Earlier example: Recall the situation where there are 4 births from 4 mothers (e.g., no twins), and let X denote the number of girls born among the 4 children. Notice that X is a Binomial(4, 1/2) random variable, i.e., n = 4 and p = 1/2.

We can see the use of the Binomial coefficients in this light. Let's recompute the mass of X:

$$p_X(0) = P(X = 0) = \binom{4}{0} (1/2)^0 (1/2)^4 = (1)(1/16) = 1/16 \qquad \text{because } \binom{4}{0} = \frac{4!}{0!4!} = 1$$

$$p_X(1) = P(X = 1) = \binom{4}{1} (1/2)^1 (1/2)^3 = (4)(1/16) = 1/4 \qquad \text{because } \binom{4}{1} = \frac{4!}{1!3!} = 4$$

$$p_X(2) = P(X = 2) = \binom{4}{2} (1/2)^2 (1/2)^2 = (6)(1/16) = 3/8 \qquad \text{because } \binom{4}{2} = \frac{4!}{2!2!} = 6$$

$$p_X(3) = P(X = 3) = \binom{4}{3} (1/2)^3 (1/2)^1 = (4)(1/16) = 1/4 \qquad \text{because } \binom{4}{3} = \frac{4!}{3!1!} = 4$$

$$p_X(4) = P(X = 4) = \binom{4}{4} (1/2)^4 (1/2)^0 = (1)(1/16) = 1/16 \qquad \text{because } \binom{4}{4} = \frac{4!}{4!0!} = 1$$

We note a few things: The mass adds up to 1, as it should 1/16 + 1/4 + 3/8 + 1/4 + 1/16 = 1. Also note that $\binom{n}{j} = \binom{n}{n-j}$. Why? $\binom{n}{j} = \frac{n!}{j!(n-j)!} = \frac{n!}{(n-j)!j!} = \binom{n}{n-j}$. Intuitively this makes sense, because if we have *n* items, and we choose *j* of them, we have avoided exactly n-j items. So we could just switch your view, and (instead) decided which items to avoid (instead of which items to choose), and this is $\binom{n}{n-j}$. For instance, $\binom{4}{1} = \binom{4}{3}$.