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# Signspotting 4: The Art Of Miscommunication



## Synopsis

For intrepid travelers and armchair dreamers-the fourth collection of amazingly odd and simply hilarious signs found the world over. Want to take a tour of the "Elephant Dung Factory and Souvenir Shop"? How about visiting the towns of Bastardo and Moronville, and doing some shopping at Sad DÃfÂ©cor or the Mayan Treasures Factory Outlet? Whether unsettling ("One Way Tours"), unfortunate ("Evil Poo Lookout"), or simply baffling ("Eels May Be Slippery"), the signs in this all-new collection will change the way you look at the printed world around you.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Doug Lansky is the creator of the Signspotting series and the author of *The Titanic Awards* and writes for *The Huffington Post*, *Esquire* and *National Geographic Adventure*, among others. He lives in India and Sweden.

# SIGNSPOTTING 4THE ART OF MISCOMMUNICATION

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the strangest things about signs is how easily we miss them—impressive considering the imposing size, bright colors, and the fact that they’re placed almost directly in our line of sight. Doesn’t seem to matter if we’re on foot, biking, or driving—we zip right past them. The reason is that most of us live in a sign forest. That is, our environment is littered with signs clamoring for attention. In Tom Vanderbilt’s fascinating book *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do*, he examines numerous studies on driving behavior, and has an interesting section on our observational skills. In one study, for example, “researchers pulled over

drivers on the highway and asked them if they recalled having seen certain traffic signs. The recall rates were as low as 20 percent. So what did they recall in that 20 percent? It wasn't necessarily the biggest or brightest signs. I'll tell you the answer in a minute. Before we get to our selective memory, I thought it better to cover the factors that determine what signs we see. For starters, Vanderbilt explained, it can depend on how experienced we are at driving (and this would presumably apply to biking as well). Studies showed that newbie drivers were so focused on just staying in their lane and maintaining the correct speed that they spent much more time looking straight ahead and used much less peripheral vision. The more experience we get, the better our peripheral vision gets. Other things reduce peripheral vision: driving fast, snow or rain, obstacles, and aggressive drivers around us. These aren't particularly surprising. More interesting, though, is if we're talking on the phone. The "hundred-car study" mentioned in Vanderbilt's book showed that when experienced drivers got on their cell phones, they "began to look almost exclusively straight ahead, much more so than they did when they were not on their cell phones." This also holds true outside the car. Vanderbilt mentioned a study in Finland where "pedestrians using mobile devices walked more slowly and were less able to interact with the device, pausing occasionally to "sample the environment." In addition to peripheral vision and distractions, there's familiarity. The closer we are to home or work (that is, the better we know an area) the more likely we are to ignore the signs. Why? We know which signs are there; chances are we stopped reading them long ago. Same goes for very familiar signs. We recognize the shape, size, and color and make a quick connection without having to read it. Carl Andersen, a vision specialist at the Federal Highway Administration, told Vanderbilt about a study in which they intentionally misspelled "stop" on a red stop sign. After drivers stopped, then drove off, researchers asked them about the sign. The vast majority never noticed the misspelling. Here's another case that hits a little closer to home: I had an Australian traveler show me his copy of Signspotting. He had it open to a page that had a roadside billboard ad for McDonald's. "This sign is right by my house," he said. "I pass it every day. I don't understand why you included it in your book. What's so funny about it?" The sign, typical for McDonald's, had a big yellow McDonald's "M" right in front of the town's name, which happened to be Yass. It didn't take much imagination to read the sign as "MYass." I asked him to read it to me out loud. The penny dropped.

A fun little gift for travel-loving friends. I have seen such odd signs in other countries, but at least they are trying to communicate. I wonder how we sound to them?

The language here is not great for kids. Please read it before you give it to kids.

I own all four books in this series and love reading them frequently. The signs that actually exist are hilarious, but the editorial comments are even funnier. I have shared these books with others who have been equally amused.

I was disappointed with this book. I did not find it very funny at all.

this is the best of sign messups

This is a very funny book that makes one consider all the misguided information found on signs seen everyday all over the world.

Very funny book! Love them all!

More unintentionally funny signs. What's not to love? This series is great. They are, as a whole, funny. I've taken the others to work and everyone's enjoyed them. I can see this one being a hit as well.

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