

Understanding Your Dog FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Stanley Coren and Sarah Hodgson



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

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Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007925988

ISBN: 978-0-471-76873-9

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



About the Authors

Stanley Coren is best known to the public for his popular books on dogs and on general psychological issues. However, within the scientific world, he's also a highly respected scientist, a Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

His engaging writing style and his broad knowledge about the behavior of dogs and people have made his books *The Intelligence of Dogs*, *Why We Love the Dogs We Do*, *What Do Dogs Know?*, *How to Speak Dog*, *The Pawprints of History*, *How Dogs Think*, *Why Do Dogs Have Wet Noses?*, and *Why Does My Dog Do That?* all best-sellers. Roger Caras, President of the ASPCA, and himself a best-selling author of dog books, noted "Stanley Coren has an incredible gift — the ability to take the most complex matters and make it all seem so simple and clear." Perhaps this is why Coren was named Writer of the Year by the International Positive Dog Training Association and is a sought-after contributor to a number of national dog and pet magazines, including *Pets Magazine*, *Modern Dog*, *AnimalSense*, *Dog and Puppy Basics*, and *AKC Gazette*.

Many professional associations have recognized Coren's work with service dogs, and he's received awards from several major police dog organizations, including the California Canine Narcotic Dog Association and the British Columbia Police Canine Association. His work with and knowledge of dogs has often caught the attention of the media, and he's been the subject of feature articles in *People Magazine*, *USA Today*, *Time Magazine*, *Maclean's*, *US News & World Report*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Washington Post*, and others. His affable manner has also made him a popular guest with the broadcast media, and he's been featured on numerous television programs, including *Oprah*, *Larry King Live*, *Dateline*, *20/20*, *Maurie Povich*, *Good Morning America*, *Charlie Rose*, and the *Today Show*. He currently hosts the national TV series *Good Dog!* in Canada.

Sarah Hodgson, president of Simply Sarah Incorporated, has been a trainer of dogs and their people in Westchester, New York, and Southern Connecticut for more than 20 years. She's the author of eight dog-training books, including *Puppies For Dummies*, *Dog Tricks For Dummies*, *Puppies Raising & Training Diary For Dummies*, *Teach Yourself Visually Dog Training*, *You and Your Puppy* (co-authored with James DeBitetto), *DogPerfect*, 2nd Edition, *PuppyPerfect*, and *Miss Sarah's Guide to Etiquette for Dogs & Their People*. In addition, Sarah has produced two videos, patented a dog training leash (the Teaching Lead), and invented many other products to simplify the shared lives of dogs and people.

Sarah is frequently featured as a dog training specialist on network television, radio, and print media, including *The New York Times*, NBC, CBS, Animal Planet (Disney syndicate), FOX, CNN, WOR, Hollywood Pets, *Parenthood* magazine, and others. She has worked with many famous persons' dogs, including TV personality Katie Couric, actors Richard Gere, Glenn Close, Chazz Palminteri, Chevy Chase, and Lucie Arnaz; business moguls George Soros, Tommy Hilfiger, Tommy Mottola, and Michael Fuchs; and sport greats Bobby Valentine and Alan Houston.

In addition, Sarah is a behavior consultant and education facilitator at the Adopt-A-Dog shelter in Armonk, New York, where she holds training and socialization programs, conditioning each of the dogs within a fully decorated home environment before their formal adoption. For more information on everything Sarah, visit her Web site at www.dogperfect.com.

Sarah also writes a weekly column and balances all with her top priorities: her family and pets!

Dedication

We dedicate our book to dogs . . . from all the ones we've loved, helped, and nurtured to the ones we look forward to knowing. You have filled our path with reason and given shape to our days and meaning to our life experience. Woof!

Authors' Acknowledgments

There are so many people who deserve gratitude: Nancy Shalek for steering the boat, Kelly for your editorial efforts that grace every page, and Mike who spearheaded this project from the beginning.

And as always, our friends and family. . . . You are our sideline crew and support team. We would never — could never — be so delighted with our life if it weren't for every one of you. Big hug!

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Introduction

Prepare yourself for a journey into the mind of a dog! No matter where you start in this book, each page illuminates some facet of your dog's life experience: from her unique personality, to how and why she either focuses on your directions or spirals into an independent cycle of what you may consider negative behavior. Though scientific information is the backbone of understanding your dog's behavior, our book is a far cry from a boring read! Upbeat and cleverly written, it brings science into the mainstream, using language everyone can understand and relate to. When you walk away from this book, your dog's behavior will no longer be a mystery — it will be common sense.

Another unique aspect of this book is that it seamlessly weaves two schools of thought together. Stanley Coren, a behavioral scientist who specializes in understanding how dogs think and act, meets Sarah Hodgson, a dog trainer who specializes in changing dog behaviors. Our union has been eye-opening for us, and we bring this magic to you. This book offers something unique: a dog's-eye view of everything human. This book reveals how the grace and willingness of puppyhood can either be nurtured to encourage cooperative behavior patterns, or distorted, resulting in extreme reactivity, destruction, housesoiling, and so on. Whereas Stanley explains a dog's perception and experience, Sarah shows you how to use this knowledge to better your communication with your dog and immediately recognize a source of conflict or confusion.

Whether you're picking up this book out of a simple love for dogs, a drive to understand and communicate with your dog with more insight, or a tested affection for a puppy that has matured in unpredictable ways, we guarantee you'll not be let down. In addition to seeing the world from your dog's perspective, you'll develop an appreciation for her as you gather a toolbox of techniques to train your dog and/or repair misunderstandings. Be prepared to get hooked on everything dog, and above all else, enjoy the ride!

About This Book

Everyone envisions a great relationship with their dog, as though the outcome were guaranteed: Peaceful strolls, interactive play, calming feelings generated by a pet that brings harmony to family life and ails the angst of everyday life. If only it were as easy as wanting it to be so.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of getting a dog or queasy about your responsibility for the dog you've already committed to, you can relax. This book helps you recognize not only why your dog behaves in the way she does, but in the most positive way to encourage her cooperation.

Conventions Used in This Book

We stuck to the following conventions throughout the book:

- ✓ To avoid any gender bias, we refer to dogs as both males and females throughout the text. Except for anything that strictly relates to behaviors that are specifically male or female, you can be sure that the information applies to your puppy, regardless of gender.
- ✓ Anytime we introduce a new or scientific term, we *italicize* it.
- ✓ Keywords in lists appear in **boldface**. Also, when we present a list of steps to perform, the action you need to take is boldface as well.
- ✓ Web sites and e-mail addresses appear in monofont to help them stand out in the text.

What You're Not to Read

Though we've weaved together insightful information throughout this book, you don't need to scour each page to learn more about your dog. After all, who has the time to read a nearly 300-page book these days? Read one chapter at a time or use it as a reference throughout your dog's life, knowing that every page you digest will enhance your overall understanding of him and thus improve your relationship.

Even as you read, you can skip bits if you're pressed for time. Sidebars (gray boxes of text) include interesting, but non-essential information. The Technical Stuff and Just For Fun icons also contain insightful, but not necessarily crucial, facts.

Foolish Assumptions

Here's what we assume about you, our dear readers:

- ✓ You know your dog has four paws and a tail, and you love her dearly.
- ✓ You either have a dog now, love dogs but don't have one now, or are about to get a dog.
- ✓ You don't want to get your PhD in animal behavior, but desperately want to know more about how your dog interprets life.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into five parts, each one having its own insightful theme. Here's a quick rundown.

Part I: The Fascinating World of Dogs

In this first part, you find out about your dog's individual communication skills. Like teaching your language to a foreigner, we give you the tools to understand your dog's behavior and translate your thoughts into Doglish, their natural language.

Part II: Embracing Your Dog's Identity

Until you recognize that your dog, whether a mixed breed or purebred, has a distinct identity that makes her unique, her behavioral quirks can be puzzling — and, at times, frustrating. The first step in understanding your dog is to respect the honorable task she was originally bred for and to identify how these inbred impulses will influence her personality and behavior. We also address the dramatic influence of your dog's sensory experience, as well as the emotional life and specific needs of a growing puppy. Finally, we discuss the psychological needs of an aging dog, from the emotional shock at her own physical and sensory decline, to diet supplements that may help to slow the degenerative process.

Part III: Doggie Delinquency

Let the training begin! This part starts out examining the many positive tools and techniques available to people who train dogs, highlighting systems that are both effective and encouraging. If your goal is to have a dog who not only listens to you, but enthusiastically *chooses* your direction over other impulses, the chapters in this part point the way.

Part IV: Dogs Don't Misbehave: Misperceptions and Solutions

In this part, we target the array of frustrations most common to dog owners, from housetraining a puppy to rehabilitating a fearful or aggressive dog. Looking at each issue from your dog's perspective, we help you see that what you may consider a problem is often a simple case of misunderstanding, lack of exercise, or manageable stress.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Last but not least, we gather together the top-ten lists of the most common misperceptions and ways to communicate silently. Enjoy!

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you find icons that appear on the left side of the page and that point out different types of information. Here's a list of the various icons you may encounter:



This icon highlights useful tidbits and helpful advice.



These friendly reminders won't let any of the important information slip by.



"Warning, Warning!" Need we say more?



This icon alerts you to facts and technical information that may not be essential, but they're interesting to know all the same.



Take note of this icon. Though it may not contain crucial details, it does highlight a fun fact that's good to know.

Where to Go from Here

The neatest thing about this book is that you can jump in anywhere. It's a no-rules reference for anyone who is getting or sharing their life with a dog. Look to the table of contents, flip to the index, or simply shut your eyes and open to any page. You'll find great topics to read about and new stuff to learn on every page.

Of course, this isn't to say that you shouldn't read our book cover to cover, but it's not a prerequisite! No matter where you start, remember that, like children, your dog is a very unique and motivated being who, above all else, wants to be involved in your life experience.

Part I

The Fascinating World of Dogs

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I think he's just displaying normal pack instincts."

In this part . . .

Everyone who takes responsibility for a dog has a vision of how they'd like their dog to act: from polite to protective, from mellow to athletic, from interactive to aloof. The vision and reality, however, can sometimes differ measurably. Suddenly, an adorable puppy morphs into a maturing dog with thoughts of her own and mannerisms that may not line up with anyone's expectations.

In this part, you grow to appreciate your dog as a unique individual, fully equipped by evolution and centuries of selective breeding with her own set of ideals and inner drives. This part gives you the understanding you need to enjoy, cope with, or change your life with your pet.

Chapter 1

A Dog for Life: Dog Psychology 101

In This Chapter

- ▶ Looking at life through your dog's senses
- ▶ Respecting your differences, appreciating your similarities
- ▶ Identifying age requirements

There is no greater gift you can offer your dog than to understand her: to walk a mile in her paws. Though money can buy a lot of dog biscuits and squeak toys, and those obedience classes will encourage greater responsiveness to you, a lot more is going on behind the scenes than the simple recognition of the command "Sit." This chapter starts you on the journey discovering the mystery that is your dog.

Is Your Dog a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

Well, yes and no. Though we go more in-depth in this part, suffice it to say that dogs approached domestication at their own speed. There was no cosmic moment when some brave young boy (or girl), holding a wolf pup, approached their father and said, "Please, Dad, can we keep it?" Domestication was a slow evolutionary process that involved the gradual progression from curious wolves that drew closer to our campfire, to the marked physical changes that characterize dogs we know today.

People and dogs: Parallel evolution

Our relationship with dogs began during a time when survival was our only focus. Centered on staying alive, dogs provided personal protection and hunting assistance.

For eons, dogs and humans evolved in parallel: During the agricultural era, we modified our selection process to produce dogs who would cull the varmint population and others who would herd livestock. As kingdoms grew, massive dog breeds were shaped by a process of manual selection to guard the castles and aid in wars. And so on and so on until today, when there are more than 400 different dog breeds that populate our globe, all developed for particular tasks.



There is only one problem: Except for a few instances, any dog's special talents are rarely needed. But don't tell your dog: It would be too depressing. He thinks his abilities are still in high demand.

To know your dog, however, still requires you to understand his original breeding, and respect that his genes are still guiding his behaviors today. (For more on this topic, see Chapter 6.)

Personality

In Chapter 5, you discover how to identify your dog's temperament and how it shapes her understanding of the world you share. For example, a dominant dog assesses everyone who enters, whereas a timid dog hides under the table when the doorbell rings. Embracing your dog's personality helps you in your effort to orchestrate a training program to normalize your life together.

Unlike people who learn by listening, your dog is much more attuned to nonverbal communication, from how you hold your body (especially in moments of tension or stress) to where you focus your eyes. Learning your dog's language will help you understand her behavior and be understood in kind.



If you consistently look at your dog, she may interpret your interest as a need for leadership. Remember this little jingle: The more you look at your dog, the less she'll look to you.



Dog's devotion to people was hard-wired upon domestication. Your dog is the only species that will look to and take direction from another species (that's us) as if it was their own.

Sensory overload

To really consider life from your dog's perspective, you need a new nose. Dogs rely most heavily on their sense of smell to interpret even the minor aspects of their surroundings, such as when another animal may have passed through or even the stress hormone of a visitor in your home.

In your dog, our strongest scent, sight, is blurred and limited. Your dog can only recognize a limited range of colors and is more attuned to the motion of an object than its particulars. Dogs don't rely on the recognition of fine details of objects, but rather they were born to be hunters with the motto, "If it moves it might be food, and I'll chase and catch it!"

There is also a big difference in dog's hearing abilities, which can be traced to the evolution of our separate species. Humans are more sharply attuned to the sound of other human voices, whereas dogs are capable of hearing higher frequencies and fainter sounds. Because dogs evolved from hunters, their hearing is more attuned to the sounds that their potential prey might make.

In today's society, your dog's sensory strengths are rarely appreciated. An apartment dog is admonished each time he alerts to the sound of a footstep; hounds are scolded for getting into the trash; and all breeds are reprimanded for chasing the family cat. In our world, dogs are on sensory overload yet are expected to ignore everything. In Chapter 7, you can experience the world from your dog's perspective and also find out about new tasks that are being set for dogs that take advantage of their special sensory skills.

Age Influences

Whether you have a puppy or older dog, you can appreciate that time and experience will make a difference in your dog's behavior. A young puppy, who is often interpreting many of life's nuances for the first time, watches your actions carefully and is influenced by how you behave. An older dog, however, who has studied many human responses, may be less influenced by your activities — unless they're unusual or unexpected.

In Chapter 8, our puppy chapter, we highlight the way a puppy's mind develops and the ideal lessons to introduce at every stage. Further, we stress the critical importance of early socialization and how encounters with various people and places can change your dog's life — forever.

Dogs age too quickly. Though many of their life processes mirror ours, their timeline accelerates at ten times our rate. By age 3, your dog is a mature adult, by 7 most have reached middle age, and by 10, many are heading into their twilight years. It's a reality that can't be ignored or avoided.

In Chapter 9, you can find out how your dog's internal processes function throughout maturity and what you can do to ease their

emotional adjustment. Like humans, physical changes are often accompanied by feelings of defensiveness and fear.

Influencing Your Dog's Learning

Dogs love to learn and feel connected to group activities. How you develop as a teacher and translator directly affects their enthusiasm for learning and, in turn, for life. Think of each lesson and highlighted word as though you were teaching a foreigner your language. “Sit,” “Wait,” “Down,” and “Good” get lifted beyond mere command status, to verbal directions that show your dog how to act in everyday situations.

In Part III, we lay out all the tricks of the trade, exploring learning influences and emotional responses. In addition, we help you make sense of the different schools of thought about how to teach your dog and compare the differences between them — for example, shaping versus modeling.



There is no one approach to encouraging good behavior: Each dog is unique and may respond better to one technique than another. A clearly orchestrated attempt to educate yourself and understand the different methods available will keep your training effort fresh and alive. We also examine exactly how your dog assimilates new information and how you may use this understanding to further influence her behavior.

Though a dog can recognize up to 165 different directions, your goals need not be so lofty. In Chapter 12, we outline six directions that are most useful for navigating your life together (see Table 1-1). After you have these directions firmly planted in your dog's memory bank, they form the foundation for controlling your dog's behavior. Their use reassures your dog of her place in your family and her vital inclusion in your world. There is no greater gift you could offer your dog than that.

Table 1-1 Six Directions That Make a Difference

<i>Word Cue</i>	<i>Daily Uses</i>
Follow	When walking about town or off your property, or to encourage attention in your home
Wait-okay	To get your dog to stop and check in before entering or exiting your home or new buildings, as well as when you cross the street and approach stairs

Word Cue	Daily Uses
No (and other derivations, such as Not now, Leave it, Don't think about it)	To alert your dog that any given impulse is not in her best interest (for example, stealing food, chasing an object or animal, and so on)
Stay	Enforces impulse to control; ideally used when you need your dog to be still or to relax
Down (and Settle down)	Directs your dog into a submissive, relaxed pose or to her bed
Come	The human phrase equivalent of the word "Huddle"

Ain't Misbehaving!

No matter how livid you feel when your dog disobeys you or damages prized possessions, you won't influence her routines until you sit down and listen to her side of the story. Sure, your half-eaten shoes cost \$95 dollars, but to your dog, its enticing aroma (perfume YOU) was impossible to pass by. In this section, we lead you through the most common frustrations, from housebreaking to anxiety-driven behavior and on to darker issues such as aggression, in our efforts to shape your ability to respond in a manner that your dog understands.

Why dogs act out

Just as people do, many dogs act out when they feel misunderstood, restless, or needy. If you walk around claiming that your dog is reacting out of spite, then, in your mind, her every reaction will be tainted by that view, even though "spite" is not an emotion dogs have. If you keep shouting "Bad dog!" every time your dog makes a wrong move, what option does she have?



Dogs, like children, are motivated by what gets attention. However, it often appears that dogs can't differentiate positive attention from negative. If an action gets a reaction — any reaction — it will get repeated.

Furthermore, negative attention can be misperceived as being rough play or confrontation. Thus, a dog who steals from the counter may feel *prize envy* when her people react uproariously. A smart dog will simply wait until their people have left the room, and then (minus competition) carry the prize off to a more secluded space.