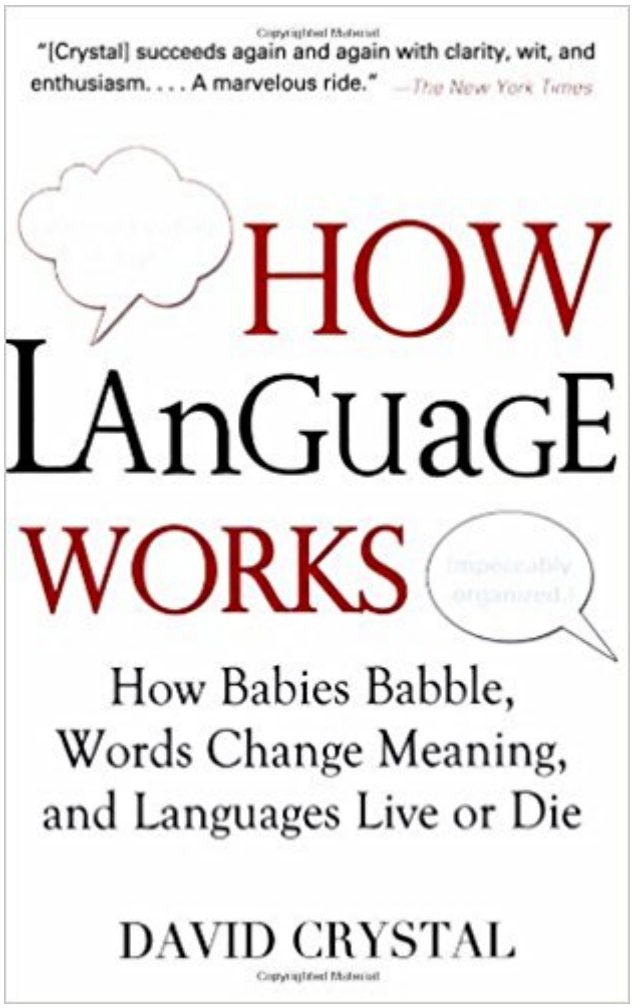
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# How Language Works: How Babies Babble, Words Change Meaning, And Languages Live Or Die




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## Synopsis

Steven Pinker meets Bill Bryson in this landmark exploration of language.  In the author's own words, "How Language Works is not about music, cookery, or sex. But it is about how we talk about music, cookery, and sex-or, indeed, anything at all." Language is so fundamental to everyday life that we take it for granted. But as David Crystal makes clear in this work of unprecedented scope, language is an extremely powerful tool that defines the human species.  Crystal offers general readers a personal tour of the intricate workings of language. He moves effortlessly from big subjects like the origins of languages, how children learn to speak, and how conversation works to subtle but revealing points such as how email differs from both speech and writing in important ways, how language reveals a person's social status, and how we decide whether a word is rude or polite.  Broad and deep, but with a light and witty touch, How Language Works is the ultimate layman's guide to how we communicate with one another.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. A world authority on language, Crystal (The Stories of English) offers an impeccably organized guide to language and communication that brings clarity to a scholarly subject, and is sure to become a standard reference. Written in an unadorned style, Crystal's chapters are purposeful lessons ("How we use tone of voice

Longtime language writer and linguistics professor Crystal (The Stories of English, 2004) offers a well-organized, thoroughly comprehensive guide to language and communication in 73 short

chapters. The passionate word enthusiast addresses every aspect of language, including how we learn to speak, read, and write; the physiology behind the formation of speech sounds; how we choose what to say; how gestures and tone of voice impact communication; how the brain handles language; and how language tells us where we are from. After beginning with spoken and written language, Crystal moves on to sign language, language structure, discourse, dialects, language families, and multilingualism. The book also includes diagrams of the human tongue, ear, and brain; a chart of Egyptian hieroglyphs over time; and illustrations of finger spelling. Although its size and subject matter may suggest otherwise, this volume is aimed at and written for general readers, and Crystal makes for an especially genial guide. Whether expressing his fair-minded assessment of the prescriptive-descriptive debate or knowledgably discussing the connection between dialects and social status, he proves to be both accessible and informative. Joanne WilkinsonCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This book is really beautiful - the fonts used and the layout are very distinctive. A++ on that.The book itself is a series of short chapters on a wide variety of language topics each of which could stand alone. It is interesting and well written, if a tad dry, but not too deep on any one topic. Think of a series of magazine articles in a magazine devoted to a particular interest, where the level of vocabulary assumes some knowledge of the topic. The chapters are all cross referenced - it would easily move to a web article.The breath of topics is very wide - from sounds and physiology to computer translation by way of grammar and language families. Overall it is very informative, but a book to take in small doses.

This book is fascinating. I found that I don’t actually read it all the way through, page by page, but skip around. This book could be read and re-read.

I enjoyed the book very much, Mr. Crystal writes about a verycomplicated subject, he shares his great knowledge in aeasy to understand and entertaining way.

It feels very complete. It covers so many areas of language and somertimes it even gets a bit too specific.

Excellent book. Very interesting

This book covers every aspect of language: the physiological, paralingual communication, nuances of language, and almost any other thing that you can think of involving language. It is from England so some of the spellings and phrasings are different, but I found it to be interesting, readable, and full of new information, based on the latest research.

A manual for me, written by the author I admire most.

Very useful

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