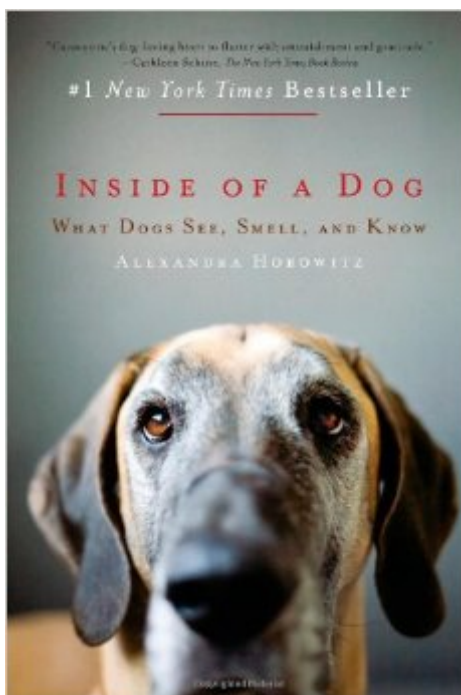


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Inside Of A Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, And Know



Synopsis

The answers will surprise and delight you as Alexandra Horowitz, a cognitive scientist, explains how dogs perceive their daily worlds, each other, and that other quirky animal, the human. Horowitz introduces the reader to dogs' perceptual and cognitive abilities and then draws a picture of what it might be like to be a dog. What's it like to be able to smell not just every bit of open food in the house but also to smell sadness in humans, or even the passage of time? How does a tiny dog manage to play successfully with a Great Dane? What is it like to hear the bodily vibrations of insects or the hum of a fluorescent light? Why must a person on a bicycle be chased? What's it like to use your mouth as a hand? In short, what is it like for a dog to experience life from two feet off the ground, amidst the smells of the sidewalk, gazing at our ankles or knees? *Inside of a Dog* explains these things and much more. The answers can be surprising—once we set aside our natural inclination to anthropomorphize dogs. *Inside of a Dog* also contains up-to-the-minute research on dogs' detection of disease, the secrets of their tails, and their skill at reading our attention—that Horowitz puts into useful context. Although not a formal training guide, *Inside of a Dog* has practical application for dog lovers interested in understanding why their dogs do what they do. With a light touch and the weight of science behind her, Alexandra Horowitz examines the animal we think we know best but may actually understand the least. This book is as close as you can get to knowing about dogs without being a dog yourself.

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Customer Reviews

After having read this book weeks ago (advanced copy), I was left a little unsatisfied. I'd give it 3.5

stars if could. It's more of a cursory glance at canine cognitive ethology rather than a definitive volume, but if you're looking for a good introductory to canine cognitive ethology, this would be a great starter. The anecdotes are sweet and the science is pretty good, and written in a way that the regular Joe Dog Guardian can read it without breaking his brain. HOWEVER. There is one VERY glaring "scientific" experiment that I feel she used for a bad conclusion, a conclusion whose inclusion of the flawed scientific experiment betrays the entire premise of the book itself. In the section on "Hero Dogs" (dogs that have responded to emergencies and saved the lives of their owners and people in general), Horowitz details what she calls a "clever experiment" with dogs where owners conspired with the researchers to feign emergencies in the presence of their dogs, in order to see how the dogs responded. In one scenario, owners were trained to fake a heart attack, complete with gasping, a clutch of the chest, and a dramatic collapse. In the second scenario, owners yelled as a bookcase (made of particleboard) descended on them and seemed to pin them on the ground. In both cases, owners' dogs were present, and the dogs had been introduced to a bystander nearby--perhaps a good person to inform if there has been an emergency. In these contrived setups, the dogs acted with interest and devotion, but not as though there was an emergency..... In other words, not a single dog did anything that remotely helped their owners out of the predicaments.

Scientifically, we might know a lot more about rats than we do about dogs. There are some experimental labs that have dogs as subjects, but lab rats get a lot of scientific attention. Dogs get a lot of domestic attention, but scientific study of dogs, and the ways they get along with humans and with other dogs, has not been a high concern. That may be because we think we know dogs; they are frank and open, and we live closely with them. Alexandra Horowitz thinks we don't know enough, and some of what we know is wrong, and she is out to change our perception of dogs and to do it scientifically. She has to work at making herself a detached observer; she might be a psychologist who has studied cognition in humans, dogs, bonobos, and rhinoceroses, but among the first sentences of her book *_Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know_* (Scribner) is, "I am a dog person." Is she ever. She didn't deliberately make Pumpernickel, her mixed breed live-in friend (she is an advocate for adopting mutts), a subject of scientific study, but Pump was her entrance, for instance, to the dog park where she could film the interactions of other dogs for acute detailed study later. She gives loving anecdotes of the late Pump in every chapter to illustrate her more objective findings, nicely showing how her scientific examination of dogs paid off in her understanding of her own dog. There are people who worry that scientific examination of any

phenomenon takes away the mystery and specialness of the phenomenon, and among the fine lessons in this amusing and enlightening book is that this is far from true. Dogs do not sense the world we do. To take one of Horowitz's examples, a rose for humans is a thing of visual and olfactory beauty, and also has connotations of a love gift.

I expected to love this book. Unfortunately, it leaves a lot to be desired. First, there is surprisingly little information in it. The author touches on each subject so briefly that only the most superficial observations can be made. Dog body language gets maybe two pages and includes such revelations as the meaning of a tucked tail (discomfort and/or submission). Is there a dog owner in the world who doesn't already know that? Note: if that's new to you and you own a dog, stop reading this review and find a dog trainer immediately. In the 250 pages I managed to read, I found two things of interest: the description of canine vision, and speculation on a potential flaw in experiments on dog intelligence (to wit: dogs know that humans are great providers of food, so if a dog that gives up on the puzzle in front of him and runs over to the researcher for help, maybe he's being smart, not dumb). Second, the author spends way too much time bemoaning human chauvinism. Apparently, all research into animal behavior is done to shore up our belief that humans are the rightful masters of the earth. Third, the tone of this book is insistently, forcibly whimsical. Sometimes it hits the right note, and I did find myself laughing out loud a few times, particularly at an anecdote about a doberman put to work guarding a collection of valuable teddy bears. Unfortunately, it's more often grating, and I found myself rolling my eyes at the little vignettes about the author's dog that start every chapter. It truly pains me to write that, as love between a dog and an owner is such a wonderful thing. Fourth, the text has some odd contradictions, one which is noted by the reviewer below me.

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