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By [Clifford Pickover](#)

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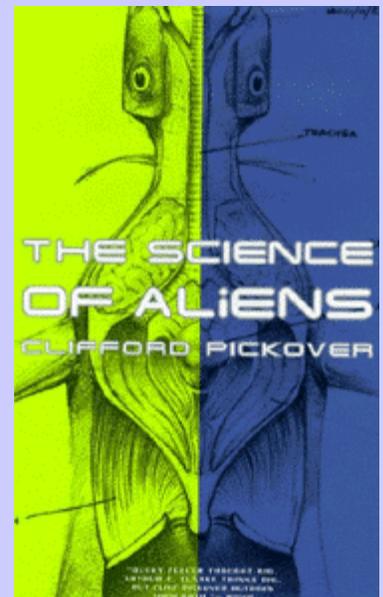
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5	4	3	5	5	2	5	4
Very High	High	Moderate	Very High	Stunning	Low	Wow!	High

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Credibility = Very High: In general, this category is a rating of the author's intellectual discipline and the strength of his argument (which are very high), not the veracity of his claims (which could be false in spite of the strong argument).

One of the most interesting books we have read in 1998. The author speculates on the form that intelligent life might take, based on our current understanding of biology and physics. Highly recommended.

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From the Book Cover

If extraterrestrials ever landed on Earth, they would find us extremely strange. Their first intimation of our existence might well be a presidential speech or the Olympic Games, a mud wrestling match or perhaps a T.V. show like [Ally McBeal](#) or [3rd Rock From the Sun](#). But, of course, they might seem equally strange to us. How strange? Their senses could be entirely different from ours-they might see in the infrared or "hear" radio waves-and they might look completely different from us.

What would aliens look like? An intelligent octopus-like creature is certainly plausible. What about odd numbers of limbs-a three-legged alien with three arms and three eyes? What about an entire planet of immobile, silicon-based "trees" that communicate with each other via electrical signals? The Science of Aliens gets weirder still. Could a giant interstellar cloud be "alive" and intelligent? Could creatures live at extremely high pressures and temperatures?

And which of these many possibilities would be similar enough to us that they could communicate with them, or they with us? Would they have any interest in abducting us? Would they want to have sex with us?

In classic Pickover style, here is scientifically-based speculation at the far edge of knowledge-and beyond.

Clifford A. Pickover, Ph.D., is on the research staff of the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center. He is a regular columnist for Discover Magazine and an Associate Editor for Computers and Graphics, Computers in Physics, Odyssey, and Theta. Previous books include Strange Brains and Genius, Keys to Infinity, Computers and the Imagination, Time:

A Traveler's Guide, Black Holes: A Traveler's Guide, and The Alien IQ Test. Dr. Pickover lives in Yorktown Heights, New York.

"Pickover just seems to exist in more dimensions than the rest of us." -- Ian Stewart, Scientific American

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