



# How Dogs Think: What the World Looks Like to Them and Why They Act the Way They Do

*Stanley Coren*

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## **How Dogs Think: What the World Looks Like to Them and Why They Act the Way They Do** Stanley Coren

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Bestselling author, psychologist, and world-renowned expert on dog behavior and training Dr. Stanley Coren presents the most informative, in-depth, fascinating book yet on dogs. Acclaimed for its solid scientific research and entertaining, eminently readable style, *How Dogs Think* gives you the insight that you need to understand the silly, quirky, and apparently irrational behaviors that dogs demonstrate, as well as those stunning flashes of brilliance and creativity that they also can display. It lets you see through a dog's eyes, hear through his ears, and even sense the world through his nose, as Coren presents a fascinating picture of the way dogs interpret their world and their human companions, and of how they solve problems, learn, and take in new information.

*How Dogs Think* also answers questions about our canine companions that have puzzled many: Can dogs count? Do they have an appreciation of art or music? Can a dog learn how to do something just by watching another dog or even a person do it? Do dogs dream? What is the nature of dog personality? Which behaviors are prewired into your dog, and which can you actually change? And, can dogs actually sense future earthquakes or detect cancer?

With sound behavioral science and numerous funny, informative anecdotes, experiments, and firsthand observations, *How Dogs Think* shatters many common myths and misconceptions about our four-legged friends and reveals a wealth of surprises about their mental abilities and potential. It will make you love and appreciate all dogs—including your own—in wonderful new ways.

## **How Dogs Think: What the World Looks Like to Them and Why They Act the Way They Do Details**

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## **From Reader Review How Dogs Think: What the World Looks Like to Them and Why They Act the Way They Do for online ebook**

### **Weavre says**

Really interesting, but not quite what I expected. Coren offers lots of detailed information about how dogs' senses work for them, exploration about how dogs learn, etc. There's also a bit of philosophical meandering into such questions as, "Do dogs have what can accurately be termed personality?" and, "Can dogs actually appreciate--or even create--art in its various forms?" I was expecting more about how dogs might view specific situations differently from humans ... that's there, to give Coren credit, but just didn't quite meet my expectations. Still, the stuff I hadn't expected to be there held my attention anyway, and overall this was a pretty good read.

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### **Michelle says**

Dogs doing calculus.

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### **Emahlie says**

This book explores the world from a dogs perspective. Coren moves through each sense and draws on research to explain to the reader how dogs perceive the world differently. The book was easy to read and enjoyable, but some of the author's interpretation of research has been called into question.

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### **Craig says**

Dogs aren't color blind. They have 2/3 of the cones that we have and can distinguish blue from a field of grass for example, but not red or orange.

Dogs have been genetically evolved to be much closer to being human than their ancestors. It's not inaccurate to attribute human like qualities to them, ie, "It's just a dog" has little scientific basis. It's only been relatively recent, 1990's that the public is better informed in this way.

Plato was more accurate on the subject than the common person in the 1800's.

(Things took a wrong turn for dogs when Descart contributed uninformed perspective on the subject of dog intelligence and emotions.)

Caveat: I have two very intelligent and sensitive dogs, a rescue herding mix, and a Labrador retriever, so of course I gravitate towards information that confirms my personal bias.

For people who believe everything the Dog Whisperer, Caesar Milan, says, take it with a grain of salt please. I used to think he was the last word, and still appreciate his shows, but some of it is a bit off the mark.

## Guppy says

I loved this book, but I wouldn't recommend you read unless you absolutely love dogs and are fascinated by their behaviour/genetics etc

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## Sera says

Based heavily on science, this book answers questions like "do dogs dream?" and "can dogs count?" (answers are "yes" and "yes", respectively). Answers to questions such as these are based upon scientific studies. The information that Coren provides is very interesting; however, I wish the book was more comprehensive. One of my friends asked a good one - "Why do dogs go in a circle before they lay down?" The book doesn't address this question. However, based on my reading of the book I would answer that the dog is outlining it's small territory before it settles down.

This book is a great read for dog lovers who wish to learn about their dogs and the different ways in which to train them. There is also a great section on aging dogs, which I found to be very interesting. Keeping dogs physically and mentally active (like people) will ensure that they remain sharp and "young".

Overall, I learned that dogs and humans are very similar. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it to others.

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## Candice says

A very interesting book. The author describes the dog's five senses and how they differ from human sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. We have wondered why our dog sometimes can't find the bright orange ball that we toss for him. It turns out that to a dog's eyes bright orange is the worst color possible for a ball if you are throwing it on a grassy field. To the dog, the grass and the ball both appear yellow. Who knew? Another fascinating bit of information - a dog who retrieves a ball is the best candidate for training. Also, dogs with gentle mothers are more easily trained. Besides facts and tidbits such as this, there are anecdotes about the author's dogs and other dogs he has encountered or heard about. Anyone who loves dogs or is curious about them will learn a lot by reading this book. It didn't tell me how to keep Dude from pulling on the leash, but I'm working on it.

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## Brien says

This is a fascinating book! I actually finished reading it a few weeks ago and just haven't gotten around to writing about (sometimes the dissertation does have to take priority).

The book is written by Stanley Coren, Ph.D. Dr. Coren is a psychologist and member of the faculty at the University of British Columbia. He's a renowned and well-known expert on dog psychology and dog-human interactions.

At first, I was a little afraid the book would be something like the drivel that shows up on that Dog Whisperer show. But I was pleasantly surprised. It's a smart, informative and interesting read. Maybe that's because I'm a dog owner and lover as well as a psychologist. But I don't think anyone could read the book and not be impressed with the sensory and perceptual ability of dogs and the One who created them and all else.

The book spends a lot of time discussing the sensory systems and abilities of dogs. A chapter is committed to each of the five senses, all supported with solid empirical research and flavored with interesting anecdotes. For example, did you know young dogs have a heat-sensing ability in their noses that unfortunately disappears as they get older? It's how they find a warm mother when they are blind and deaf newborns.

The book also spends a lot of time discussing the evolution of dogs, paying particular attention to the ways humans have directed that evolution to serve our own purposes. Things like the incredible smelling abilities of hounds, rescue skills of St. Bernard's, the hunting prowess of dachshunds, and herding talents of the herd dogs are explained in evolutionary and genetic terms....all in an understandable way for those who aren't evolutionary psychologists or biologists.

If you're an animal enthusiast or an armchair psychologist, I think you'll like this book. At the very least, it'll fill your mind with lots of facts that might come in handy the next time you play Trivial Pursuit!

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## **Bridget says**

As a new dog owner, I've been interested in books which talk about dog training and thinking. This one has been really interesting. I liked the detail, although at first I thought I might have chosen something a little bit dry, it isn't that way at all. There are lots of examples and anecdotes to keep you reading and to clarify the scientific points being made.

Stanley Coren is a psychologist and he applies his knowledge to dogs by looking at the various senses they have and using that as a basis to look at the behaviour they exhibit. I learnt so much from this book, about breeds and the generalisations we apply to them which are often not actually based on any evidence. I loved hearing about dog physiology especially about their paws and whiskers. As I have a dog which needs grooming, I'm really not keen for him to lose his whiskers anymore! They are removed as a standard part of the 'making him look gorgeous' process, but he needs them to help him navigate the world. There is so much in this book, and a lot of it is about assumptions and things we think we know about dogs and quashing the inaccuracies. A lot of it is about training and the ways dogs learn - or don't learn. I enjoyed learning about the different methods in which dogs are trained and the thoughts about how dogs might be useful to us in the future when we train them to do even more for us.

I learned so much about the way my dog uses his senses and where his behaviour has come from. The things that have been passed down to him from his ancestors and why he does some of the things he does. This book was a great read, I highly recommend it if you are new to dogs or are even just interested in learning more about your dog.

## **Cyndie says**

Glad I read it, there are some interesting pieces on the sensory perception of dogs that I haven't come across before not even in vet school that I am glad to have in my repertoire. However, there is an undue influence on discussion of dominance and submissiveness that doesn't fit our current understanding of how dogs really interact with each other or with us. I worry this would encourage owners to pursue methods of training their animals that would be counterproductive. Again, glad to have read it but it doesn't make it to the top of my list and I would not recommend it to clients.

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## **Jenna says**

How Dogs Think is full of details about the physiology of dogs' perceptions. I've always known that dogs don't see, hear, feel, taste and smell the same way we do, but I didn't have any information on how they do experience the world. After reading this book, I have a much better idea of how dogs experience their environment (and our actions), why they react the way they do and how they communicate back to the world. If you want to learn as much as you can about how your dog interprets and responds to the world around him, add this book to your library (and read it).

One of the most fascinating things I learned about in this book is "neoteny." Neoteny is defined by The American Heritage Science Dictionary as the retention of juvenile characteristics in the adults of a species. In the book, Coren explains that as humans domesticated dogs, dogs evolved to be more similar to wolf puppies than to adult wolves – more playful, friendly, and willing to be trained. Basically, the selective breeding for easygoing personalities has also slowed the maturation process. Breeds with more neoteny are recognizable by one or more of several characteristics such as wider heads, rounder eyes, floppy ears, and shorter muzzles. The higher the number and extent of these characteristics, the more neoteny. Inversely, the more a breed looks like a wolf, the less neoteny exists.

There is an intriguing section on learning periods (neonatal, transition, socialization, and juvenile). The book also discusses personality and genetics in relation to learning, classical and operant conditioning, and even "teaching love."

These are just a couple examples of the interesting and useful topics covered in the 317 pages of this easily readable book. If you share your life with a dog, I hope you'll read How Dogs Think.

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## **Emily says**

Just realized I hadn't put any review for this more than a year later. This book got me through my first hospital stay and kept my mind on something worth thinking about. Thought it needed more than a blank white space with no mention of its huge importance to me.

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## **Sarah Miller says**

This is my new favorite nonfiction book! A lot of scientific terms are used, but they're explained really well.

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### **Dena says**

I read this book because my dog is a bit of a disaster. I am always trying to help her and her neurotic ways. This book was very scientific and interesting, though not much help for my specific disaster. I did learn that water actually has a taste that humans lack the ability to decipher. But dogs can taste water...and they really can smell fear. They are sensitive to the pheromones that fear produces. Hmm...like I said, it was interesting.

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### **Caroline says**

This was really informative and interesting! I don't normally review non-fiction books but I felt compelled to review this one - when I selected it I saw a lot of four star reviews that didn't specify why they gave four stars vs. five (except a few that mentioned that the book was too technical), so here is my reason:

This brought up Ethics in Animal Research issues for me, and while the writer does not outright condone things like purposefully breeding neurotic dogs to determine a genetic predisposition to a personality type, or the removal of brain parts to test memory and learning abilities, it was hard to read the use of such research. Some of the research the writer admits is old and unethical, but a lot of it is still pretty modern.

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