

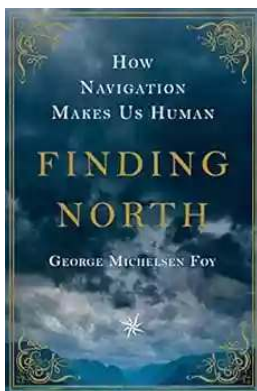
# Finding North: How Navigation Makes Us Human

Have you ever wondered how we, as humans, are able to find our way home or navigate through unfamiliar territories? The ability to navigate is a fundamental skill that has played a crucial role in our survival for thousands of years. In fact, navigation is deeply rooted in our biology and has shaped our development as a species. In this article, we will explore the fascinating world of navigation and how it makes us truly human.

## The Importance of Navigation

From ancient times to the present day, navigation has been essential to human survival. Our ancestors relied on their ability to navigate in order to find food, water, and shelter. Whether it was crossing vast oceans or trekking through dense forests, their survival depended on understanding their surroundings and finding their way back home.

Today, navigation continues to play a crucial role in our daily lives. From using maps and GPS devices to navigate through cities, to understanding the position of the stars in the night sky, our ability to navigate is deeply ingrained in our existence.



## Finding North: How Navigation Makes Us Human

by George Michelsen Foy(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 917 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 302 pages



## Navigation and Human Evolution

One of the most fascinating aspects of navigation is how it has shaped our evolution. The ability to navigate requires a complex set of skills, including spatial awareness, memory, and problem-solving. These skills have not only contributed to our survival but have also influenced our brain development over time.

Studies have shown that the hippocampus, a region of the brain associated with memory and spatial navigation, is significantly larger in humans compared to other primates. This suggests that navigation has played a significant role in shaping our brain structure and cognitive abilities.

## The Internal Compass

Have you ever wondered how birds are able to navigate thousands of miles during their annual migrations? While they may not have access to modern navigation tools, birds possess an incredible internal compass that allows them to navigate with pinpoint accuracy.

In recent years, scientists have discovered that humans also have an internal compass, known as the "sense of direction," which enables us to navigate our surroundings. This internal compass relies on a combination of factors, including our ability to detect the Earth's magnetic field, the position of the sun, and landmarks in our environment.

Furthermore, research has shown that our sense of direction can be improved through practice and experience. Just like any other skill, navigation can be honed and developed, allowing us to navigate through complex environments with ease.

## **The Role of Technology**

In the modern world, technology has revolutionized navigation. From the invention of the compass to the development of satellite navigation systems, our ability to navigate has been greatly enhanced by technological advancements.

GPS, or Global Positioning System, has become an integral part of our lives, guiding us through unfamiliar territories and providing accurate directions. However, as technology continues to advance, there is a concern that our reliance on navigation aids may diminish our innate ability to navigate.

It is important to remember that while technology can be a valuable tool, our ability to navigate is a fundamental aspect of being human. By understanding the principles and techniques of navigation, we can not only reconnect with our ancestors but also develop a deeper appreciation for the world around us.

## **Cultivating Our Navigation Skills**

So how can we cultivate our navigation skills in a world dominated by technology? Here are a few tips:

1. Explore your surroundings: Take the time to explore your neighborhood or nearby nature reserves. Familiarize yourself with different landmarks and routes, and practice navigating without the use of technology.
2. Use maps: While GPS systems provide convenient and accurate directions, challenge yourself to use maps instead. This will help you develop your spatial

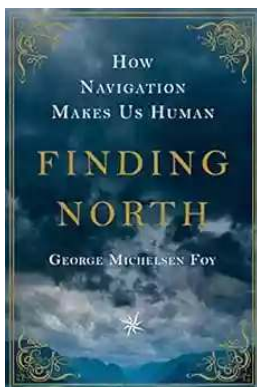
awareness and improve your ability to navigate in various environments.

3. Observe the stars: Spend time observing the night sky and familiarize yourself with different constellations. The position of stars can provide valuable guidance when navigating in open areas without landmarks.

4. Trust your instincts: In situations where technology fails or is unavailable, trust your instincts. Humans have an innate ability to find their way if they trust their instincts and rely on their internal compass.

Navigation is not just a skill; it is deeply ingrained in our biology and has shaped our development as a species. From our ancestors who relied on navigation for survival to our modern lives where technology aids our journeys, the ability to navigate is an integral part of being human.

By understanding and cultivating our navigation skills, we not only connect with our past but also develop a deeper appreciation for the world around us. So, the next time you find yourself lost or in need of guidance, remember that finding your way is more than just reaching a destination – it is a reflection of our humanity.



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Navigation is the key human skill. It's something we do everywhere, whether feeling our way through a bedroom in the dark, or charting a ship's course. But how does navigation affect our brains, our memory, ourselves? Blending scientific research and memoir, and written in beautiful prose, *Finding North* starts with a quest by the author to understand this most basic of human skills---and why it's in mortal peril.

In 1844, Foy's great-great grandfather, captain of a Norwegian cargo ship, perished at sea after getting lost in a snowstorm. Foy decides to unravel the mystery surrounding Halvor Michelsen's death---and the roots of his own obsession with navigation---by re-creating his ancestor's trip using only period instruments.

Beforehand, he meets a colorful cast of characters to learn whether men really have better directional skills than women, how cells, eels, and spaceships navigate; and how tragedy results from GPS glitches. He interviews a cabby who has memorized every street in London, sails on a Haitian cargo sloop, and visits the site of a secret navigational cult in Greece.

At the heart of Foy's story is this fact: navigation and the brain's memory centers are inextricably linked. As Foy unravels the secret behind Halvor's death, he also discovers why forsaking our navigation skills in favor of GPS may lead not only to Alzheimers and other diseases of memory, but to losing a key part of what makes us human.



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