



Why Does My Dog Act That Way?: A Complete Guide to Your Dog's Personality

Stanley Coren

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A uniquely complete guide to dog psychology with a mixture of entertaining anecdotes and scientific data that Coren's fans have come to expect and enjoy, Why Does My Dog Act That Way? will draw dog owners in packs.

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A. says

This book is more about establishing the personality of a newborn dog, rather than one that will help you divine why your dog (who came from the pound) is confused by playing but loves eating bees. It would be a very useful book for the new puppy owner, however, and it features several chapters of heroic dog stories (always inspiring to yours truly, sentimental dog lover).

It includes a little quiz that tells you which breeds have personality types more suited to you. It told me what I already knew: that I like dumb, friendly dogs who aren't much into scampering around the house (ie a dog that wants to function as a rug).

It was a fun book, but the title mislead me, is why I was disappointed.

D. says

Written by a scientist, this easy-to-read volume uses various studies to describe and explain the temperament and personality of dogs. The author is a psychologist with a good understanding of evolutionary theory and natural selection which he uses to explain dog behavior. Breed personality profiles and anecdotes make the book engaging.

Karine Tremblay says

Alexandre Dumas

Abby says

I don't know why I keep reading Stanley Coren; I think he's a mediocre researcher who relies completely on breed stereotypes. But I guess we all like to read about stereotypes. That's what this book is about. Some interesting anecdotes, but it didn't make sense as a cohesive work and had a lot of unnecessary, irrelevant chapters.

Julie says

Interesting, very science-y, so I read it slowly, mixed in with lots of other books.

Xenia0201 says

I ask myself that question every day...I was thinking I'd learn something here about my psycho pointer. Book was very clinicl and very generalized. Explored much of the psychology of a dog but didn't offer too many solutions. Or at least any I could find. Lots of info, but none I found particularly useful.

Sara says

This is a "why" book, not a book that offers solutions to existing behavior problems. Full of interesting research and anecdotes, discussions of personality testing for dogs, and how to raise a "superdog" from birth to age one. Lovers of the fighting breeds will be upset by his definite stance that their dangerous reputation is in part well founded and the result of centuries of careful breeding.

Jen says

One of my favorites- some chilling revelation in this one. I was almost disappointed, because it doesn't start out with the warm, anecdotal tale of dog lore that each of his books does, but... it's there... deep into the book. I imagine if the reader were hit with this one right off the bat, the story would have deterred any further investigation.

monica says

This was a great book for anyone interested owning a dog, especially if you have no idea what breed would be the best choice for you. Written in an easy-to-read style, it incorporates a plethora of interesting elements: from American Kennel Club conformation standards, to commonly-used examinations of dog behavior, to university studies of human personality and the history of the man-dog relationship. Read it to gain a better understanding of the ins and outs of dog personality.

Melody says

Amusing, erudite and very informative. I was skeptical when I picked this up, fearing it would be another touchy-feely "love your doggie" sort of book. It's not. Coren is a scientist, pure and simple. He's also an unapologetic, unreconstructed Darwinist of the Dawkins school, which gets huge points from this reader. Highly recommended for dog-owners.

Ed says

I feel I understand my 4-legged friends a bit better as a result of knowledge gained by reading this book. Only people who never had a dog could state that they don't have personalities. They are as different as

people with their traits and quirks.

Recommended for larger public library collections or special collections dealing with domesticated animals.

Elizabeth says

Coren offers a great introduction to the mind of dogs; he writes as both an animal behavior specialist (PhD in psychology) and as someone who loves the dogs in his life. If you've never read any of his books, you will learn a lot from this. If you've read some of his others, however, you will find a certain amount of repetition from earlier works.

Kristen says

This book was a mix for me, and although I ultimately gave up on it, there was a lot in here that was really interesting and stuck with me.

Pros:

- the history of domestication and wolf vs dog
- the experiments he cites about how animals are domesticated (or not)
- the section on pit fighting and history of fighting breeds

Cons:

- the extensive and annoyingly 'common sense' guide to the breeds, which seemed to stand without actual evidence or any real purpose
- the way the book degenerated into a breeder's guide to socialization
- Coren's dry writing

Overall, the parts where he actually discussed personality and the way dogs' are shaped by history and biology were really interesting. As he went off onto tangents (breeds, 'superdog', etc) it got less interesting and more specified for people who are looking to be a helicopter dog owner, which is not what I was looking for from this book. I ended up skipping chapters 9, 11, 12 and 13 as it got too boring for me.

Dena Beck says

It was an enjoyable read, but not a lot of practical information for the owner of three adult dogs. It would be practical for someone raising puppies. It covers the importance of the things they experience in the first weeks of their lives. For those of us who didn't have our dogs at that stage in their life, it highlights what they likely missed. It doesn't offer much in the way of how you can correct for that later in their life-possibly because he doesn't think you can. I liked his writing style, and plan to read the reviews of his other dog books. Maybe I will see that one of them might be more practical, and I would read that.

Jeremy Bruner says

I actually started reading this over five years ago. It lulls hard in the middle if you're not hardcore into the behavior science (which of course is the most important part of the book), so I took some time off and then came back to it. But, the basics about the evolution of dogs and how genetics and environment play in to personality are fascinating. Really loved the sections about breeding and training practices for dogfighting (and the genetic implications of it) and about altruism/helpfulness were great.
