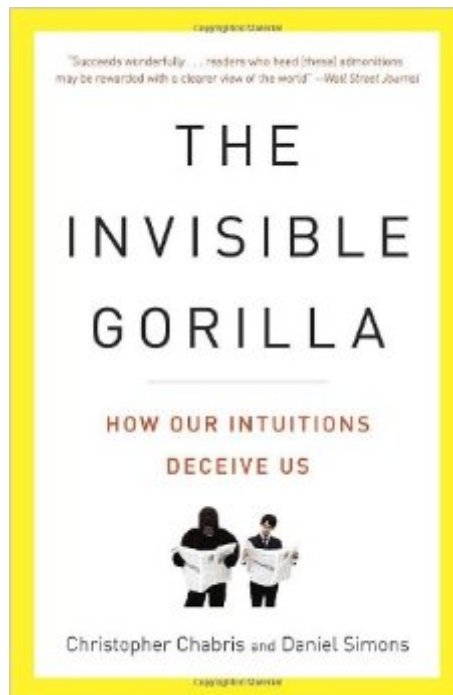


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The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

The Invisible Gorilla is an unusual name for an unusual book. The authors Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons have assembled a evidence of six illusions that impact our lives in significant ways. Chapter One deals with the illusion of attention, that is, the illusion that we see or observe far more than we think. Several experiments have proven that even obvious things are easily missed by people. Up to fifty percent of testers failed to see a fake gorilla enter a basketball game where the testers were counting the number of ball passes rather than looking for gorillas. It is from this experiment that the book gets its name. Most think that such a gorilla would be easily noticed; however, various experiments have shown this is not the case. This lack of ability to see objects that are not expected may explain why cars pull out in front of motorcycles, as it is theorized that people driving cars do not expect to see motorcycles and thus they do not. Cell phone users also miss obvious objects while they are driving. It seems cell phone users that are driving suffer from a reduction in awareness, but they are not aware of it. Thus the illusion that they are as fully aware while talking on the phone as they are when the phone is not in use. The Invisible Gorilla points out how this attention illusion can have real and sometimes harsh results in the real world. Then the book goes on to describe five other illusions: the illusion of memory, the illusion of knowledge and confidence, the illusion that in a series of events, event one causes event two, and the illusion that certain mythical processes - such as hypnotism - can help one reach their full potential.

Lately, there has been a plethora of books trying to popularize the more interesting and counter-intuitive results from fields like behavioral psychology. All of those books, as far as I'm aware, mention a particularly famous study where participants are asked to view a video of basketball players and asked to count the number of passes. As odd as it sounds, about half of the participants fail to notice the "invisible gorilla" - a man dressed like a gorilla strolling from one side of the court to the other. These two authors are the inventors of that and subsequent experiments. In other words, these authors are very knowledgeable about their field because, in a sense, they invented one of its primary experiments. What is their focus in this book? Well, it is not so much that people didn't notice the "invisible gorilla" that surprised them, but the adance with which

participants denied that they could have missed something so obvious. Many disbelieved that there was actually a gorilla in the tape they were shown, accusing the researchers of playing a trick on them. So, the authors' mission in this book is to explore the human tendency toward overconfidence in their abilities. Each chapter focuses on a different "illusion" that comes from the human tendency to (very subconsciously) overestimate our ability. They are as follows: Chapter 1 - Illusion of Attention, or, the belief that we are attentive to much more than we actually are at any given moment. Chapter 2 - Illusion of Memory, or, the illusion that our memories are much more exact than they are. Chapter 3 - Illusion of Confidence, or, the illusion that confidence (in others) is a good sign of competence.

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