

Topic Page: [sense organ](#)

Definition: **sense organ** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 a structure in animals that is specialized for receiving external or internal stimuli and transmitting them in the form of nervous impulses to the brain

Summary Article: **sense organ**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Any organ that an animal uses to gain information about its surroundings. All sense organs have specialized receptors (such as light receptors in the eye) and some means of translating their response into a nerve impulse that travels to the brain. The main human sense organs are the eye, which detects light and colour (different wavelengths of light); the ear, which detects sound (vibrations of the air) and gravity; the nose, which detects some of the chemical molecules in the air; and the tongue, which detects some of the chemicals in food, giving a sense of taste. There are also many small sense organs in the skin, including pain, temperature, and pressure sensors, contributing to our sense of touch.

Animal senses Research suggests that our noses may also be sensitive to magnetic forces, giving us an innate sense of direction. This sense is well developed in other animals, as are a variety of senses that we do not share. Some animals can detect small electrical discharges, underwater vibrations, minute vibrations of the ground, or sounds that are below (infrasound) or above (ultrasound) our range of hearing. Sensitivity to light varies greatly. Most mammals cannot distinguish different colours, whereas some birds can detect the polarization of light. Many insects can see light in the ultraviolet range, which is beyond our spectrum, while snakes can form images of infrared radiation (radiant heat). In many animals, light is also detected by another organ, the pineal body, which 'sees' light filtering through the skull, and measures the length of the day to keep track of the seasons.

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