

Stopping condition: I have considered enough possible explanations and criticisms. I am confident enough in my selection of the best explanation to use it

The cost of being wrong about seeing this dog is low

How important is it to be right about this question?

What is the best explanation for "I saw a dog"?
By Andy Dufresne, February 2020

There is a dog

[No criticisms] -> Best explanation

There is something that looks like a dog but isn't actually a dog

What?

Robot

Don't know of any robot that looks and moves similarly enough to be mistaken for a real dog.

Statue

It moved, and statues don't move

Cardboard cutout

It moved, and cardboard cutouts don't move

Other animal (Wolf, Coyote, Dingo)

Animals that look like dogs but aren't are not common in this area

It looks like a distinct dog breed I know (golden retriever) which is hard to mistake for other dog-like animals

I am hallucinating

Something has to cause a hallucination

Drugs

I haven't taken any drugs or eaten / drank anything under sketchy circumstances

Brain damage

I haven't been in circumstances where I should suspect brain damage (crash, fight, chemical spill).

I have no other symptoms of brain damage

Self-delusion

No one has indicated I ever deluded myself about physical objects before

I am not aware of any will to delude myself about seeing a dog

Self-delusion about physical objects like dogs is uncommon generally

I am the victim of an illusion

A dog is a complex illusion that would require an intentional effort to create (not like a "bent" stick in water)

Human intelligence + human technology created the illusion

No incentive / circumstances for the level of expense and difficulty given known technologies (ex: a magician with complex mirror arrangement or hologram)

I don't see any artifacts I'd expect with known human technologies capable of producing an illusion (projectors or video baffles, controlled lighting, physical barriers, screens/curtains, etc.)

Non-human intelligence and/or non-human technology created the illusion (alien, god, elf, etc.)

No known non-human intelligences or technologies capable of creating complex illusions of dogs