broad domains,” noting that assumptions are ‘ubiquitous’ in social science. In the context of *scientific theory* in particular,

assumptions are seen as the heart of the theory, embodying “what Popper (1963) calls ‘guesses’ about nature, guesses to be tested, following Newton's vision, by testing their logical implications” (Beck et al., 2004).

In *philosophy of science*, assumptions are closely connected with views and positions about reality, about what could be known and how, and about value judgments that can be expressed as shared commitments within a certain paradigm. Assumptions could also refer to background conditions for knowledge production or to the core structures and foundational elements of reasoning, which lead to inferences and conclusions.

Another general use of assume in English refers to taking a position, taking control or responsibility, or taking an attitude (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). In the futures field, the terms *responsibility* or *agency* would serve better in these contexts, showing a terminological distinction in the use of assumption.

In Christianity, the term *take* also appears in association with Assumption, which refers to the Virgin Mary being taken up into heaven.

3. Etymology

The verb *assume* comes from the Latin *assumere* or *assūmō*, which combines *ad* (to, towards, at) with *sūmere* or *sūmō* (take). Something is taken up toward something. This Latin root links to the frequent use of *take* in the general definitions above.

Similarly, the German word for assume is *annehmen*, where *nehmen* means to *take* as in Latin *sūmō*.

4. Field of terms

<https://futuresglossary.net/term/assumption/en>