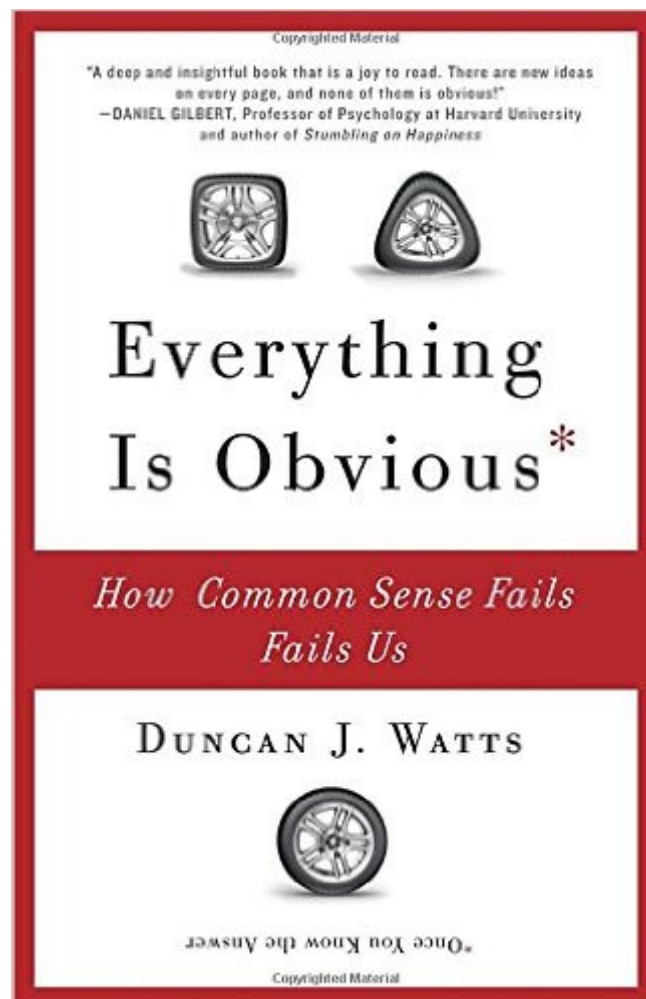


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# Everything Is Obvious: How Common Sense Fails Us



## Synopsis

By understanding how and when common sense fails, we can improve our understanding of the present and better plan for the future. Drawing on the latest scientific research, along with a wealth of historical and contemporary examples, Watts shows how common sense reasoning and history conspire to mislead us into believing that we understand more about the world of human behavior than we do; and in turn, why attempts to predict, manage, or manipulate social and economic systems so often go awry. It seems obvious, for example, that people respond to incentives; yet policy makers and managers alike frequently fail to anticipate how people will respond to the incentives they create. Social trends often seem to be driven by certain influential people; yet marketers have been unable to identify these "influencers" in advance. And although successful products or companies always seem in retrospect to have succeeded because of their unique qualities, predicting the qualities of the next hit product or hot company is notoriously difficult even for experienced professionals. Watts' argument has important implications in politics, business, and marketing, as well as in science and everyday life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mr. Watts, a former sociology professor and physicist who is now a researcher for Yahoo, has written a fascinating book that ranges through psychology, economics, marketing and the science of social networks. - The Wall Street Journal - It's about time a sociologist wrote an amazing and accessible book for a non-specialist audience. Everything Is Obvious\*: Once You Know the Answer by Duncan J. Watts is that amazing book. - Inside Higher Ed - In this bold thesis,

renowned network scientist Duncan J. Watts exposes the complex mechanics of judgement and proposes a radical new way of thinking about human behaviour.â Scott Wilson, *The Fringe Magazine*âCommon sense is a kind of bespoke make-believe, and we can no more use it to scientifically explain the workings of the social world than we can use a hammer to understand mollusks.â - Nicholas Christakis, *The New York Times*ââEverything is Obvious is engagingly written and sparkles with counter-intuitive insights. Its modesty about what can and cannot be known also compares favourably with other âbig ideaâ books.â - James Crabtree, comment editor *Financial Times*"Every once in a while, a book comes along that forces us to re-examine what we know and how we know it. This is one of those books. And while it is not always pleasurable to realize the many ways in which we are wrong, it is useful to figure out the cases where our intuitions fail us."- Dan Ariely, James B. Duke Professor of Behavioral Economics at Duke University, and New York Times bestselling author of *Predictably Irrational*âA deep and insightful book that is a joy to read. There are new ideas on every page, and none of them is obvious!â •â - Daniel Gilbert, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University and author of *Stumbling on Happiness* "A brilliant account of why, for â every hard question, thereâs a common sense answer thatâs simple, seductive, â and spectacularly wrong. If you are suspicious of pop sociology, rogue â economics, and didactic history â or, more importantly, if you arenât! â â Everything is Obvious is â necessary reading. It will literally change the way you think."- Eric Klinenberg, â Professor of Sociology, New York University" You have to take notice when common sense, the bedrock thing weâve always counted on, is challenged brilliantly. Especially when something better than common sense is suggested. As we increasingly experience the world as a maddeningly complex blur, we need a new way of seeing. The fresh ideas in this book, like the invention of spectacles, help bring things into better focus."- Alan AldaâEverything is Obvious is indicated for managers, scholars, or anyone else tired of oversimplified, faulty explanations about how business, government, society and even sports work. Temporary side effects of reading Duncan Watts' tour de force include: light-headedness, a tendency to question one's colleagues, temporary doubt in one's own strategies.â Long term effects include: Deeper insight into history, current events, corporate politics and any other human activity that involves more than one person at a time.â Everything is Obvious is available without a prescription.â • Dalton Conley, Dean for the Social Sciences, New York University" A truly important work that's bound to rattle the cages of pseudo- and self-proclaimed experts in every field. If this book doesn't force you to re-examine what you're doing, something is wrong with you."- Guy Kawasaki, author of *Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions*, and co-founder of Alltop.com. "Watts brings science to life. A

complicated, global, interconnected world, one which often overwhelms, is tamed by wit, skepticism, and the power to challenge conventional wisdom. The book will help you see patterns, where you might have thought chaos ruled."- Sudhir Venkatesh, William B. Ransford Professor of Sociology at Columbia University

DUNCAN WATTS, a principal research scientist at Microsoft Research, was a professor of sociology at Columbia University. A former officer in the Royal Australian Navy, he holds a Ph.D. in Theoretical and Applied Mechanics from Cornell University. He is the author of *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*. He lives in New York City.Â For more information visit [www.everythingisobvious.com](http://www.everythingisobvious.com)

Whether you are rich or poor, political left or right, God-worshipping or atheist, a scientist, parent, cashier, C.E.O, customer service rep., fast food worker, this book is for EVERYONE! We all believe so strongly in our, well, beliefs, that we rarely give others the time of day or the benefit of a doubt. The author challenges us to consider-, even for a moment-the possibility that everything is not always as it seems, and that we may all be far more ALIKE than we are different.

I found the vast majority of this book interesting in its examination of what we think we know versus what we really do know. Understanding how we interpret events to have them make sense to us, and then understanding that we are assuming many things based on our point of view which is likely not relevant at all was quite interesting. The book makes you think about things perhaps more dispassionately.

Having worked for many years in agriculture, where the ideas of interdisciplinary needs are central, it is a great joy to read Duncan Watts' book. His easy transition across all areas of learning is an object lesson. His skill is that he does it with such amazing ease. He he walks amongst the big questions with all the skills of a scientist who understands the needs for rigour, but accepts that the human (whether they be in policy, research or dinner table discussions) is supremely adaptable, especially when it comes to paradox, consistency, and commitment over time. I hope this becomes a widely used text for students and educators. It is rich in ideas and his footnotes and references provide a great signpost to further reading for people with all sorts of parochial interests. Read it, and I am sure you will be tempted to grab a pencil and underline more than a few well argued comments and conclusions.

Brilliant !!No doubt, after reading the book, that everything is obvious once you know what happenedIn a very entertaining and educating way, Duncan makes his case about how good we are to decieve ourselves in order to make sense of things we just don't know.

This book has some great insights that are well worth digesting. Although there's nothing here that I shouldn't objectively have already known, and did "know" on some level, having it spelled out and reinforced in this way forced me to confront it head on, and more carefully consider what I really know. A big game changer for me. And as I read a lot of non-fiction, I am always happy when a knowledgeable author tells it like it is without babying me or being unnecessarily esoteric.At a few points the author seemed to hammer on his points a little longer than necessary, but soon enough it moved on to something else that was interesting. Be aware that the index is MASSIVE - some 30% of the book - so if you're reading the Kindle edition and it seems like you've read a ton before the 50% mark even happens, it's not as long as you think.

Great stories backed up by tidal waves of references and written wonderfully.Highly recommended for those looking to step into the world of social science.

I will never think of common sense the same again. This is a thought-provoking work that deserves to be read.

Great book from a fantastic sociologist.

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