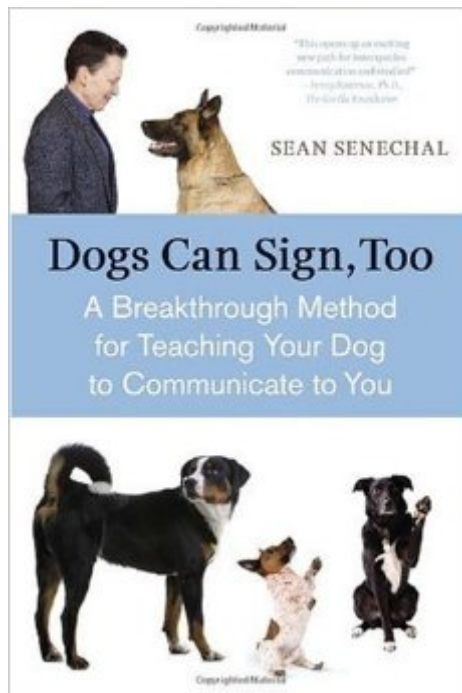


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# Dogs Can Sign, Too: A Breakthrough Method For Teaching Your Dog To Communicate



## Synopsis

Imagine being able to ask your poodle, "Who's at the door?" and having her respond, "It's Katy." Or asking your golden retriever, "Do you want a treat?" and him responding, "No, water." Or asking your Border collie, "Which toy do you want?" and getting the response, "Stick." If you've ever wondered what dogs would tell us if they could, now you can find out. The K9Sign system teaches dogs to communicate to us "making it a first in any dog training book category. Dogs Can Sign, Too is the first book dedicated exclusively to the K9Sign system for teaching dogs to communicate to their human companions using a vocabulary of gestures. This extraordinary education tool, developed by the creator of AnimalSign Language exclusively for the canine community, teaches people and their pets a unique mode of communication that employs an extensive lexicon of specific signs. Sample signs range from general concepts, such as "Food" or "Play" to identifying special treats, such as "Liver" or "Cheese" and specifying a favorite toy, such as "Ball" or "Frisbee." Signs also include useful questions such as "Who's that?" or "What type?" to naming a particular friend or family member, or even indicating a stranger. Learning and practicing K9Sign is a fun, challenging, and rewarding experience for both you and your dog that is sure to deepen the human-canine bond while expanding our ideas about interspecies communication.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am not usually given to writing reviews, but this time I simply had to. Having lived with at least one

dog for the last 30+ years and having worked as a professional dog trainer in the past, I have come across lots of dog behavior/training books. LOTS of them. They have mostly been interesting, often helpful, brushing up my knowledge and adding some new aspects. After a while, I got the impression that I had read/heard it all. There were no "aha-experiences" any more. "Dogs Can Sign, Too" changed all that. It came as a complete surprise. In this book, the author describes a revolutionary, experimental and ambitious approach to educating and communicating with your dog. Although recent scientific publications tend to acknowledge that dogs' cognitive capabilities in some ways resemble those of young (2-3 yrs of age) human children, these books generally focus on basic problem solving skills. They don't venture into this seemingly exclusive, distinctively human domain of acquired language skills (beyond body language and species-specific vocalizations). The language barrier between our species (human and canine) still remains largely intact. We are left to wonder what our canine companions are thinking, feeling, how they perceive the world. We try to glean information about their inner state by observing their gestures and categorizing different types of barks (fearful, aggressive, ...). While observing dogs can give us some rough ideas (e.g. telling us that the dog noticed somebody at the door), it doesn't provide the details (e.g. who is at the door - a stranger, aunt Mary, the neighbor's dog, ...). Sean Senechal refuses to accept this barrier as impenetrable and insurmountable. She created an animal-friendly language, AnimalSign (K9Sign for dogs) to teach animals. I really appreciate her approach of giving the dog - and other, non-human and non-primate species - the benefit of the doubt. Until proven wrong with evidence, we have to assume that our canine pupils can learn to actively expressively communicate with us, using learned signs (e.g. special paw or head movements), maybe even making up new signs after having learned the rules of the AnimalSign Language (presented in her book). In order to find out if dogs can do this, we have to do our best to teach them, adjusting our teaching methods to their needs. This is another point that really caught my attention and changed the way I am interacting with my dogs: The book emphasizes teaching as opposed to training. It offers a more comprehensive approach than traditional dog training, allowing the learner to develop his/her own thoughts. While traditional training methods like classical and operant conditioning are effective and can also be used for teaching signs, Sean Senechal offers additional teaching techniques she came to value through her experience as a teacher of human students. This makes sure that learning success isn't stunted by limited methods. The second half of the book applies the various techniques to hands-on instructions for teaching canine sign language to your dog. It introduces a number of signs that can be used in everyday life, like a general sign for "toy", special signs for particular toys ("ball", "Frisbee"), a general sign for "food", special signs for different types of food, etc. Each sign is

described in detail over several pages, with lots of advice for teaching, practicing and testing. Even if you are not interested in the general concept of teaching a sign language to dogs, you can use this part as a guide for trick training. But you will gain much more from it if you keep an open mind regarding the possibility that dogs might learn and use these "tricks" as building blocks of a real language. This way the book has the potential to open a window into your dog's mind, granting you the chance for new insights and a real understanding of his/her needs and perceptions. I especially like the idea that humans might regard dogs and other animals with more respect if they discover that there are active minds inside those cute, furry heads. Being able to communicate through a language that we can understand could help dogs to teach us about their intelligence, thus redefining the way we think about them and making our relationships much more satisfying for both sides. True love and respect go hand in hand. This is not your typical dog training book. Nor does it replace basic obedience training. If you are new to dog training, you will need other books ("Dogs Can Sign, Too" actually contains some suitable literature recommendations) and/or dog training classes to learn the basics. But you can use this book in parallel, whether you have a puppy or an adult dog. At the very least it provides you and your dog with lots of fun exercises - and it has the potential to greatly enhance your mutual understanding and enrich your relationship. There is nothing to lose (except maybe some old prejudices about "dumb beasts") and a lot to gain!

Altogether an invaluable advance in the possibilities for shared work and living with Domestic dogs. Lots of people, including animal behavior-cognition researchers routinely speculate about what their dog really meant by what it did. Now, with a modest amount of effort, you can get the dog's answer directly. Skip the mind-reading - ask! Did your dog really intend to send a message by that spot on the rug? So ask her or him! Get a real answer, don't just sputter that you wish you knew what she really wanted! If you ask him why he ate the TV remote control, you might get the answer "Pizza," because you got pizza juice on it while watching TV, so the remote tasted good. Our deaf dog we asked why she chewed table legs; she answered "teeth hurt," -because her new adult teeth were coming in at the time. Women, teenagers and children are especially good at teaching family dogs to converse with them. Kids teach other children and dogs, because the kids at school are always teaching each other new words and slang, and it's fun. While we were at first teaching our dogs, we were amused to find that in the noise of adult parties we could converse between wife and husband by using Ms Senechals K9 gestures. - -Think of it as Twitter by gesture-signs. People who rely on service dogs and therapy support can readily use the gesture languages to enhance the dog's understanding of what their human really wants and needs. And if the dog is unable to do

what their person asked, they can more clearly explain what the problem is and perhaps offer an alternative. The book is straight forward, uncomplicated and reliable. We used the methods Sean recommended, and discovered that our dogs, both normal hearing and deaf, soon began to invent their own new signs to expand their and our vocabulary to include their own topics.

I purchased this book because I work with an assistance dog. I went through a 2 year program to learn how to train Shane to help me. During class you could see the dogs become excited when they realized that they can communicate with their people by doing a behavior. Dogs are very adept at watching your body language but people are very inept at reading canine body language. As a result the dog is doing all the work when it comes to communicating. Shane has learned to wake me up with soft verbalization instead of a loud bark. But if I forget to fill his water bowl he'll bring it in to my bedroom and bonk me on the head with it. Giving Shane a way to gently wake me up and then sign water would be wonderful!

I give the book "4 stars" because it could benefit from some simplification to make it more accessible. I give the concept 5 STARS! Why haven't we been teaching our dogs to sign for generations? Maybe groups of people have in the past. I've had dogs all my life and always struggle with the desire to understand what they have to say without knowing how to access that information. This was the obvious answer that I never thought of. K9 sign is particularly important to me now that I have a hearing dog who spends long days at the office with me. If I get busy, I want him to be able to tell me when he needs food, water or a bathroom break. We took Sean's class and he loves to sign. He already initiates communication with me about sounds that I may not hear by bumping me in the leg. He was quick to learn that he can use the same bump technique to get my attention so he can sign for "food" or "toy". He's currently learning the "water" sign. If you are passionate about dogs and communication, this book goes into depth on animal communication. If you just want the nuts and bolts, skim through the intellectual part and focus on the individual signs and how they are taught. I'm looking forward to seeing this concept catch on and spread through the dog lovers world. Great book to start the conversation.

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