

The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us

By Christopher Chabris, Daniel Simons

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Reading this book will make you *less* sure of yourself—and that's a good thing. In *The Invisible Gorilla*, Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, creators of one of psychology's most famous experiments, use remarkable stories and counterintuitive scientific findings to demonstrate an important truth: *Our minds don't work the way we think they do*. We think we see ourselves and the world as they really are, but we're actually missing a whole lot.

Chabris and Simons combine the work of other researchers with their own findings on attention, perception, memory, and reasoning to reveal how faulty intuitions often get us into trouble. In the process, they explain:

- Why a company would spend billions to launch a product that its own analysts know will fail
- How a police officer could run right past a brutal assault without seeing it
- Why award-winning movies are full of editing mistakes
- What criminals have in common with chess masters
- Why measles and other childhood diseases are making a comeback
- Why money managers could learn a lot from weather forecasters

Again and again, we think we experience and understand the world as it is, but our thoughts are beset by everyday illusions. We write traffic laws and build criminal cases on the assumption that people will notice when something unusual happens right in front of them. We're sure we know where we were on 9/11, falsely believing that vivid memories are seared into our minds with perfect fidelity. And as a society, we spend billions on devices to train our brains because we're continually tempted by the lure of quick fixes and effortless self-improvement.

The Invisible Gorilla reveals the myriad ways that our intuitions can deceive us, but it's much more than a catalog of human failings. Chabris and Simons explain why we succumb to these everyday illusions and what we can do to inoculate ourselves against their effects. Ultimately, the book provides a kind of x-ray vision into our own minds, making it possible to pierce the veil of illusions that

clouds our thoughts and to think clearly for perhaps the first time.

From the Hardcover edition.

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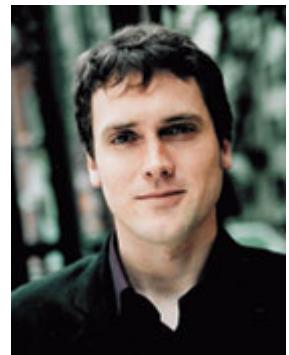
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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Tom Vanderbilt Reviews *The Invisible Gorilla*

Tom Vanderbilt writes on design, technology, architecture, science, and many other topics. He is author of *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us)* published in 2008 by Alfred A. Knopf, and *Survival City: Adventures Among the Ruins of Atomic America*, published in 2002 by Princeton Architectural Press. He is contributing editor to *I.D.* and *Print* magazines, contributing writer at *Design Observer*, and writes for many publications, ranging from *Wired* to the *New York Times* to *Men's Vogue* to the *Wilson Quarterly*. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.



Do you remember when you first saw--or more likely, didn't see--the gorilla? For me it was one afternoon a number of years ago when I clicked open one of those noxious-but-irresistible forwarded emails ("You Won't Believe Your Eyes!"). The task was simple--count the number of passes in a tight cluster of basketball players--but the ensuing result was astonishing: As I dutifully (and correctly) tracked the number of passes made, a guy in a gorilla suit had strolled into the center, beat his chest, and sauntered off. But I never saw the gorilla. And I was hardly alone.

The video, which went on to become a global viral sensation, brought "inattentional blindness"--a once comparatively obscure interest of cognitive psychologists--into striking relief. Here was a dramatic reminder that looking is not necessarily seeing, that "paying" attention to one thing might come at the cost of missing another altogether. No one was more taken with the experience than the authors of the original study, Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris, as they recount in their new--and, dare I say, eye-opening--book, *The Invisible Gorilla*. "The fact that people miss things is important," they write, "but what impressed us even more was the surprise people showed when they realized what they had missed."

The Invisible Gorilla uses that ersatz primate as a departure point (and overarching metaphor) for exploring the myriad of other illusions, perceptual or otherwise, that we encounter in everyday life--and our often complete lack of awareness as we do so. These "gorillas" are lurking everywhere--from the (often false) memories we think we have to the futures we think we can anticipate to the cause-and-effect chains we feel must exist. Writing with authority, clarity, and a healthy dose of skepticism, Simons and Chabris explore why these illusions persist--and, indeed, seem to multiply in the modern world--and how we might work to avoid them. Alas, there are no easy solutions--doing crosswords to stave off cognitive decline in one's dotage may simply make you better at doing crosswords. But looking for those "gorillas in our midst" is as rewarding as actually finding them.

(Photo © Kate Burton)

From Publishers Weekly

Professors of Psychology Chabris and Simons write about six everyday illusions of perception and thought, including the beliefs that: we pay attention more than we do, our memories are more detailed than they are, confident people are competent people, we know more than we actually do, and our brains have reserves of power that are easy to unlock. Through a host of studies, anecdotes, and logic, the authors debunk conventional wisdom about the workings of the mind and what "experts" really know (or don't). Presented almost as a response to Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*, the books pay special attention to "the illusion of knowledge" and the danger of basing decision-making, in areas such as investing, on short-term information; in the authors' view, careful analysis of assumed truths is preferred over quick, intuitive thinking. Chabris and Simons are not against intuition, "...but we don't think it should be exalted above analysis without good evidence that it is truly superior."

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From [Booklist](#)

Since psychologists Chabris and Simons first teamed up in the late 1990s for a study on perception, the so-called invisible-gorilla video buttressing their experiment has become world famous. In the clip, two teams pass a basketball around while a gorilla-suited woman briefly appears and pounds her chest before walking away. When viewers are instructed to count only the basketball passes, 50 percent completely miss seeing the gorilla. Even more surprising, however, is most people's insistence that they could never miss something so glaringly obvious. This overconfidence in perceptual accuracy serves as the springboard for Chabris and Simons' engaging treatise on how our intuitions often lead us astray. In chapters with titles like "I Think I Would Have Seen That" and "Jumping to Conclusions," they methodically deconstruct what they refer to as our "everyday illusions." Other forms of self-deception include faulty memories and misconstruing cause and effect, both illustrated with eye-opening, often humorous examples. Chabris and Simons gratifyingly supplement such ego-deflating illustrations with ways to better use the mind and ultimately protect ourselves from wrongdoers. --Carl Hays

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joseph Kidwell:

This book untitled *The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us* to be one of several books which best seller in this year, this is because when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit onto it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book retailer or you can order it by means of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to your account to past this e-book from your list.

Cecil Andrade:

The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The article

author giving his/her effort to place every word into pleasure arrangement in writing The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us but doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest as well as based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information may draw you into brand-new stage of crucial pondering.

Jennifer Lorenzo:

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