

Discover what makes Fido tick
and how to fix problem behaviors

Understanding Your Dog

FOR
DUMMIES®



Stanley Coren, PhD

*Author of How Dogs Think and
How to Speak Dog*

Sarah Hodgson

*Dog trainer and author of DogPerfect
and Puppies For Dummies*

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



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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 bestsellers. 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!

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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!

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Restore Predictability

Highlight the Positive

: Further Reading

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 unpredicted 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.