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10 Great Snake-Oil Gadgets

By Rob Beschizza November 17, 2007 | 8:41:32 PM Categories: [Religion](#)

GUARANTEED RELIEF FROM EARACHE, COGNITIVE DISSONANCE, PATHOLOGICAL CURIOSITY, MENTAL INFLAMMATION.



GADGET LINIMENT

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GOOD FOR EVERYTHING AN
ELIXIR SHOULD BE GOOD FOR

FREE ENERGY
NO REFUND EVER NECESSARY

Some gadgets change the world. [Others don't](#). These ones, however, are very effective at one thing in particular: teleporting money out of customers' pockets.



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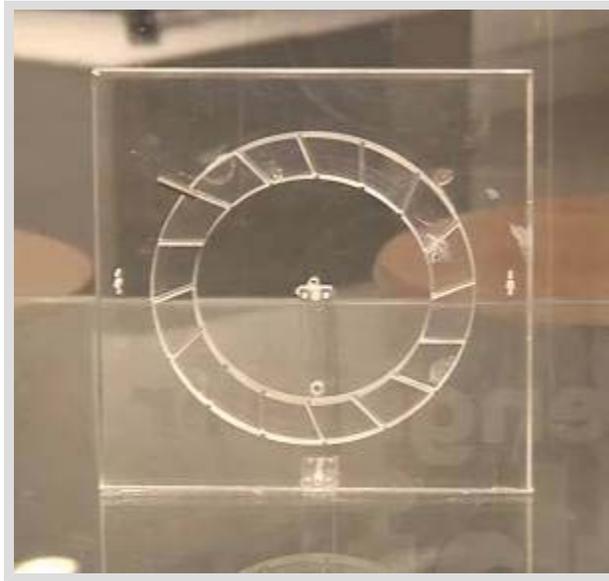
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Q-Ray Bracelet

The FTC smacked down Q-Ray's "ionized" bracelet [to the tune of \\$87m](#) after the makers made deceptive advertising claims. The \$200 placebo trinkets are still on sale, however — the ad copy just makes vague intimations of "wellness" and the like instead of specific medical claims.

Whether "ionization" even does anything, however, is a moot point. Tested by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at an electron microscopy lab, it found that the thing wasn't ionized at all. Even for true believers, it's a waste of wonga.



Orbo

When it comes to gadgets, perpetual motion machines are bullshit's bread and butter. Steorn, the Irish company behind Orbo, is only the latest in a long line of deluded, incompetent or fraudulent firms to claim the scalp of the laws of thermodynamics. File this one under deluded: enthusiastically setting up a public display, [the inventors were humiliated when it failed to operate](#). But wait! Steorn gave its deal to 22 scientists who'll "validate" the device. Don't hold your breath, chaps.

Perhaps it's art, a complex exploitation of media credulity and skeptics' blood pressure. Perhaps it's a clever-dick ad for Steorn's marketing abilities. What it isn't, however, is a free energy machine.

Think it might be real? For the love of Leibniz, get a freakin' clue: if it looks like a toy and the net gain is almost imperceptibly small, you're selling a measurement error.

Danie Krugel's DNA search device



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Marshall McLuhan may have seen technology as an extension of the human body, but we're not going to fall for this one: former South African cop Danie Krugel's "quantum" box, which he claims can locate anyone on Earth, when primed with a sample of their DNA.

Science-challenged bumpkins at Britain's Observer and Telegraph newspapers [fell for it hook, line and sinker](#). After Krugel approached the parents of missing toddler Madeleine McCann, then told them she'd been buried on a beach, the Observer described this hogwash as "forensic DNA tests" by a "detective renowned for locating abducted children."

Ben Goldacre of Bad Science called the reportage "[contemptible](#)." Krugel's led more than one bereaved family up the garden path, it transpires: The Daily Mirror delivered a [much-needed debunking](#).

The magical mystery box weds "[complex and secret science techniques](#)" with GPS to show exactly where the missing person is. Krugel, however, won't let anyone examine it. If anyone gets a chance, swap it out for one of Mother Mohiam's when he's not looking, would you? That'll teach him.



Harmony Chip

The [Harmony Chip](#) is so transparently useless as to be an object lesson in how drivel may be dressed up as science.

Everything is just as it should be. The appropriation of scientific terminology to tout snake oil. [Misrepresented research from real scientists](#). A website slathered in testimonials. [Vague medical claims](#) about pain relief, blood pressure and curing headaches. A [long-haired, bare-chested Yorkshireman](#) with a fake Eastern name who rambles emptily about the nature of innovation and who attributes commonplace platitudes to himself. Wait... What?

Harmony "revitalizes" blood and water, improves your golf swing, speeds recovery from injury and "personal development," and makes you "clearer" and "cleverer." It improves gas

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mileage, reduces tire wear, cuts emissions, reduces workplace turnover and absenteeism, cleans swimming pools, refreshes "exhausted" engine oil, and protects one from radio waves. It even does the dishes.

Buy the basic kit for \$200. Buy it with a pair of headphones — "probably the most powerful self-development accelerator on the planet" — for \$537. Go get yours, now! Do it!



Philip Stein Teslar Watch

Described by Wired's Katie Dean as "[a watch powered by snake oil](#)," Teslar watches contains a chip (uh oh) that purports to emit a frequency that "neutralizes the electromagnetic fields" output by cellular telephones, computers and radios.

Most scientists don't think such fields are harmful anyway, but even if they were, a feeble wristwatch wouldn't protect you from the radio waves rattling around every human head on planet Earth.

"There is not a chance in the word that [it] will do anything but lighten your wallet," says John Molder, a professor of radiation oncology at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Here's the blurb, straight from the company's website: "When a Teslar watch is worn on the

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left wrist, the frequency goes into the triple warmer meridian on the left wrist, and then travels throughout the body, canceling out harmful static caused by electromagnetic fields (ELF) along the way."

This snake oil starts at \$600.

Screen Mist

Clarins' [Expertise e3P](#) "ultra-sheer screen mist" purports to offer a "Magnetic Defense Complex" with Rhodiola Rosea and Thermus Thermophilus, to protect you from all that horrible radio pollution.

At about \$40, this *bottle of failure* takes the electromagnetic biscuit.

The Guardian, for one, found its makers [unwilling or unable to cite](#) the scientific research that they said supports their claims.

The main cause of premature skin aging is sunlight, for which the cure is darkness or sunscreen. If you want to get away from EM radiation, spraying water on your face is not an effective way to do so—even if it does have bits of dead Siberian weeds in it.



MPion MP3 Player

Done listening to the MPion's stash of music? It won't take long, with only 128MB of flash storage on board.

The real feature of this device is is "negative ion generator," which is said to clean pores when you smudge the unit over your face. Yours, for only \$170, in Japan.



Even if this thing harmed bacteria, the effect would be more than compensated for by the torrent of them acquired by smooshing the grease from your own hands all over your chops.

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Harmonic Products's EMP Power Modulator

With [so many crackpot devices out there with alleged wellness benefits](#), it's hard to pick one out. Ah, the agony of choice.

Harmonic Products's EMP Power Modulator, however, is like the Telsar Watch's big daddy. Plug it in, and it supposedly emits "non-Hertzian frequencies" to remove "harmful" radio waves from the building and allow biological de-stressing. It also purportedly makes electrical devices safer and more efficient.

Reports of success tend to be anecdotal rather than evidential, but don't let that stop you buying this AU\$300 toy. Actually, do let it stop you.

The sellers of this particular device don't like to be called on their nonsense: when one critic, Daniel Rutter, [upbraided the Power Modulator online](#), its makers issued a series of nutty legal threats and had [his website taken offline](#). Say "Hi" to the Streisand Effect, guys. Maybe it'll help shift some of your junk.

The thing is just an extension cord with a ghetto line filter: three aluminum plates held close to a copper conductor running the length of the device. The plates have holes in them, because Harmonic Products also sells them as pendants.

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A Beech Knob

If paying thousands of dollars for a [volume control](#) isn't spendy enough, try upgrading it with a pair of \$485 wooden volume knobs, replacing the standard bakelites.

There's just no reason to pay this much for wood, even for committed audiophiles. Look at it this way: unlike speakers, signal processors or even cables, there's no engineer out there dedicating his life to polishing wooden volume knobs.

This well-known pearl of rot may, unfortunately, now be a thing of the past. The [product page seems to have been removed](#). Where will the world get its \$485 volume knobs? Silver Rock beech knobs 4 lyfe!

Dowsing Rods

I can't let you go without mentioning the all-time classic scam-friendly gadget. Be it two precision-engineered brass rods, dangling crystals or old hazelwood, divining is to the technology of magical thinking as the humble flintknap is to invention itself.

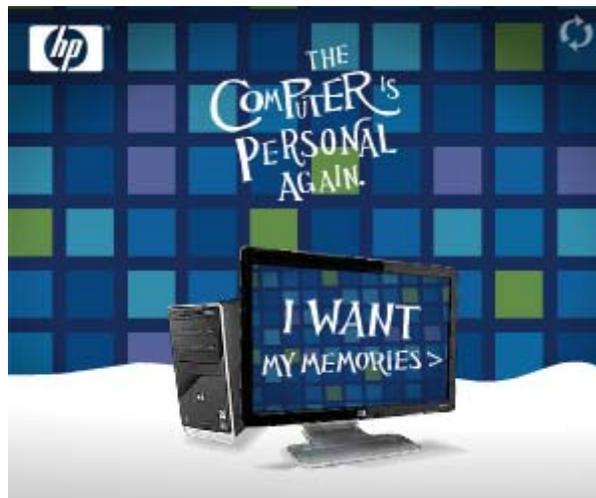
Usually associated with the search for water, dowsers search for pretty much everything: buried gold, gemstones, hydrocarbons and murder victims are just the beginning of a practice stretching back millenia.

Generous skeptics and even some dowsers maintain that the rods serve to amplify near-imperceptible twitches caused by the suppressed wisdom of the unconscious mind. Unfortunately, such inspired ideomotoring vanishes under test conditions, like just so much Randi-fodder.



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I remember back when I was a kid that my Grandfather hired a "water witch" equipped with divining rods to locate a suitable location in which to dig a new well for irrigation after the existing one went dry. I remember watching with interest as the man walked over a selected area in a grid until the rods crossed and he marked then spot with a stake. 20 years later the well is going strong with still some of the tastiest water I have ever drunk.

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 5:10:14 AM

I guess my response to that would be, 'Did you dig in any other areas in your yard not selected and not find water?'

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 9:32:11 AM

I actually went across the street to watch the man who was dowsing on a vacant property. He held the dowsing stick overhand. When the rod began pointing down, I could hear the friction from his hands and see his hands turning red with the force. I couldn't lift the rod back to a horizontal position although he let me try. He said he didn't know what it was but he made a living by it. He did point to water, his hands were sore looking afterward and he made 2 grand. I think I'm a believer.

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 1:25:14 PM

After the business where they worked went belly up, a friend of my mom's worked for a company that sold devices which claimed to block harmful waves from 'electromagnetic pollution'. It looked like a ribbon of metal that was to be placed into the cell phone.

I checked out the hokey website with cheesy glowing testimonials and a 'scientific study' that claimed to prove it worked, but anyone with half a brain would realize that six testimonials of feeling more energetic from individuals who may or may not exist combined with a silly looking bar graph didn't mean squat. Plus the study seemed to have been done by some private Russian lab that didn't even have a mailing address, website, phone number or any other publications.

I tried to convince my mom that the whole thing was a big scam, but having no scientific training, was convinced it worked, since there was a 'scientific study' (I'm saying this with barely a straight face) otherwise the government would have pulled the product. The company disappeared two weeks later.

Posted by: Sick of bulls*it products | Nov 18, 2007 2:59:15 PM

Wow, two out of the three commentors so far are total morons.

Posted by: Emesis | Nov 18, 2007 2:59:28 PM

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Every single double-blind experiment testing Dowsing has shown absolutely no evidence for this nonsense.

Posted by: Jeff Winterbaum | Nov 18, 2007 3:04:25 PM

You left out the cellphone range enhancers!

[http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?](http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=140179038476&ih=004&category=20380&rd=1&ssPageName=mem_guide:1#ebayphoto)

[ViewItem&item=140179038476&ih=004&category=20380&rd=1&ssPageName=mem_guide:1#ebayphoto](http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=140179038476&ih=004&category=20380&rd=1&ssPageName=mem_guide:1#ebayphoto)
hosting

Posted by: Rowr | Nov 18, 2007 3:38:45 PM

Surprised Mormonism didn't make the list.

Posted by: BJ | Nov 18, 2007 3:50:41 PM

Yeah, the 'water witch' probably just knows where the best places to dig for water are by other signs... the rods have nothing to do with it.

Posted by: water witch | Nov 18, 2007 3:54:16 PM

I saw someone take two metal rods and walk around a 50x50 foot garden to find the exact position of the well pump. didn't believe so tried it at different houses and always worked... I thought it was just something that worked

Posted by: me | Nov 18, 2007 3:55:30 PM

Maybe I'm silly, but I always thought if you dug deep enough, eventually you will hit the water table. I remember watching my Grandfather test out some diving rods he made out of two clothes hangers. The magically crossed when he walked closer to the pond! Secret science I bet.

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 4:08:49 PM

My uncle goes weak at the knees when crossing under ground streams. He's never become a water dowser but from his stories I think it's a bit naive to rule it out with out any prior knowledge. I'm not going to say that all 'water witches' aren't con artists though.

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 4:08:54 PM

Two 36" brass welding rods bent at one foot leaving two feet of straight lengths, held parallel, will always cross and then return to parallel, when the holder walks over a pipe, buried metal, etc. Don't know what makes it work, but it always does. Try it, oh skeptic! No, don't just be pissy, really TRY it, and see for yourself. Truly amazing, and cheap.

Posted by: Scott Searl | Nov 18, 2007 4:14:16 PM

Two 36" brass welding rods bent at one foot leaving two feet of straight lengths, held parallel, will always cross and then return to parallel, when the holder walks over a pipe, buried metal, etc. Don't know what makes it work, but it always does. Try it, oh skeptic! No, don't just be pissy, really TRY it, and see for yourself. Truly amazing, and cheap.

Posted by: Scott Searl | Nov 18, 2007 4:14:20 PM

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I've tried dowsing with two metal rods, I didn't know where the water and sewer lines in the yard were, but when I walked over them the rods would cross. This was repeatable and very amazing to experience.

There's something to it.

This is the biggest ripoff:

<http://www.tornado-fuelsaver.tv/default.asp>

Posted by: Dan | Nov 18, 2007 4:16:33 PM

just to clarify what I said... in a garden someone walked around with two bits of wire, they crossed and upon digging down a foot or so the well pump was found. There was only 1 pump in the garden.

Posted by: me | Nov 18, 2007 4:19:06 PM

I so love my copper dowsing rods...

They work,jmo

many blessings every body....

Posted by: imarealwitch | Nov 18, 2007 4:22:59 PM

Gold star for the Dune reference. We need more of them!

Posted by: Kringle Brap | Nov 18, 2007 4:25:54 PM

C'mon... the cell phone range extender / RF filter is by far better than any on this compiled for Digg top ten post. The only thing better historically was the solar powered clothes dryer... wherein the buyer received twenty feet of clothesline and some clothes pins.

Posted by: William Nett | Nov 18, 2007 4:34:36 PM

yeah, Proctor & Gamble have been doing this for years with their "Pro-Vitamin complex" and "Nanosphere's" in their shampoo..

Posted by: tigger | Nov 18, 2007 4:48:15 PM

I like the way the zune ad at the bottom looks like it's the next item in the list.

Posted by: hello | Nov 18, 2007 5:44:32 PM

I'll add my support for dowsing rods. The brass welding rods do do something. When I tried them out, I didn't do any thorough testing by digging, but there were times when they would move (for me it was always away from each other, not crossing), and the places where they would were consistent with everybody who tried them. Interestingly, some people got stronger effects than others. Not something I'd count on for any serious business, but a fun party trick.

Posted by: S | Nov 18, 2007 5:45:40 PM

Just because you can't prove or like making fun does not mean it does not exist. Do your research on other sites and try witching for yourself before you spew bull crap.
bob

Posted by: you are so full of yourself | Nov 18, 2007 6:12:00 PM

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lol at dowsing advocate comment invasion

Posted by: Rob Beschizza | Nov 18, 2007 6:29:39 PM

I'm a pair of brass rods and I'm getting a kick out of these comments.

Posted by: Brass Rods | Nov 18, 2007 7:10:01 PM

This stuff will stop selling the same day people stop being religious. I don't know how people can giggle at these things and think they're stupid when they themselves believe in a religion that is hundreds of times more ridiculous.

Christianity, Scientology, Mormonism, Islam, astrology, fortune telling, and the items on this page are all on the same level.

Posted by: James Justin Harrell | Nov 18, 2007 7:35:58 PM

scientology yes. but the major religions are just a tad more complex.

also, i think dowsing is a sham. but my parents hired dowzers for 3 houses they built and it worked every time. thats not saying that if they dug somewhere else it wouldnt have worked either. but they didnt have to dig far if that means anything.

imo, the dowser just knows what signs to look for. rock formations, tree density, grass, topography, etc..

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 8:05:46 PM

i own a pair of brass rods. the things really do work well for beating my child

Posted by: mind | Nov 18, 2007 10:10:22 PM

hahaha

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 10:42:20 PM

Well if you're talking about snakeoil you should look at this company in Australia that thinks it has...wait for it...broken Newton's Third Law. Their entire business apparently is to defy Newton's Third Law of motion. Check out www.rtiel.com and see see how elaborate a smoke and mirror show it is...

Posted by: Jeffery Flanagan | Nov 18, 2007 10:49:51 PM

Seriously, dowsing really does work. I wouldn't normally have even added my support, but seeing all the comments come out in support has inspired me to speak up too. I've done it for years, and the sh!t is no joke. Try it yourselves. 36" Brass rods, bent at a 90 degree angle at 12" mark. Hold the 12" parts loose in your fists, so they can swivel. Try it. Just. Try. It.

Posted by: Mike Dicorvera | Nov 18, 2007 11:00:02 PM

Anyone who says dowsing doesn't work will also need to admit that the earth has no magnetic field, and that the sun rotates around the earth because you are just that ignorant.

Posted by: | Nov 18, 2007 11:27:30 PM

ITT one nutjob presents himself as an army of dowsing supporters

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Posted by: desu | Nov 19, 2007 2:25:51 AM

Dear Witching advocates:

Please collect your million dollars from James Randi... <http://www.randi.org/research/index.html> Until then, STFU!

Posted by: pablo | Nov 19, 2007 4:15:59 AM

If dowsing rods are a scam, it is indeed very strange that the county diggers use those instead of their \$40k equipment when looking for water pipes around here. Private contractors also prefer dowsing over expensive electrical gadgets - which also only works part of the time.

Greetings from Norway.

Posted by: ola | Nov 19, 2007 5:23:33 AM

as laughable as orbo is, it hasn't actually 'teleported money from customers pockets'.

Posted by: blah | Nov 19, 2007 7:59:06 AM

I'm another supporter of dowsing rods.

About 10 years ago, I worked with a surveying company for several months. One day, one of our jobs was to survey in a new oil drilling site. This particular site had a known pipeline running through it, but it was buried many years earlier, and all traces of where it might be were gone. In order to properly locate the well-head, we needed to know where that pipeline was.

Our electronic locator was being used by another crew that day, so the senior surveyor I was with did something unexpected. From behind his seat, he pulled out a nice case, and from that case took out two brass divining rods... about 2.5 to 3 ft long, bent at about the 8 to 12 inch mark at a 90 degree angle. Then, holding them loosely in his hands, he proceeded to walk slowly back and forth over an area of about 100x100 ft. Every time he walked over a particular area, the rods would cross over in his hands. He then marked these spots with a flag. He proceeded to do this through the whole area we were working. Later, while we were working on surveying the actual well site, the other crew showed up with the electronic locator. The surveyor then used the electronic locator to double check his marks, and I was amazed to see every mark was within a foot of the actual location.

I kid you not, this is real. There is something about a flowing liquid that causes a magnetic field, and brass divining rods are able to pick up this field. I've never seen it done just to locate water, but to find *moving* liquid underground, I totally believe it.

Posted by: Dallas | Nov 19, 2007 8:09:20 AM

Wow. I thought the article was funny, but what's even funnier is the pack of morons who STILL claim dowsing works, and have taken time out of their lives to defend it here! lol
I want to know where these people are, I have bridge in Brooklyn for sale...

Posted by: Joe | Nov 19, 2007 8:13:01 AM

Let me reiterate Pablo's sentiments

All you water dowsers claiming it works, go here to become a millionaire:

<http://www.randi.org/research/index.html>

Until you've taken the challenge kindly keep your silly superstitions to yourself.

Posted by: Jared | Nov 19, 2007 8:25:15 AM

Talk about lame, un-investigative journalism, throwing stones in a glass house. Crappy, Rob.

Posted by: Carl | Nov 19, 2007 8:31:11 AM

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I am wearing my \$500 aluminum foil hat which prevents your skeptical thoughts from reaching me!
I have bought all of these products and they are working wonderfully, especially the beechwood volume control knobs, which also also emit protective "Zargon 12" rays channelled from Pleiadeian dolphins!

Posted by: Bellecat | Nov 19, 2007 8:31:49 AM

I think the anti-dowsing comments are all one guy who works for a company that makes water-locating sonar-type device and charges \$500 to survey property for water sources.
I've seen it work to find a leak in an irrigation pipe where no visible signs of water seeping existed. I've seen it used to dig rural wells several times.

Posted by: Wes | Nov 19, 2007 8:32:33 AM

In a recent public televised test 10 top UK Dowsers were asked to find a pail of water under 5 plastic covers. Despite giving the Dowsers numerous retries, not one of these people could find the pail of water more than random chance.
End of story.

Posted by: Stuart Halliday | Nov 19, 2007 8:35:15 AM

Dowsing works - the trick is to keep the audience small - put the rods in the hands of someone who does not know where the pipes are in your yard walk them over the pipes and watch the rods cross - as far as a fancy juts get two coat hanger and bend them into right angle - works fine - balance in hand so slightest twitch will move them

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 8:39:57 AM

Oh yes one other point have them think of water

Posted by: azrael | Nov 19, 2007 8:41:43 AM

I don't know about finding dead bodies, but I can locate underground pipes and electrical lines with a piece of bent coat hanger wire. I have no idea how it works, and honestly neither give a dang, nor worry if anyone believes it. Matter of fact, I've used them to locate underground utilities before we did excavating, and always got dead on with my dowsing than the locate companies did with pipe horns.
As far as randi's challenge is concerned, they'll never pay up, because they'll always make something up to keep from paying, so why waste time messing with them?

Posted by: Schroeder | Nov 19, 2007 8:44:39 AM

My father owns a water well drilling business. He 'witched' for a suitable location to drill for a client recently and picked out 8 spots where water was. The client said 'No' and wanted the well someplace else. Dad dug down 400 feet before the client gave to OK to stop and dig in one of the 8 spots. Dad hit water in 150 feet.
Also, not everyone is able to 'witch'. My grandfather never could, but my Dad (as previously shown) and I both can. I even took two wire coat hangers and helped some friend find a water leak in their yard a few years back.

Posted by: JD | Nov 19, 2007 8:45:47 AM

I love the classic testimonials in the comments.....

"I tried it and it worked".....

Yeah, and I have friends and family who have seen the Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, UFOs, etc....

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If it worked, then when it was truly tested (under scientific conditions) it would work.
I am sure some people think that they are really psychic....but I doubt any of them can prove it

Posted by: PuckSR | Nov 19, 2007 8:46:59 AM

Wow, I really don't know what to say about "divining rods". This stuff has been around since seers advised Mesopotamian king, all the time these devices of "supernatural power" are elaborate hoaxes. People who believe it are a perfect example of how blind our world has become. For some odd reason humans have always loved lies, hatred, and lawlessness. We don't care what's thrown at us as long as it satisfies us. It's so sad.

Posted by: Michael | Nov 19, 2007 8:47:49 AM

@Dallas

If "something about a flowing liquid" causes a magnetic field that can be picked up by a pair of brass rods, why can't it be detected by more scientific means? If all it takes is a pair of brass rods, why even have more sophisticated electronic instruments?

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 8:54:00 AM

Dowsing works. Whenever I'm near an area of moisture, my rod goes straight up.

Posted by: Eric | Nov 19, 2007 8:56:24 AM

Wow, metal rods able to detect other metal objects. That isn't water dowsing but I won't burst your bubble explaining simple physics.
Meanwhile the comments prove why these things sell. Enlightened society my ass.

Posted by: Vikingsson | Nov 19, 2007 8:58:17 AM

Have any of the "dowsers" actually made a blind test? Blindfold yourself and let a friend spin you around a few times. Then, take the rods and have the friend mark where they cross. See if it is repeatable. I would bet that it isn't.

Posted by: chemist109 | Nov 19, 2007 8:58:53 AM

My dowsing rod abruptly shifts 90 degrees from the downward position to the horizontal position within seconds of divining my wife's naughty bits. It truly is a miracle.

Posted by: Vi Agra | Nov 19, 2007 8:59:20 AM

I can't get over the huge number of supporters of dowsing / divining rods -- the comments *themselves* are turning into snake oil!

For all those people who actually believe in this dowsing nonsense, let's think about this logically.

Under what scientific principle do rods of (arbitrary) metallic design cross in the presence of water buried hundreds of feet below the ground? (Where is the energy source?)

Why is it that the dowsing rods appear to work with water of arbitrary depth?

Why does it only work for water, and not subterranean oil?

Why would dowsing only work with water underground, and not be influenced by the water vapour in the atmosphere?

If dowsing rods cross over top of water sources, why do the parallel, metal girders of bridges (which span bodies of water) not experience a force which causes the girders to cross?

Posted by: K | Nov 19, 2007 9:03:25 AM

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While I'm not saying 'Yes' or 'No' to divining rod / dowsing argument, I can say that yes, *flowing* water and other liquids do create an electromagnetic and/or an electrostatic effect. Why else do they put static warnings all over fueling pumps, and ground aircraft during fueling? One of the things to look for when doing an MRI magnet install is the location of electric lifts, railway lines, car parks, and yes, sometimes even the water main.

That effect *may* give some clue as to why divining rods *may* work, but I doubt that it would actually be strong enough.

It would be easy to test and gather data - get a plot of land, bury some pipe put in a pump and a tank, and let people try to find it. I think I could do well with a Gov't grant to run the experiment....

Posted by: Micheal | Nov 19, 2007 9:03:50 AM

yeah, water dowsing is so fake it is even on the usgs.gov site.

<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/dowsing.html>

Posted by: Bobcat | Nov 19, 2007 9:07:03 AM

I am psychic, PuckSR. I can predict with great accuracy what I am about to say. It's uncanny!

Posted by: JuJu | Nov 19, 2007 9:08:01 AM

Previous post: "Dowsing works - the trick is to keep tha audience small"

Oh yes -- a classic property of flim-flam. Because audience size affects the laws of physics, you know.

Posted by: John | Nov 19, 2007 9:08:12 AM

Great article, but I think Wired should've at least had one nod to a more recent scam that was fomented online- such as Alex Chiu's magnetic immortality bracelets. God, that site has got some of the funniest ramblings on earth- the dude is truly bananas.

Posted by: El Duderino | Nov 19, 2007 9:08:14 AM

Dowsing is a bullshit. If you don't believe me than prove me wrong and win \$1,000,000 here:

<http://www.randi.org/joom/content/view/38/31/>.

Before you apply see here for what a fair dowsing test looks like: [http://video.google.com/videoplay?](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7461912885649996034)

[docid=7461912885649996034](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7461912885649996034)

(Just don't complain about sun spots and "negative vibrations" after your results are no better than pure chance.)

Posted by: George | Nov 19, 2007 9:08:42 AM

I'm going outside to walk around my yard with my rod in my hands. Every time I do that, it always ends up a big mess.

Posted by: Floyd | Nov 19, 2007 9:09:33 AM

My dad was a "dowser." He was also a civil engineer, an inspector for the local highway department. He'd bring out his rods and dowse for buried cables so his crew wouldn't cut them while digging (this was back in the '60s, before "Miss Utility"). And, he'd find what he was looking for.

Since he showed me how to dowse, and I've done it "succesfully", I guess you'd have to call me a dowser too.

Want to hear the secret?

IT DOESN'T WORK. YOU'RE JUST GUESSING.

Sure, he found buried cables, but that's really because he already knew where they should be - he was a civil engineer! He thought he was getting info from some mysterious effect via his dowsing rods.

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And my dad passed away never knowing that.

Posted by: Richard Krehbiel | Nov 19, 2007 9:12:37 AM

Matter of fact, I'll show Randi how it's done and let him do it for free. No, I'll give him a dollar for his troubles.

Posted by: Schroeder | Nov 19, 2007 9:15:06 AM

@Jeff Winterbaum

Re: Every single double-blind experiment testing Dowsing has shown absolutely no evidence for this nonsense.

Paradoxically, if you're right, then this is strong evidence FOR dowsing. If there were nothing to it, a few of the experiments would have worked by pure chance.

Posted by: Pete Austin | Nov 19, 2007 9:15:30 AM

I used to believe in Dowsing, Uri Geller, psi, etc. What a massive let-down when I tested myself and found it didn't work when measured.

Run a double-blind test on yourself:

Have a friend mix up three bottles, one with water, two without.

Divine the one with water perfectly 10 out of 10 times. It should be no problem. Use glass bottles, they don't block the rays like a thin aluminum can.

P.S. Don't look at your friend, they can give subtle clues.

Convinced me that Dowsing was a lesson in self-deception, sold by con artists.

Posted by: Paul Nagelkerke | Nov 19, 2007 9:17:39 AM

I've used divining rods. They work. I'm a skeptic. I don't know if it's repeatable under controlled conditions;

I know that I can locate a PVC waterpipe 8' deep 9 times out of 10, and then hit it with a probe. I use two

coat hangers, cut and bent. No money involved, and no, I won't sell you a pair.

It's not foolproof, I don't have an explanation, but it works for me.

If it doesn't work for you, oh well.

Posted by: yan | Nov 19, 2007 9:19:58 AM

Schroeder wrote:

Matter of fact, I'll show Randi how it's done and let him do it for free. No, I'll give him a dollar for his troubles.

By all means do so. Randi himself said that he would like nothing more than to see proof of some paranormal activity. He's not out do disprove those who make wild claims, he simply provides fair, double-blind scientific tests. Please, do the test if you're so confident. Seriously. I would love it if divination was possible. If you're not in it for the money (common excuse to avoid the test by the way) than just take the \$1M and donate it to charity. Right now it's just sitting at Goldman Sach's gaining interest. Try it. Just. Try. It.

Posted by: George | Nov 19, 2007 9:21:24 AM

yan: "It's not foolproof" because GUESSING isn't foolproof. And it sometimes works because sometimes you GUESS RIGHT. And if the thing you're dowsing for happens to be an area of your particular expertise, your GUESSING can BEAT THE ODDS, making you think you're receiving information from a system that DOES NOTHING.

Posted by: Richard Krehbiel | Nov 19, 2007 9:27:16 AM

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yan wrote:

> I've used divining rods. They work. I'm a skeptic. I don't know if it's repeatable under controlled conditions;

- Hence it's chance. You only remember the hits, not misses. Selective memory at work.

> I know that I can locate a PVC waterpipe 8' deep 9 times out of 10, and then hit it with a probe.

- Wow? 9/10? What does that mean? Are you over a ground where the odds by pure chance of finding a pipe are 9/10? If not than hurry and take Randi's test, get a \$1M, bragging rights, Nobel Prize, and prove me wrong

> It's not foolproof, I don't have an explanation, ...

- I do. You only remember the times you are right and forget when you've been wrong. I'm not saying you are being dishonest, I just think you are fooling yourself. Watch this (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7461912885649996034>) to see what an actual dowsing test looks like. It's elaborate and fair. If you can succeed in something similar than you'll be \$1M richer. If not, and it only works "sometimes", than you're no better than flipping a coin.

Posted by: George | Nov 19, 2007 9:29:13 AM

I love it! And the wonderful irony is that any truly revolutionary innovation will look exactly like this junk until it's proven out. I suppose that's why people fall for this nonsense so readily.

Posted by: David | Nov 19, 2007 9:30:58 AM

As to the validity of Dowsing... I'm a tad torn. I consider religious and superstitious thoughts to be rather ignorant in general, but I also know from experience I am not arrogant enough to say I know everything. As a devout atheist, I remember years back chucking at my uncle as he tried this snake oil scam. It made no sense, and from everything I knew shouldn't work. None the less, he was able to find running water/large bodies of water underground with it. He had me try, and regardless of my thoughts on it's stupidity, the bark on the Y shaped branch ripped off in my hand as we walked over a spot that we later confirmed to be an underground creek when we dug down to it. I don't know why it work, honestly I don't think it should work. But after having tried it, and seen it used by certain people... I have no real rebutal to it. As much as I love the safety and comfort of a materialistic and realism based life, I find as I grow older that I am still surprised by that which should not be according to what little we know.

Posted by: Clay | Nov 19, 2007 9:33:54 AM

Posted by: jon | Nov 19, 2007 9:34:25 AM

You know I used to believe all the crap about the "Dowsing", used to watch the SciFi shows with it showed when I was younger. Till I got the idea from one of the shows, took 2 metal hangers straightend em up as much as I could and started walking around the yard, funny thing was i walked all over the place for about 40 minutes and nothing would happen, tried it by the garden hose, on and off.... the sprinklers (above ground mind you), my little brothers dog.... and nothing, even tried right above the septic tank....where i knew there would be water (sorta). I had even broke down and after getting a few strange look while standing next to the television trying it and not getting any results gave up and called it quits with that, then went out and grabbed 2 brass tubes outa the garadge and cut a few lengths off and tried it again, and guess what.....nothing happened.

For those of you who think this really works ive got a few other things you showed see me do...like moving a pendulum without moving my body, or making a pen bend with only two fingers. Straight up Howdine shit i tell ya.

Posted by: Doubtfull One | Nov 19, 2007 9:36:00 AM

A new scam is hydrogen generators that "boost" your car mileage. Just hook up the water splitter to the "unused" electricity from your alternator and feed the brown gas into your intake manifold. Unfortunately, the boost you get from the gas is less than the additional drag from the alternator.

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Posted by: tom blalock | Nov 19, 2007 9:38:50 AM

what happened there ?

anyway.. i'm a trained engineer, i work in IT and I'm generally a sceptic, but I've seen, several times, in different locations, that he had no prior knowledge off, a guy (also a trained and very successful engineer) locating and following water pipes under concrete and across fields with nothing more than a couple of bent welding rods for dowsing with.

so.. if science doesn't explain it does that mean that it doesn't happen, even though (tens of) thousands of people can give testimony to having seen it happen ?

or does it mean that its something we can't explain yet? (a bit like electricity a few hundred years ago - after all, electricity must not be possible as at one time science had no means of explaining it, unless of course we know now everything there is to know about everything which is a little bit arrogant to think so)

Posted by: Jon | Nov 19, 2007 9:40:24 AM

As a field engineer on over a 100 miles of pipe (sewer&water), Dowsing Rods appear to work. It was a little scary to see a gas company worker use them to locate buried gas lines. Amazingly they worked.

Posted by: Andrew | Nov 19, 2007 9:43:58 AM

There will always be a market for crap.

Enough people are crazy/gullible/impulsive enough to believe in or buy crap. Ergo, someone will always try to sell it.

Posted by: Dunbal | Nov 19, 2007 9:44:37 AM

Rob you couldn't be more wrong. Dowsing Rods are the google of the real world. I found my uncle's stack of old playboy magazines he hid from us, my car keys when i lose them, change in the couch, the source of the terrible smell in my fridge, and my true love!

I don't know what i'd do without them...

Posted by: vince | Nov 19, 2007 9:46:50 AM

I saw the Zune add and thought it was in the list!

Posted by: Dan | Nov 19, 2007 9:49:52 AM

Lol @ the dowsers.

It's nonsense. Sort yourselves out. It's a well known and old enough claim to have been investigated many many times and still be found lacking in both scientific explanation AND results.

Maybe not all "water witches" are con artists. I'm sure some of them believe in what they're doing. They're just wrong.

Posted by: Dave | Nov 19, 2007 9:50:58 AM

I love the one or two guys posting under a dozen different names in an attempt to make us think a bunch of people believe in dowsing.

I think it's true -- I held a Logitech USB Dowsing Rod 3000 over my laptop and it found all the bugs in my code! 4 REALZ! I think it has something to do with the magical energy of the Bluetooths.

Posted by: Greg | Nov 19, 2007 9:53:10 AM

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@Pete Austin
You're a bloody idiot.

Posted by: zas | Nov 19, 2007 9:56:46 AM

my grandfather has successfully dowsed for water for wells on his ranch plenty of times.
and you can buy a diode which many electricians use for \$15...yes, a lighter wallet, and maybe it works, but certainly not HUGE waste. If it seems to work for you, \$15 isn't bad.

Posted by: heather | Nov 19, 2007 9:57:56 AM

I think anyone who sells "high end" audio cables that carry digital signals is selling bullshit. For example, my local hi-fi company wanted to charge me £50+ each for three SP/DIF cables. I bought them on Amazon for five pounds each. What's the difference? How can gold-plating or whatever make any difference to digital signals? Hand-made Cat5 anyone?

Posted by: Matthew Stibbe (Bad Language) | Nov 19, 2007 10:01:07 AM

It is true that dowsing can sometimes seem dubious, people use dowsing to find inanimate objects, missing cats etc.

But jeez. For finding water lines, it actually does work. Try it, you can do it with \$0.50 worth of used brass and zero knowledge of divination :P ... hardly a scam. Hold the rods loosely in the fingers at one end.. walk over a water line. I've done it myself and guess what.. they crossed!
Don't know why it works, but it does!

Posted by: st | Nov 19, 2007 10:06:58 AM

Magnetic sensing is used to find metals and oil underground.
From an aircraft.

That equipment is pretty sensitive, but the main motivation for having a plane do it is the size of the area surveyed.

I see no reason that exclude water from that sort of sensing.

Meaning, dowsing rods may or may not be possible, I haven't the knowledge to say it does or doesn't work.
Or how it would work.

I would love to see it proven properly. The burden of proof is on the dowzers, however.

If the rods react in some way to changes in magnetic fields, then fine.

However I won't buy an explanation of "magic" or "it just works".

Posted by: ari | Nov 19, 2007 10:10:57 AM

I hadn't heard of Dowsing since being a kid and my parents hiring one to find a well on our property out in the country. Even at that young age i remember being a skeptic as he held his bent wires and seeming found running water underground. First, our property was so full of running water I don't think you could dig a well without hitting it and when the dowser let me hold the other end of the y branch I remember thinking "he could just be forcing it down with his other hand." I proceeded over then next couple of weeks to try and duplicate the effect to no avail. Thanks for this link,
<http://www.randi.org/library/dowsing/index.html> the ideomotor effect provides a plausible explanation to why people are so convinced by this. I'll have to research it more.

Posted by: Jimmy Zoo | Nov 19, 2007 10:13:17 AM

OK, for the diving rod skeptics:

If it's true and I am guessing, and using the rods helps me improve my odds of guessing, then BINGO!

They've done their job.

I just know they save me a lot of time probing for pipe. Some people 'have luck' using them, some don't.

For all I know it's like chess: Grandmasters are no better than babies in remembering random setups, but can remember and analyze actual game positions.

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Maybe the divining help me 'channel' the knowledge I have; I don't know. WTF, it works for me.

Posted by: yan | Nov 19, 2007 10:13:52 AM

I'm a well driller. While on a job looking for an abandoned pipe with a backhoe I had a customer come out with dowsing rods. He used them and every he I crossed above where the pipe was, they moved. I was skeptical, so I took the dowsing rods and tried, same results. Digging with the backhoe did indeed show the abandoned steel pipe to be in that exact location. I didn't wanna believe, but after that I was a believer....

Posted by: DaveM | Nov 19, 2007 10:14:54 AM

Got to love James Randi,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOsCnX-TKIY>

Posted by: Dr G | Nov 19, 2007 10:17:02 AM

I used to drill water wells. People would often ask "How do you know where on the property to drill to find water?"

I found that the most effective response was, "I had the choice of either drilling up or down, and took a chance on down."

Underground water exists in layers not columns. By knowing a little about the wells of the two closest neighbors and factoring in elevation it's easy to guess with 90% accuracy how much water you will get at a given depth anywhere on the property... wait aren't those the same stats that water dowasers claim?

Posted by: Rambler | Nov 19, 2007 10:22:39 AM

Hey wes, the white people from Waco called, they want their paranoia back.

Seriously people, there are so many things wrong with the statements being made my head will exploded if I try to address all of them. Brass is a copper and zinc alloy: neither individually nor as an alloy are they magnetic. Not that that has anything to do with anything. Please, do some research beyond anecdotal stories. Divining rods are right up there magnetic bracelets and healing crystals.

If you believe in divining or dowsing or whatever you want to call it, you're most likely a kook and I kindly request you relieve yourself from making important decisions that affect people aside from yourself.

Posted by: Zashi | Nov 19, 2007 10:27:46 AM

How about wifi speed spray?
<http://j-walk.com/other/wifispray/>

Posted by: ted | Nov 19, 2007 10:32:32 AM

Jesus enough with the dowsing crap! Unless you're one of the water witches using it to make money, why do you care if people think it's BS?

Posted by: Andrew | Nov 19, 2007 10:37:44 AM

@Andrew

Wide spread ignorance in my society and my world is dangerous to society at large. Why do we bother with education if it doesn't matter what other people think or know?

Posted by: zashi | Nov 19, 2007 10:41:05 AM

I have seen a dowsing rod in action, the guy doing it found the water, told the people who were going to

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drill for water right where he found it with a dowsing rod...and guess what: water?!

Posted by: Michael | Nov 19, 2007 10:50:33 AM

"Let's think about this logically"

Yes let's.

"Under what scientific principle do rods of (arbitrary) metallic design cross in the presence of water buried hundreds of feet below the ground? (Where is the energy source?)"

You move the rods into the force field so you're supplying the energy. The scientific principle is unknown.

That doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

"Why is it that the dowsing rods appear to work with water of arbitrary depth?"

Depths between 100 and 1000 feet is a very limited range.

"Why does it only work for water, and not subterranean oil?"

There could be a hundred reasons. It all depends on the mechanism. But oil is far more viscous than water, tends not to form flows underground, possibly has fewer dissolved metallic ions, etc. etc.

"Why would dowsing only work with water underground, and not be influenced by the water vapour in the atmosphere?"

The technique is supposed to find volumes of space in which water is highly concentrated. Any such technique would naturally ignore water vapour.

"If dowsing rods cross over top of water sources, why do the parallel, metal girders of bridges (which span bodies of water) not experience a force which causes the girders to cross?"

That depends on the magnitude of the forces involved. Bridges experience forces of a few Newtons from light breezes etc. and don't suddenly bend.

Look, there may be a physical effect here, or there may not be. But not knowing what it is is not equivalent to proving it doesn't exist. A scientist experiments, he doesn't pontificate about the "known laws of science" as if they prove anything beyond their own limited scope.

Posted by: Eddie | Nov 19, 2007 10:52:39 AM

How about that video "What the Bleep do we Know"

My parents showed me that crap and by the midpoint I was standing up and yelling at the TV, the depth of the BS made me so angry.

Posted by: Carter | Nov 19, 2007 10:53:29 AM

@Michael

That's because there's water pretty much everywhere if you dig. Look up the idea of a water table.

It's been said before, but it's hard not to find water.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 10:54:03 AM

@Eddie

You're right, scientists experiment to find if there is an effect. And every experiment so far has shown there's nothing going on and it's a sham.

Posted by: Dave | Nov 19, 2007 10:55:36 AM

Why dowsing rods work:

Dig deep enough, you will always hit the water table, grade 10 science. It's not the rods that work, it's the fact that the water table goes up or down depending on the fresh water being absorbed... no rain, no gain.

Therefore if you don't dig deep enough to get below, it will "dry up"

It's just like ouija boards. They only work because you want them to.

Posted by: Nila | Nov 19, 2007 11:09:16 AM

For all of those that are saying to go to the Amazing Randi, this is not an occult or supernatural event,

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which is what he offers his reward for. So, keep up the excellent debunking and insulting that you're doing, as you are the ignorant turd in this.

Posted by: ByteMe | Nov 19, 2007 11:14:49 AM

Dowsing with copper angles does work. Better for some people, worse for others. I've tried it on telephony wires and verified with a more "scientific and electronic" device with a transmitter connected to the wires and a search device above ground.

I was a sceptic, but as a humble civil engineer in Computer technology I can admit that there are things in our world that not yet have been explained but still can work.

Posted by: Lars | Nov 19, 2007 11:17:37 AM

So wow. Someone has way too much free time. Isn't it amazing how there are suddenly SO many well drillers that read wired? That by itself defies logic and i think i should apply for that \$1mil.

Now seriously, I'd be much more amused to see the IP log for the feedback posted here. Want to bet we've got quite a few of the same? Want to bet which posts match up with that IP list? Heck, the majority of them are so similar it's laughable anyway.

But anyway, nice article overall. Too bad they didn't include some of the \$1000+ power cords for high end stereos. I guess that would have piSSed off some of their readers :)

Posted by: Anti-Douser | Nov 19, 2007 11:22:21 AM

Working as I do for a company that makes computers for oil exploration companies, I find it insane that they all prefer to spend millions of dollars on expensive computers when bent 36" copper rods will do even better. It makes you wonder how come those companies make all the money and dowsing oil exploration companies don't. Hmmm.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 11:22:24 AM

@ <http://blog.wired.com/gadgets/2007/11/10-awesome-gadg.html#comment-90413770>

That's funny. I am suprised all of Christianity didn't make the list. Actually...make that all organized religion.

Posted by: DA | Nov 19, 2007 11:22:54 AM

My parents hired a douser to locate scraps of waterpipe that were left behind when an old chicken coop was dismantled. He found several, and we roto-tilled the yard without finding any more pieces.

Posted by: Dennis | Nov 19, 2007 11:26:43 AM

"For all of those that are saying to go to the Amazing Randi, this is not an occult or supernatural event, which is what he offers his reward for." -Anonymous Idiot

"By far the most common claim made for the Million Dollar Challenge offered by the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF) is dowsing." -James Randi
<http://www.randi.org/library/dowsing/>

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 11:27:43 AM

If we spray religious zealots with wifi speed spray (mentioned above) then maybe :)

For dowsing, I repeat, the burden of proof lies with the dowsers. Just as with the Homeopaths, crystal healers and perpetual motion machines.

Posted by: ari | Nov 19, 2007 11:33:26 AM

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"While I'm not saying 'Yes' or 'No' to divining rod / dowsing argument, I can say that yes, *flowing* water and other liquids do create an electromagnetic and/or an electrostatic effect."

While it's possible that rushing water in a pipe can generate static electricity, the static created by your rubber-soled shoes on the ground would probably have a greater effect, and neither static field would be strong enough to deflect a coat-hanger.

"Why else do they put static warnings all over fueling pumps, and ground aircraft during fueling?"

Because fuel pumps tend to emit gasoline vapors which can be ignited by a static shock, so they are warning people to make sure that they are electrically grounded, and cannot produce a spark, while the fuel is flowing. They're not implying that the fuel itself is the source of the static.

"One of the things to look for when doing an MRI magnet install is the location of electric lifts, railway lines, car parks, and yes, sometimes even the water main."

That is because iron pipes are magnetic, and the magnet in the MRI machine is strong enough to rip them out of the wall. Brass rods, however, are not magnetic, and will not react to a magnetic field.

Posted by: Zan | Nov 19, 2007 11:35:07 AM

Vikingsson obviously does not even know about basic physics. here's a 6th grade level knowledge boost for you: non ferrous metals (brass) will not react to ferrous metals(steel) or even other non ferrous metals (copper).

every time a BLIND test is done with people that can douse they magically lose the ability. It has been proven time and time again it's as fake as reading the future and minds.

But most americans are stupid enough to believe in ghosts so it's not a surprise to me. I bet many here believe the moon landings were faked.

Posted by: foobles | Nov 19, 2007 11:35:40 AM

Hey "I-Can-Find-Water-With-Sticks" idiots... If you're so sure you could always apply for James Randi's \$1,000,000 prize.

Think of it, do what you're good at and win a million dollars in a few hours.

Should be simple, eh?

Posted by: Grub | Nov 19, 2007 11:38:46 AM

I bet the kooks who believe in water witching also believe in God(s), Jesus, ghosts, the Easter Bunny, Santa, the Cat in the Hat, 6000 old Earth, "Evolution is a lie"...

No wonder this country is in such terrible scientific shape.

Posted by: Not_a_Retard | Nov 19, 2007 11:42:47 AM

How about HeadOn and whatever-On? They can't be sued because the inane repetitive TV commercial never says it does anything - which is exactly correct.

But real pharmacies like Walgreens sell this snake oil!

I just saw one for "male enhancement" "making that certain area" "larger, guaranteed!" Maybe it just makes your ankles swollen. I guess if you complain they can say "Which area did you think it enlarged?"

Posted by: Mike Easter | Nov 19, 2007 11:45:45 AM

Many of the kooks sound like the exact same person

Posted by: Boris | Nov 19, 2007 11:50:31 AM

@ByteMe:

Actually he does offer the reward for dowsing: <http://www.randi.org/library/dowsing/>

Posted by: Biting You | Nov 19, 2007 11:50:32 AM

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i'm glad to see James Randi's influence here. Use your brains people

Posted by: big joe | Nov 19, 2007 11:53:50 AM

So where's 'Global Warming caused by mankind'?
Surely that should rate up close to #1.

Posted by: Greg | Nov 19, 2007 12:01:03 PM

Great article! I too would have liked to see you nail "Head On - Apply directly to the forehead" - that one is complete placebo.

And for the folks that believe in dowsing...

I have special *magnetic* brass poles. They were given to me by Jesus himself, and blessed by the Easter Bunny. When the tooth fairy comes over to my house every week to drink beer, we always go out back and dows for wells just for fun. Last time we found a well so deep, we could see China on the other side. It was the awesomest thing ever.

Posted by: Sad Guy | Nov 19, 2007 12:02:48 PM

How stupid is the world?

Just LOOK at the comments here in support of dowsing rods.

I really do need to go make up some total bullsh!t "electro-ionizing miracle patch" and get an infomercial and retire in the next year a wealthy man. If I run out of cash, I'll just market my new "magneto-radio field de-stresser and energy booster" and make another million. If I still run out, I'll just go sell "premium ionized metal alloy dowsing rods, 500% more effective than traditional dowsing rods!"

Geez.

Posted by: Corby Ziesman | Nov 19, 2007 12:04:17 PM

Dowsing for water lines and buried electrical cables, pipelines etc works. We used it without fail before digging holes for power poles when I worked for a power line company as a summer job when I was younger. This is not using sticks to find water, but bent copper rods to find actual pipelines. If we had a positive we would dig by hand, and sure enough there was a line of some kind down there. I am software developer with no time for fantasy, I'm sure its simply magnetic fields. It looks like magic, but it works.

Posted by: James Laidler | Nov 19, 2007 12:10:34 PM

The comments reveal more stupidity than the article.

Posted by: fubar | Nov 19, 2007 12:12:03 PM

I have a set of anti-dowsing rods. If I cross them, then wherever I walk they create a water table that follows my path. Except for one time when I crossed them over a drain in the street, and a stray kitten appeared. It really happened. I wasn't a believer but then it happened and now I am I can't explain it but it worked. I lost the sticks so I can't show you either sorry.

Posted by: nuclear wessels | Nov 19, 2007 12:27:32 PM

Several responses:

"There is something about a flowing liquid that causes a magnetic field, and brass divining rods are able to pick up this field. I've never seen it done just to locate water, but to find *moving* liquid underground, I totally believe it."

Brass is non-ferrous and non-magnetic and hence would not be affected by magnetic fields. So... you're wrong. Also the only flowing liquids that cause magnetic fields are flowing ferrous metal (such as the

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molten iron at the Earth's core). If flowing water cause magnetic fields then aircraft would not be able to use their magnetic compass in the rain, or even flying in clouds and I can assure you that magnetic compasses are not affected by rain. Or how about this: put a compass next to your kitchen faucet and then turn the faucet on. Did the needle move? Nope. Argument refuted, so... you're wrong. Thanks for playing. "There is something about a flowing liquid that causes a magnetic field, and brass divining rods are able to pick up this field. I've never seen it done just to locate water, but to find *moving* liquid underground, I totally believe it."

Again, brass is non magnetic and can not be affected by magnetic fields and flowing liquids don't cause them anyway. Water is a conductor and does not allow static charges to build up.

They put those warnings on fuel pumps and aircraft because there have been cases when a static charge builds up on the vehicle or fuel handler and if the charge jumps to ground in the presence of the highly flammable fuel vapors then the fuel handler and likely the vehicle and much around it will cease to exist. The static discharge at a automobile fuel pump is usually from the driver getting out of the car with cloth seats or from the latent charge on a plastic fuel container.

The charge on an aircraft is from friction with the air (drier air=more static charge) moving over the skin of the craft of the propeller/rotor blades. Since most aircraft ride on rubber wheels the charge has no place to go until the jetway or grounding cable touch it.

"Christianity, Scientology, Mormonism, Islam, astrology, fortune telling, and the items on this page are all on the same level.

...

Posted by: James Justin Harrell | Nov 18, 2007 7:35:58 PM

scientology yes. but the major religions are just a tad more complex."

No, they're not. You only believe that because you were probably raised in one of those religions and they are all basically the same. All religion is based on puffed up stories and mysticism. The 'invisible man in the sky who created everything' is no more or less plausible than 'we're all put here by aliens' when you look at it objectively.

Posted by: Gerard | Nov 19, 2007 12:28:15 PM

Ok, a little science lesson:

Brass (and copper) are NOT MAGNETIC. Don't believe me? Pass a magnet over your divining rods. Even if water produced a magnetic field equivalent to the supermagnets in an MRI, it wouldn't move your rods.

The reason the rods "work" is that your subconscious little brain is working a massive Monte Carlo simulation in the background, and sending unconscious signals to your body to lean, twist, and twirl the rods where it "expects" the imaginary underground water/pipe/cat. The better your natural intuition, the better your results.

Posted by: Richard Tallent | Nov 19, 2007 12:40:49 PM

When I was 11 I believed in dowsing for about 10 days. I saw a show on it, made a set. And they worked! My father believed in them too. Then I got to thinking and decided to test it. Try these experiments yourself.

1 Get a bucket of water and 2 people explain to one person that the rods will go inwards when near water and explain to the other person that they will go outwards. You will notice that the power of suggestion is real and I find THAT more interesting than anything else.

2 After they "prove" it to themselves that it works. Just cover the bucket up in some way. And have several other empty buckets covered the same way. Have them "detect" the water about 20 times and check to see how often they got them right.

3. Here is another fun one put the rods in a holder that isolates the rods from individual hand movements. I placed the rods in an iron bar with two holes on either end. Then just hold on to the bar. You will notice that they don't "work" anymore.

Like I said I did these tests when I was eleven. I did step one to disprove it to myself, I needed use steps 2 and 3 to convince my dad.

Posted by: Jester | Nov 19, 2007 1:00:52 PM

Hate to break it to you kids but dowsing for water lines works. Dismiss me as weak-minded, as another creation of the one guy posting all these responses (paranoia anyone?), or for no reason whatsoever. I've seen it happen with my own two eyes too many times to say otherwise. It's one thing to be a skeptic, but it's quite another to berate people who have seen it because it "sounds like it's just magic". I thought it was ridiculous too, even after two or three hits. Eventually you can't deny what's happening right in front of you. Inability or unwillingness to change your beliefs in the face of evidence is a hallmark of religious types,

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no? I'm interested in the science behind dowsing if anyone knowledgeable cares to cut through the teen angst.

Posted by: Tim B | Nov 19, 2007 1:01:03 PM

Since I've never used/seen dowsing rods at work, I can't comment on whether I think dowsers have any sort of legitimate claim. However, I do have some comments for some of you anti-dowsers...

Before you call someone an idiot and refer them to this Randi Whatever site, take a look at the twenty other posts that have already directed people there. Who, exactly, is the idiot?

Also: Strange that all these pro-dowsing posts are similar, yes? Maybe not. What are dowsing rods supposed to do? Find water. So, you're probably going to see more posts about how someone "found water with dowsing rods" than posts about, say, finding a '66 Camaro with dowsing rods, because, well, they aren't supposed to find cars. Also; who's more likely to try dowsing? People who are looking for water/pipes; ie engineers and etc. I have never used dowsing rods, because I have no particular need to find underground water.

Maybe dowsing works, maybe it doesn't. But you people who insist that it doesn't, and mock everyone who believes, are no better than religious zealots AND obnoxious atheists who feel the need to cram their opinions down everyone else's throat.

Posted by: Chris | Nov 19, 2007 1:03:54 PM

Most you people bitching and moaning about how illogical dowsing is need to actually try it in an objective manner.

Most of you people claiming that dowsing works need to actually try it in an objective manner.

Posted by: Chris | Nov 19, 2007 1:07:06 PM

I have demonstrated dowsing succesfully many times but one time in particular sticks in my mind. I was out with a group of freinds who were very skeptical. I didn't have my regualr brass rods with me so I fashioned rods from two wires bent at 90 degress. I was a tad concerned at using these makeshift rods but never mind, I I thought. Straighaway after I began, I found water running directly beneath our feet. My firends weren't convinced but we dug down with a hatchet. After just a couple of inches, a jet of clear fresh water shot about eight feet into the air! Well, boy, they were convinced then!

Sadly, at that point, our boat sank beneath us and we all drowned. But I felt so stongly that dowsing works that I've come from beyond the grave to tell all you skecptics so.

Posted by: Ferd 'Skeeter' Drabbins | Nov 19, 2007 1:18:58 PM

I don't know about the dowsing rods, but I do believe the drunk part.

Posted by: Drew | Nov 19, 2007 1:22:02 PM

What, nary a mention of the magical sticker you can place on your cell phone that is supposed to increase your reception (despite it being on the battery), or increase your battery life? Come on, I think everyone knows of someone that had one of those on their phone at one point.

Posted by: Rob Stevens | Nov 19, 2007 1:33:45 PM

The Australian Skeptics hold the Mitta Mitta Muster water divining test every few years in the small town on Mitta Mitta. You can see a video of the 2002 one at: [http://video.google.com/videoplay?](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4694530584288972114)

[docid=4694530584288972114](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4694530584288972114)

No one has done any better than average and not even come close to claiming the AU\$110,000 prize.

If you believe that you can really locate water when you do not know where it already is, it would be well worth the flight to the next one ;-)

Posted by: Andrew Knight | Nov 19, 2007 1:46:50 PM

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Reading these comments has been loads of fun! It's incredible (and vaguely unsettling) that so many people still believe so fervently in dowsing. It's like believing in astrology or tossing salt over your shoulder. And I thought we had progressed!

The subject of dowsing has been debated extensively, and as has been said many times, there has been no evidence. How can you believe something that sounds patently impossible, has no scientific basis and no corroborating evidence?

Still, definitely an interesting afternoon's read...

Posted by: Arjun Seshadri | Nov 19, 2007 1:48:26 PM

Someone wrote:

While I'm not saying 'Yes' or 'No' to divining rod / dowsing argument, I can say that yes, *flowing* water and other liquids do create an electromagnetic and/or an electrostatic effect. Why else do they put static warnings all over fueling pumps, and ground aircraft during fueling?

and I replied:

Because of static charge from OTHER locations like, say, you stepping out of your car, the people refueling the airplane, etc.

Electrostatic charges dissipate into the electrical ground provided by the earth so they couldn't be detected no matter how close you are to it. That's why lightning rods have a wire that goes into the ground, etc.

Sorry, there's NO scientific evidence that dowsing works in the least.

Posted by: Eric | Nov 19, 2007 1:49:33 PM

You people missed the best one.

Penis enlargement cream.

Apply and rub vigorously for 5 minutes and YOU YES YOU will have a larger penis.

Posted by: RR | Nov 19, 2007 1:49:39 PM

How much money are you willing to waste for the entertainment value?

When the phone company needs to lay new underground fiber-optic cable, they call a central service that sends out technicians for each type of utility, who mark the existing layouts with spray-paint across the ground. They certainly don't hire magical dowsers to perform this critical service, or they'd have a huge mess on their hands.

Posted by: Ed McWellington | Nov 19, 2007 1:55:32 PM

this stuff will or will not work at the age of 13 i figured out that if it works and works well enough to be a product that can block something harmful, the army would've bought it and stopped all production. Most people know that if it works so well why are they selling it to us and no to some one with way more money?

And no one needs that stuff on it is good for the world, or we want to share our good fortune, and my fav it's good for every one to have one for (insert reason here).

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 2:00:08 PM

What? No mention of Monster Cables or other "magic" audiophile cables?

<http://www.belt.demon.co.uk/>

Posted by: uh_clem | Nov 19, 2007 2:02:32 PM

If dowsing rods are a scam, it is indeed very strange that the county diggers use those instead of their \$40k equipment when looking for water pipes around here. Private contractors also prefer dowsing over expensive electrical gadgets - which also only works part of the time.

Greetings from Medieval Europe.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 2:11:18 PM

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Has anyone else seen the Q-Ray bracelet commercial? Some Olympic sprinter is going over how wonderful the product is by saying (I kid you not) "last year I only thing I changed was my Q-Ray bracelet and my new coach; now I run even faster" - or some variation of it.

So, obviously, the new coach had nothing to do with it. Love it!

Hee, hee dowsing...

Posted by: Brent | Nov 19, 2007 2:16:18 PM

If dowsing really works for anyone here, I suggest you make yourself an EASY million dollars, by taking the Amazing Randi Challenge. Seriously, take the challenge, and get a million. Come one, it works for you, don't it??

<http://www.randi.org/research/index.html>

Please come back and report on your results, we await breathlessly.

- Andy

Posted by: Andy | Nov 19, 2007 2:32:30 PM

I think some comments deserve answers:

"Why else do they put static warnings all over fueling pumps, and ground aircraft during fueling?"

Because static electricity can cause sparks, which can ignite the fuel and cause bad things. Wow. That was a hard one to figure out.

"One of the things to look for when doing an MRI magnet install is the location of electric lifts, railway lines, car parks, and yes, sometimes even the water main."

Wow. You are installing an equipment that radiates an electromagnetic field right ? You have water nearby.

Is that water, oh I don't know, inside a pipe maybe ? Any piece of conductive metal (which usually a metal pipe is) subjected to a variable magnetic field will develop an electric current. Wow. This is heavy physics dude!

"or does it mean that its something we can't explain yet? (a bit like electricity a few hundred years ago - after all, electricity must not be possible as at one time science had no means of explaining it, unless of course we know now everything there is to know about everything which is a little bit arrogant to think so)"
Wow. I mean .. wow. Just because science can't explain something, that doesn't mean it isn't possible to do scientific testing. For this kind of thing (potentially unexplainable), the way to do it is to remove ALL other possible factor. So you blind the person, spin him around a bit, and have him try and divine at an completely unknown location (take him there blindfolded). Also make sure you do enough of these tests, and on some of those locations there isn't anything to be found (half would be good). The result would prove it to be either true or false. No need for scientific explanation until it can be proved to be true.

"I think anyone who sells "high end" audio cables that carry digital signals is selling bullshit."

Not necessarily. Signal distortion on cable is quite possible. The connectors also can make a big difference. How well isolated those cables are is also important. I'm not saying a lot of them aren't useless, and that they are not overpriced about 99% of the time, but your reasoning is flawed.

"Magnetic sensing is used to find metals and oil underground."

Until you understand how that process works (and it is not magnetic a lot of times), please refrain from using it as an example. For starters, it is an ACTIVE process. Do your rods emit eletromag waves and then measure the reflected energy (just one processed used for some cases) ? No ? I fail to see the correlation then.

"If it's true and I am guessing, and using the rods helps me improve my odds of guessing, then BINGO!

They've done their job."

Scott Adams (from Dilbert) recommends sprinkling some sodium bicarbonate inside your shoes too. (You asked for this answer, I'm sorry).

"You move the rods into the force field"

You are right. YOU move the rods. Thank you for the clarification.

"Depths between 100 and 1000 feet is a very limited range."

No it is not.

"A scientist experiments, he doesn't pontificate about the "known laws of science" as if they prove anything beyond their own limited scope."

Yes, but it can prove if something exist. Proving something exists is actually easy (proving it doesn't is hard). So, with so many diviners around, I wonder who not a single one have proved it does. Proved to others, I mean, not to themselves.

"For all of those that are saying to go to the Amazing Randi, this is not an occult or supernatural event, which is what he offers his reward for."

Actually, he offers the reward for dowsing too. <http://www.randi.org/library/dowsing/>. Now go there and claim your million.

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"I am suprised all of Christianity didn't make the list. Actually...make that all organized religion."

Thats because they are not selling something .. Oh wait ... My mistake.

"While it's possible that rushing water in a pipe can generate static electricity"

Actually, even taking into consideration water is NOT a good electricity conductor (and it is not), it is not enough, under any conditions, to generate static electricity when in friction against any known material.

"Brass rods, however, are not magnetic, and will not react to a magnetic field."

Oh really ? Then how can you explain that dowsing uses electromagnetic fields to detect running water ?

Oh wait, you are on the scientific side here. I'm sorry.

"So where's 'Global Warming caused by mankind'?"

Anyone who makes that claim should be taken out and shot. However, global warming can be INFLUENCED by mankind. And indeed it is.

"I am software developer with no time for fantasy, I'm sure its simply magnetic fields."

Sure you don't have time for physics either. The magnetic field produced by those line is not enough to move those copper rods even if their were suspended in a vacuum. Let alone being held in a hand (friction anyone ?). Oh, did I mention that copper is diamagnetic ? What is why they use it in electrical transformers (besides being a good conductor).

But you all go ahead and continue believing on dowsing. Don't let facts get in your way.

Posted by: Rodrigo | Nov 19, 2007 2:39:37 PM

Dowsing, schmowsing... They definitely missed some outstanding audio snakeoil, like this drivel:

"Brilliant Pebbles is a unique room & system tuning device for audio systems and satellite TV. Original (Large) Brilliant Pebbles is a 3-inch clear glass bottle containing various minerals/stones. A number of highly-specialized, proprietary techniques are used for preparation/assembly. Brilliant Pebbles acts as both a vibration "node damper" and EMI/RFI absorber, depending on application, via atomic mechanisms in the crystal structures."

<http://www.machinadynamica.com/machina31.htm>

Less-than-brilliant rocks between the ears then...

Posted by: Del | Nov 19, 2007 2:47:40 PM

I find the simply stated vs petulant nature of some pro/con enthusiasts to be a bit ironic. I don't believe in divination rods, but I am not going to decry the possibility, on the other hand. Studies have shown that American science studies are actually doing well, of late. Most people, in most places of the world can be considered 'ignorant' when posed with specific questions that the interviewer has studied recently beforehand. Life is a daily exercise, and ones focus usually lies there more-so than it does esoterics that will not be used in the function of their living.

Posted by: TMG | Nov 19, 2007 2:49:27 PM

@DOWSING MORONS: Go bury yourselves

in the desert with enough oxygen and water for say...four hours. Then hold a jug of water in your hands during this time. We'll narrow down where to dig to a 100 meters square. Then get one of your buddies to use dowsing to detect the water in the jug. If you live dowsing works. OK? Any takers?

Posted by: balance | Nov 19, 2007 2:51:47 PM

You forgot to mention Vista.

Posted by: Philip Hastings | Nov 19, 2007 2:51:49 PM

Talk about your placebo effect. Dowsing simply doesn't work. Those who think it works are just too weak-minded to understand that they've been fooled.

Three cheers for James Randi!

Posted by: Not Mystified | Nov 19, 2007 2:56:22 PM

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I must need a tin foil hat too seems my brain isn't functioning. I thought there would be less nuts in this fruit cake.

Oh, I daydream the future but I'm dead so it is kind of boring.

Posted by: QRay | Nov 19, 2007 3:00:11 PM

I love the comments by those who say we should listen to them because they claim to be engineers. And we should believe you are an engineer, why?

Posted by: Jay Cline | Nov 19, 2007 3:05:21 PM

With all the dowsing posts here I wonder if it isn't the brass industry at work here.

Posted by: brass | Nov 19, 2007 3:11:01 PM

Gee, after all these folks tell me that dowsing works, I should be really worried about losing my US\$1,000,000 prize! About 80% of those we've tested, have been very convinced dowsers, and not one of the hundreds have succeeded. I have to wonder why... Well, the offer is still on, so come on, folks, apply and we'll send someone to test you! Go to <http://tinyurl.com/ysxjmv> and get started!

Posted by: James Randi | Nov 19, 2007 3:21:46 PM

Actually, non ferromagnetic conductors like brass can react to changing magnetic fields, it's called induction. But if dowsing worked through induction it would be measurable. Paranormal stuff can't be scientifically measured simply because it doesn't exist.

Posted by: Brendon | Nov 19, 2007 3:36:39 PM

I can't believe the anger displayed by some of you supposedly rational people. I'm also a bit skeptical of dowsing for water with a forked willow stick for a well.

That said, I do know that if you take two stiff pieces of wire, and bend them at right angles, and hold them loosely in your fists, with the ends resting on your little fingers, just about anybody can locate buried pipes, electrical cables/conduit, even non-metallic water and sewerline lines. I've used this method many times for nearly 50 years. I was shown this method by a plumber I worked for one summer when I was in high school. I've mostly used wire from metal coat-hangers, sometimes 12 ga. unisulated copper wire. Many times I have no clue where within 25 to 50 feet where the line I need to find is located. I know that it works for lines buried up to 6' deep, and will put me within 2' of the line. I have a technical background and have worked in construction and communications most of my life.

I have thought a lot about what the scientific explanation might for this. I do think it may have something to do with magnetic fields.

Copper and brass are not magnetic but the live human body is. Pure water is not magnetic, but virtually all ground water and the water piped into our homes and businesses carries a bit of ferrous material.

Electrical, phone, and catv lines have induced fields--even when no current or potential is switched on.

If you don't think the human body has a emf field-- just disconnect the cable from your tv and hook up an old fashioned rabbit-ear antenna, tune in to a weak uhf signal, then touch the antenna, and check out the reception.

There is way too much hookum and snake-oil in the world, but this one deal works. It doesn't anything ('cept a few pennies for a piece of wire).

Posted by: Jack Watson | Nov 19, 2007 3:41:45 PM

It's easy to poke fun - whistling by the graveyard - But ... my dad used a dowser when geologists failed to find water on his property despite drilling many test holes over a period of four days. Now my dad is a respected anesthesiologist with 40+ years of experience. He is a medical scientist. But he is smart and humble enough to know he can't know everything and to keep an open mind. He figured he had little to lose so he listened to locals and hired a dowser. (I think he paid him \$40). The guy used a classic wooden

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dowsing fork. Now it could be psychosomatic - maybe the dowser could detect the water without the stick, but whatever, the guy found water within 20 minutes. They drillers rolled their eyes but drilled anyway and were *very* surprised when plentiful good clean water came forth.

Some things can't be explained yet. Beware of 'scientists' that claim that something is impossible. Such statements expose their insecurity and ignorance.

Posted by: Look Who Knows So Much | Nov 19, 2007 3:43:10 PM

I'm afraid I also come to defend the dowsing rods. My father saw the use of them in his service in the army. The wielders varied from fellow soldiers to Korean nationals. I also know an old German woman who uses the trick. Whether or not these people know why it works, it seems to. Given that to this day scientists fail to fully explain magnetism, and that water in a liquid form is such an interesting molecule, and has such unique and recognizable features I don't think it should be written off. I'm not saying that I personally wouldn't prefer GRP (ground penetrating radar), but in a pinch would you give it a try?

Posted by: Thomas Moore | Nov 19, 2007 3:48:01 PM

A diamagnetic (non ferromagnetic is nonsense, there are plenty of stuff with magnetic properties that are non ferromagnetic) metal will not be influenced by a magnetic field. At least, not in the way you mention. You can heat water with a variable magnetic field.

There are some diamagnetic compounds that can be influenced by magnetic fields because ... here it comes ... they have components that are ... (left as an exercise to the reader).

Also, there absolutely no reason to try to scientifically measure dowsing (and other stuff like that). First, using a scientific methodology, it need to be proven to exist. So no candy for the other people that keeps claiming that science can't explain everything. Well, doh! Guess what ? It doesn't need to prove HOW dowsing works the say way it doesn't need to explain how I can walk through walls.

Posted by: Rodrigo | Nov 19, 2007 3:49:03 PM

Do you know what I find interesting? The only ones who post that dowsing has worked for them, are ones that have tried it. All the disbelievers cite how, "its impossible, D'oh!", or how if it actually worked, more people would use it. Now to be clear, I am very doubtful of dowsing. But I've never tried. I'd like to someday. And if it doesn't work for me, I'd like to hire someone who claims to be a professional. At least then I could post with a definitive anecdote.

But its the same with everything. The cynical arrogant bastards are truly guilty of everything they've accused. They zone out if you start talking to them about anything vaguely religious. Anything that seems at all revolutionary, and its immediately ignored. Most of them are snake oils, but if someone tells you they've discovered a way to make something levitate, would you investigate, try to think of ways it could be possible? No. You assume that you are right, as always, so theres no reason to check it out. You complain that people just assume that the science is real on these scam sites. Yet what is the most common answer to an unusual phenomena? "If you were right, someone would have noticed". It took Copernicus to point out that the sun might not revolve around the earth. It took years before scientists believed that a vacuum COULD be created. That blood wasnt food. That it you can minimize the effect of surface area, two objects will fall at the same rate, regardless of mass. Most of these inventions are nothing. Most of them are people trying to get rich off our gullibility. But denying their possibility for the mere reason that "its impossible", its not very scientific

Posted by: dreamstohack | Nov 19, 2007 3:53:30 PM

"Copper and brass are not magnetic but the live human body is."

Hold your horses there "no so young man". The human body is magnetic ? I think you are reading too many x-men comic books.

From where did you draw that wonder conclusion ?

"If you don't think the human body has a emf field-- just disconnect the cable from your tv and hook up an old fashioned rabbit-ear antenna, tune in to a weak uhf signal, then touch the antenna, and check out the reception."

That is because the human body works are a CAPACITOR. That is a very different thing. Please don't confuse an electric field with an electromagnetic field. Those are two VERY different things.

"but this one deal works"

So why are you refusing a free million dollars ?

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"Some things can't be explained yet."

Guess what ? If something doesn't exist, there is no need to explain it. AFTER you have proven that it does exist (*waves a million dollar check*), you can feel free to make that claim.

Okey, lets try a bit of scientific reasoning here, starting from the point of view that dowsing exists (ok, this is non-scientific, so sue me). We have dowsing. It was observed by several people. The locations are different. The objects (water, wires, dead bodies) are different. The time of day was different. The number of dust molecules on the atmosphere were different. The electromagnetic interference was different. The soil composition was different. The gravity pull was different. Air pressure. (so on ad nauseum). The tools were different (bent copper wire, brass, wood, crystals etc). Being an experimentalist (I'm leaving the scientist word out here), I'm forced to exclude all of those, since they are non-repetitive factors. Dare I say random ?

Which was the one and only common factor on all those "proven occurrences" ? A human being. So we have our common factor here.

Now some may claim that the human being has a potential to detect unseen stuff. Oddly enough, some claim that dowsing works for everybody. Some claim that only a few can do it. Lets suppose the first group is right, and everybody can do it (and the second group is mistaken). How hard would it be prove that it is real ? No need to claim the million dollar check. Just prove it so people will stop calling you deluded.

Based on our previous analysis, lets apply Occam's Razor. The ideomotor factor is proven (easily), so that is one possibility. The other possibility is that some unknown factor that no one can even guess about (let alone prove) is in effect here. Which of those is the simples explanation ? Actually, which of those IS ALREADY PROVEN ?

If you want to believe in dowsing and say it is magic, fine. You can believe in faeries for all I care. But don't try to bullshit your way using pseudo-science and claiming facts you obviously know nothing about. It only makes you look stupid.

Posted by: Rodrigo | Nov 19, 2007 4:08:21 PM

What?

Diebold touch-screen voting machines didn't make the list?

Posted by: Ian | Nov 19, 2007 4:15:23 PM

Yet another one. Lets try it.

"The only ones who post that dowsing has worked for them, are ones that have tried it."

And how, pray tell, would anyone claim it didn't work for THEM if THEY didn't try it ?

Or maybe you are saying that people who try it will get it to work. Guess what ? I tried it once. Just for the kicks. Oh ? Does it only work if I believe in it ? Then it is not science, it is religion.

What I really can't take is the attitude of "lets ignore all the existing proves, reproducibile evidence, that every time someone tried to prove it works it didn't".

For the people that don't want the million dollar, but just want to prove to other that dowsing works. James Randi also offered to provide with a complete procedure for a scientific test. I mean, why would they be posting here if they were not trying to convince others ? What better way to do it than ... errr ... proving ?

As I said before, if you want to believe it and claim it is magic, thats fine by me. But enough with the pseudo-science.

Posted by: Rodrigo | Nov 19, 2007 4:15:51 PM

I think you forgot the LightStim.

<http://www.lightstim.com/>

Another terrible modern age product.

Posted by: Jordan | Nov 19, 2007 4:17:49 PM

Of course dowsing works. For Heaven's sake. Don't you know that when dowsing the rods actually transform into Jesus' femurs, and Jesus crosses his legs when his bladder is full - the principle behind dowsing. The Vatican calls this 'transsubstancelocation'.

Heathens. Boy are you nay-sayers ignorant.

Posted by: Barlow | Nov 19, 2007 4:18:14 PM

visited on 1/3/2008

Oh, I almost forgot this one:

"But denying their possibility for the mere reason that "its impossible", its not very scientific"

Oh, I agree. How about something that was tested HUNDREDS of times, and debunked every single time it was conducted using a scientific methodology ? No need to prove HOW it works. Just prove that it DOES work.

If I claimed I can walk through walls, would you claim that it is possible ? Maybe if I claimed I can cause your cat to die by writing these works (do and check your cat, please). But wait, I bet if enough people read this, one of them will go an find his cat dead! Eureka! I proved it! Now, where is my million dollar check, James ?

Posted by: Rodrigo | Nov 19, 2007 4:19:55 PM

@DOWSING MORONS (AGAIN): Go bury yourselves

in the desert with enough oxygen and water for say...four hours. Then hold a jug of water in your hands during this time. We'll narrow down where to dig to a 100 meters square. Then get one of your buddies to use dowsing to detect the water in the jug. If you live dowsing works. OK? Any takers?

Also what part of "DOUBLE-BLIND" SCIENTIFIC STUDIES DON'T YOU GET!

Please feel free to elaborate on how science fails to be able to test for this. Enough already.

Posted by: balance | Nov 19, 2007 4:22:36 PM

@TMG

Are you almost done with your 2007 word of the day calendar? Now that you've learned all of those big words, all you need to do is learn how to use them to convey a coherent idea to another English speaking person.

All this dowsing stuff reminds me of a quote from physicist Richard Feynman. "The first principle is that you must not fool yourself - and you are the easiest person to fool."

Posted by: OMG | Nov 19, 2007 4:26:49 PM

OK, OK, calm down all you dowsers and anti-dowsers!

We ++all++ have a built-in sense of +moisture+.

(Drive through the desert some time and feel the difference when you pass a group of birds at a seep. It's like driving through a sauna.)

Anyway, some people are more aware of that sense than others, and maybe that is part of what is at work here. . .

Posted by: d'ARK | Nov 19, 2007 4:29:18 PM

Anyone opposed to this dowsing argument threadjacking should just skip ahead.

Dreamstohack:

I just wanted to tell you that your comment was one of the most insightful I have read online in some time.

Well said.

The scientific method requires not only skepticism but experimentation. Science should be questioned rigorously and continuously else it will surely fall to the corruptions of other religions.

(I use Geertz' definition of religion BTW, if anyone is curious as to why I would consider it possible for science to become a religion - look it up and see if you don't agree that popular science fits all of Geertz' criteria (at least in the US). Geertz' definition is often argued, but I have never found a better one.)

Posted by: Jason Denning | Nov 19, 2007 4:30:54 PM

BTW - Not saying I believe in dowsing, but also have not investigated the subject at all.

Posted by: Jason Denning | Nov 19, 2007 4:32:34 PM

Did anyone mention the napoleon dynamite time machine! That thing is awesome.

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Posted by: Big time Dowser | Nov 19, 2007 4:37:25 PM

I used to want to believe that PSI was real until I saw the researcher on PBS who was eliciting electrogalvanic responses from plants when he "threatened" them. What I observed was a researcher directly affecting sensitive static electric detectors with his own body's electrical fields.

And I already knew that +anyone+ can train themselves to generate the same measurable effect. I don't believe that low-repeatability effects will ever be on par with high-repeatability facts, but I don't automatically rule something I know nothing about until I have tried it myself. . .

Posted by: d'ARK | Nov 19, 2007 4:39:23 PM

I worked at a water treatment plant up here in Canada for two summers. We used the brass "Dowsing Rods" to locate water pipes nearly every day, it's no hoax and I know it for a fact.

Posted by: Jonathan A | Nov 19, 2007 4:50:46 PM

d'ARK -

Have you ruled out the possibility that you could survive if you jumped off of a 12 story building?

Keep in mind it's not 100%.

Are you trying to say that you're a great person because you're so open minded, or that you're a total sucker that will believe anything anyone tells you until you personally get around to debunking it?

Posted by: OMG | Nov 19, 2007 4:53:57 PM

Wow rodrigo, you really seem to know your science. Im proud. Of course, you address two of my sentences, take them out of context, and exploit the gramatical ambiguousnes (for that i am truly sorry). My point had nothing to do with dowsing rods. It has to do with the fact that science DOESNT have everything right. And we can use this as proof for the possibility of dowsing rods. Just because i cant see very clearly doesnt mean that flower has legs. But since I've messed up before. Since i know my vision isnt perfect, maybe i should go up to the flower, investigate it, examine it, try to determine if it truly does have legs.

Posted by: dreamstohack | Nov 19, 2007 4:59:09 PM

I borrowed Napoleans Time machine to go back and draw how to "Dows" in caves!

Posted by: TM | Nov 19, 2007 4:59:40 PM

Jonathan A - If you worked at a water treatment plant, why did you need "dowsing rods" to locate water pipes every day? Don't the people that work at the plant know where their pipes are already? While this "factual" divination was in progress, did you notice any of the full-time employees laughing amongst themselves while you witnessed the "non-hoax" in progress? You were the college-kid summer employee weren't you? As the kids today would say, you were punk'd.

Posted by: OMG | Nov 19, 2007 5:21:04 PM

The triplewarmer is in the neck.

Whatever; a lot of this stuff is persuasive; you should see a gold finders catalog. They offer a 2000 set of electronically enhanced dowsing rods.

Now believe in dowsing rods or not; charging 2000 for a set is just wrong.

Posted by: Icecycle | Nov 19, 2007 5:37:43 PM

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all i have to say is i tried the dowsing rods before...
lo and behold, i was in a lake!
truly works. truly.

Posted by: vince | Nov 19, 2007 5:44:30 PM

Ever heard of maxoderm instant male enhancement? Supposedly works in 3-5 seconds. I can only assume that means its an inflammatory agent that swells your penis by agitating it. I don't know about you other guys but I'm not about to burn my old fella with some cream to make it expand. My girlfriend makes it expand without any pain involved.

I think that Randi has been over posted as has the science behind dowsing not working. If people are going to get uppity and post their story about it working, they probably wont read all of the replies before they do. They also are not likely to go out and test their beliefs. That being said, I do not believe in dowsing, but plan to test it this weekend for kicks. I also plan to get way drunk and have a sword fight with my 5 year old neighbor using the rods when I am done.

Posted by: CM | Nov 19, 2007 5:51:11 PM

You forgot the pyramid that sharpens razor blades...

Posted by: Graham Milford-Scott | Nov 19, 2007 6:01:43 PM

Drop the Dowsing Rods from the list. They are easy to make fun of, but they aren't really in the same class as the rest of the items in the list, not a product, not one group hoaxing another. It just makes you sound closed minded rather than sober.

A story my father told was that they bought a piece of property in Arizona and paid for two different geologists to determine where to drill. They drilled and found nothing, drilled a different spot, found nothing: dry drill head down hundreds of feet (!). Eventually they ran out of money and had to sell the house they were building to pay the debt they'd incurred trying to find water... but the property was nearly valueless without a water source.

On advice of locals and out of desperation, a water witcher was hired. He came by and quickly pointed out a spot he said would have copious amounts of water fairly near the surface, unfortunately it was over the property line by a dozen yards. The neighbor drilled at that point and they found an extremely strong source that the neighbor agreed to share, making it possible for my parents to sell the half-completely house.

My father was a total skeptic, an engineer with little room for flimflam, he loved the Amazing Randi, taught logic in the middle schools, etc. But his attitude towards the water divining was simple: the witcher was cheaper and more accurate, results are results.

Hopefully the science-based water prospecting has gotten better in the last 40 years.

Posted by: bl | Nov 19, 2007 6:11:26 PM

Nice Alan Parson Project Reference there..

Posted by: KitsuneKoji | Nov 19, 2007 6:18:40 PM

@bl

"It just makes you sound closed minded rather than sober."

Umm, no, this has been tested repeatedly.

Dowsing = FAIL.

Fact.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 6:31:46 PM

Amazing how we can have people describing themselves as critical, yet... not!

Dowsing is part of the set of "experiments" where failure is less detectable than success. If a dowser finds water, YOU label that as a success. But... Oops! There were other sources of water he walked right passed!

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FAILURE! He actually FAILED perhaps 4 times (who knows) in this one run. Sure, he did find some water, but how do you know he didn't walk passed other spots. Success rate of this run: 20% or random. Result in your mind: SUCCESS!

If you claim you've seen dowsing work, understand that you probably also saw it NOT WORK much more often, right there, in front OF YOUR VERY EYES, but couldn't tell.

It's a bit like a broken clock. If you wait long enough (6 hours on average for a 12 hour clock) IT WILL give you the correct time!

Posted by: W | Nov 19, 2007 6:33:13 PM

Dowsing rods are bullshit. They don't work. It's all in your head. EVERY SINGLE double blind scientific study has proven it.

The James Randi Educational Foundation is offering \$1,000,000 to ANYONE who can prove anything supernatural/paranormal/etc exists. And dowsing rods are on the list. I've attended THREE public attempts to prove the existence of dowsing, and all have been bullshit. You even get to create your own tests, if the JREF and a skeptical third party (Committe for Skeptical Inquiry) agree that your tests aren't biased and truly scientific.

The burden of proof is on the one putting forth a theory (that dowsing exists), so get off YOUR asses and prove it or STFU.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 6:37:09 PM

Gotta love those BRASS rods picking up those MAGNETIC fields! Oh wait, brass is not a ferrous metal... Hmm...

Posted by: Sasha | Nov 19, 2007 6:37:23 PM

bl-

"A story my father told..." Really?

That's your proof? A 40 year old tale that flies in the face of actual scientific tests, and that's what you're going with? Do you happen to be a science teacher in Kansas?

I hope my sarcasm wasn't too subtle.

Posted by: OMG | Nov 19, 2007 6:37:25 PM

Oh, and I should mention that the JREF has had the cash prize for proof of paranormal/supernatural/etc phenomena for over 40 years, during which time, dozens of people have attempted to prove various forms of dowsing. All of them failed and no one has claimed the prize (most commonly they fail because the JREF and SCI see right through their pathetic attempts to cheat).

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 6:40:57 PM

I guess sarcasm isn't really the right word there, but I wanted to make sure you got the idea of what I thought of your anecdote.

Posted by: OMG | Nov 19, 2007 6:41:06 PM

I am a well witch, like my father before me. Our very name means "well witch". My brother is also a witch. I used the rods first when I was about 8 years old. In an unfamiliar yard and went directly around the house into the front yard to find the water meter. My brother and my self have used them to find lost car keys. They work for anything. The key to making them work is the ability to hold a clear mind. It in fact works better for me in unfamiliar places. Were I can't possibly know where things are.

Posted by: Creswell | Nov 19, 2007 7:03:20 PM

visited on 1/3/2008

Connoisseurs of woo will enjoy this story,
<http://www.badsience.net/2007/11/free-energy/>
which features a dowser!

Posted by: I can fly! | Nov 19, 2007 7:21:51 PM

For some reason, water diviners are the real thing. Dont know why, but it works.

Posted by: harry wolf | Nov 19, 2007 7:30:37 PM

Water diviners are a crock.
Dont know why, but it NEVER works.

Posted by: | Nov 19, 2007 7:33:10 PM

Water diviners are a crock.
Dont know why, but it NEVER works.

Posted by: harry wolf | Nov 19, 2007 7:33:21 PM

Water diviners are the Kosher biscuit.
They always find the H2O.

Posted by: harry wolf | Nov 19, 2007 7:34:33 PM

You guys are all crazy! It's not witch craft! It's God! Gesh, how could you not know that? I've known that for...gesh, has it really been 2007 years now? Wow, I'm getin old.

Posted by: Jesus Christ. | Nov 19, 2007 7:47:43 PM

Maybe dowsing is explainable with some sort of multidimensional string theory that our very limited science hasn't caught up with. I think we are behind most other non-terran cultures on the subject of science. Clearly we have a long ways to mastering dimension-hopping, time travel, the warp drive, and folding space. Oh arrogant humans, do you really think you have the truth?

Posted by: Homer Noodleman | Nov 19, 2007 7:55:10 PM

@ Homer Noodleman
I know I have the truth! It's God, God I tell you! Now, don't make me say it again.

Mr.Spock! WARP THREE! ENGAGE!
@(^_^)@

Posted by: Jesus Christ. | Nov 19, 2007 8:01:45 PM

@ Homer Noodleman
I know I have the truth! It's God, God I tell you! Now, don't make me say it again.

Mr.Spock! WARP THREE! ENGAGE!
@(^_^)@

Posted by: Jesus Christ. | Nov 19, 2007 8:01:45 PM

visited on 1/3/2008

You idiots. Of course you can dig down to the water table at pretty much any point. Flowing liquid doesn't have a charge because it is charged balanced. Water does have a slight polarization (it has a bond angle of 109.5 degrees so it has a dipole moment), but the orientation of the hydrogen bonding cancels it. The derivative with respect to time of the magnetic flux will be nonzero for ONE molecule, but put in two with opposite orientations, and it will be negligible (not you can barely feel it, as in so small ATOMS can barely feel it). The reason certain objects (such as fuel pumps) are grounded is because they can be charged statically (air rubbing over objects will strip them of electrons - triboelectric charging). The underground water is underground and they don't call earth grounds GROUNDS for nothing. Any static charging will almost assuredly be stripped by the earth. Even if it didn't, the magnetic field would be negligible at the earth's surface as it decreases in magnitude with the square of the distance (Biot-Sevart's law). Also, walking slowly decreases the force that would be felt by the rods in the field. If you wanted such massive objects to move, you would have to be moving very FAST $F=qV \times B$. Notice the freaking velocity term? Good. Idiots. If you see dowsing work, it's either because the person was: a) lucky b) dug deep enough c) had prior knowledge or d) knew other signs such as increased vegetation that dot the landscape or e) they were LYING about something else. God, please smite the stupid amongst us.

Posted by: B | Nov 19, 2007 8:03:31 PM

What's really interesting about the comments here is that

- 1) there's a shipload of people who believe in dowsing,
- 2) none of them have offered (ok, so I only read half the comments--sue me if I'm wrong) any verifiable evidence (just stories of apparent success, which don't stand up to much scrutiny, at least individually--and if any of them do have verifiable evidence, they can collect a \$1,000,000 from James Randi, so it's reasonably safe to say they don't have it); and
- 3) the anti-dowsing crowd is not offering any explanation for why so many people have had so much apparent success with dowsing.

Everyone's just talking past each other. If it works, why can't ANYONE prove it!? That's a legitimate question that needs to be answered. If it doesn't work, why are so many people believing it, and having what they take to be repeated success with it. That's also a legitimate question that needs to be answered. I have to (for the time being) take it to be a fraud. But until someone can explain why so many people have *apparent* success, I will have to wonder if *something* is going on, something other than what either side is describing.

Posted by: Brandon Z | Nov 19, 2007 8:04:28 PM

Don't forget the iPhone

Posted by: CJ | Nov 19, 2007 8:06:49 PM

As I understand it, dowsing for water = dowsing for *underground* water, and Randi's experiment did not recreate these conditions, so IMHO his experiment was a pointless exercise for both 'sceptics' and 'woos.'

Posted by: drowsy non dowser | Nov 19, 2007 8:12:50 PM

RE: Brandon Z

The issue at hand is confirmation bias. People have a strong tendency to remember the hits and forget the misses. We have been conditioned by evolution not to record what we regard as non-events. Think back over the last few days, try to remember every detail of each of the past several days. You'll find that what stands out most are the things which deviate from the norm. The success rate of divination is no better than chance under any circumstance you could provide.

RE: Drowsy,

The test you describe is stacked in favor of the dowzers, locating underground water is about as difficult as falling out of bed. Most of these dowzers make outrageous claims that *can* be tested, such as the dowser above that is claiming it can be used to locate lost keys. Patently absurd.

Posted by: Joe Shmoe | Nov 19, 2007 8:52:27 PM

Am I the only one who thinks that picture of Danie Krugel looks like Jeff Foxworthy after a 3-year bender?

visited on 1/3/2008

Posted by: Greg Bulmash | Nov 19, 2007 8:52:42 PM

If water flowing through a pipe "creates an electromagnetic field", it should be a simple matter to set up some magnets on a spindle around the pipe and generate electricity with their spinning motion. Why don't one of you dowsers use your secret knowledge of limitless energy to get rich and set the record straight, once and for all?

Posted by: MikeB | Nov 19, 2007 8:53:19 PM

@Brandon Z: "3) the anti-dowsing crowd is not offering any explanation for why so many people have had so much apparent success with dowsing."

Yes, I have. Go read my post above. The extra short of it: failures are not detected/recorded.

Posted by: W | Nov 19, 2007 8:54:46 PM

Watched a well witcher as a kid find a 1 1/2 gallon a minute well. It was good money paid. ;^) The neighbor across the fence chose his spot sans witcher and got 45 gallons per minute. Oh, the next people to own the property were smarter than our landlord and got 10 gallons per minute without the dowser.

Posted by: Gollux | Nov 19, 2007 9:04:35 PM

Dowsing is bullsht. It's like the Ouija board; unconscious shaking masquerading as woo. There has NEVER been anything other than anecdotal evidence. It has never worked in a double-blind test. Wonder why.

Posted by: qwer | Nov 19, 2007 9:08:10 PM

RE: W and Brandon

Yes you did. And Brandon, this is an example of improperly shifting the burden of proof. The plural of anecdote is not 'evidence' it is the duty of the party making the mind-bending claim to present evidence, not the skeptic to present a counter-argument.

Posted by: Joe Shmoe | Nov 19, 2007 9:16:04 PM

divining rods are only a sham because (dumbass) people pay for it. all u need is a piece of branch in the same shape off a tree and it will work (it doesnt move as much though, but it does move). my uncle showed all us kids how it worked on his farm and he had us all go get branches and try it.for all those saying it doesnt work for buckets/bottles, my theory is it has something to do with the flow, volume and depth (and something else - i dont know what). and for all those who say 'it cant be proved scientifically', i say only because we havent worked it out yet. i mean, try explaining maxwells laws to 15th century scientists

Posted by: dowser | Nov 19, 2007 9:22:20 PM

I find it amusing and sad that some find it necessary to be polite to the religious, but not the dowsers! Hey folks, it's all the same bullshit. Religion poisons everything in your head! It teaches you to ignore reality, and then you just picks your stupidity. Wise up.

Posted by: Secular Humanist | Nov 19, 2007 9:32:46 PM

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Would even ONE person who believes in the efficacy of dowsing rods to detect water care to take a stab at a theory as to HOW they might work? How do you explain it to yourself in your mind? If you can't, do you routinely accept things that don't make sense to you?

Posted by: Bob | Nov 19, 2007 9:43:49 PM

HAHAHAHA I just saw the PS3 ad after the last one I thought it was a bonus!

Posted by: john | Nov 19, 2007 9:45:07 PM

I have held that fork like sticks in my hands and have them twist so hard as to twist the bark of. What that means I do not have a clue

Posted by: UHM | Nov 19, 2007 9:47:36 PM

I think you should add the World Map to this list. Considering how many American's don't know how to use it, you could assume that it was actually a fake too. "World map! America is the world!" small minded idiots! just because you don't understand something it doesn't mean it doesn't work!

Posted by: br | Nov 19, 2007 10:18:42 PM

How about MAINSTREAM snake oil companies?

- 1) Bose (nuff said!)
- 2) Monster Cable
- 3) Franklin Mint

Posted by: steve savage | Nov 19, 2007 10:29:43 PM

I donno if anyone else caught this... but "non-hertzian frequencies"? a frequency of something is defined in hertz.. a hertz is a measurement in seconds $^{-1}$ (1 over number of seconds being measured) you.... cant.... have.. a Non-hertzian frequency... a hertz is a unit... please please tell me that the Harmonic Products's EMP Power Modulator one is just a joke. if it isn't.. i think i may become sick.

Posted by: Michael Jones | Nov 19, 2007 11:23:11 PM

As I understand it, James Randi always reaches agreement with dowsers beforehand that the test is valid, that they can perform the test, that there is nothing about the test which will stop them dowsing successfully, and so on. Nobody holds a gun to their heads. It's only after the test that dowsers realize why it wouldn't work.

Posted by: Barrie Tite | Nov 19, 2007 11:26:34 PM

I learned how to dowse a few years ago. We have a house that was part of a mine complex in eastern Oregon and the septic tank backed up. I had no idea where the line or the tank was. I took two wire coat hangers and bent them into a L's and walked around the yard, every time the wires crossed I put in a flag. I walked a large grid and found two distinct lines. One led to the pump house one led to the bushes. When we dug the lines up I was consistently about a foot off to the right or left (I can't remember which.) So even if my unconscious was able to guess where those 60 year old pipes were I am damn impressed with my unconscious. Also the pipes weren't metal they were made from some crazy composite.

Posted by: Rhys | Nov 19, 2007 11:30:54 PM

visited on 1/3/2008

Also, sorry for the double post.

water flowing very swiftly in very large quantities is completely capable of having an overall effect over objects near them.

water is a polar molecule, the oxygen in the H₂O bonds with both of the hydrogens in such a way as the hydrogens are stuck up next to each other, while the oxygen has an extra 2 electrons that hang around by themselves. (imagine a mans crotch without the dick), pretty much, because it is a polar molecule, you can do stuff with it using magnets, and also it can do stuff to anything that can be influenced by magnetic fields. all organic matter has components that can be influenced by magnetic fields. your hair is made of protien, and protien can be safely assumed to have metal in it, whole bunch of different metal. our blood contains a massive amount of iron (comparatively), i think, but cant remember, that iron is a naturally magnetic element.

plants are the same in a different (slightly) way

copper, while not terribly naturally magnetic, could easily be influenced by its conductive properties (electrons flow through it easily, speaker wire is made of copper)

so, i honestly have no problem believing in dowsing.

i just have a problem with dowsing working every time, for everyone except for "scientists"

if you want to try to simulate this, go and by the biggest and most powerful magnet you can find, burry it in your back yard as deep as you can get it, and try dowsing over the magnet. better yet, wait a year after you burry it, then try.

as long as the magnet never lost its strength (can happen) im pretty sure it will work.

heck, got an old speaker and some copper pipe? tear that magnet out of that speaker, those suckers are strong. even Better, tear out the magnet from that old harddrive sitting in your closet. rare earth magnets are hella strong.

anyway, sorry for being so annoying folks.

Posted by: Michael Jones | Nov 19, 2007 11:34:41 PM

No mention of the Segway? Fuelled by hype it it was going to change the world, cities would be rearchitected around it...and for some reason, Wired still keeps writing about it.

Posted by: Carl | Nov 19, 2007 11:35:04 PM

Ok debunkers, sorry, but there is something to the dowsing stuff - at least it has my support in regards to *flowing* water. I'm quite confident that its poorly understood science. If you want to begin to comprahend how it *could* work, read research material from Viktor Schauberger, an Austrian Ecologist from around the turn of the century. He did some very interesting work. Has nothing to do with dowsing directly, but since the debunkers here are no doubt extremely intelligent, they should be able to catch my drift, and begin to see the possibility of how dowsing works.

Posted by: Knower | Nov 20, 2007 12:01:20 AM

Dowsing has failed every properly-controlled test it has ever been subjected to. It doesn't work, and believers are simply deluded. They may be sincere and honest, but they're still deluded. It just doesn't work.

Posted by: Adrian | Nov 20, 2007 12:18:11 AM

ok, there is a water table or there isnt, most cover a large area and cant be missed, and entire cummunitys will use the same source, so unless you live with no neighbors anywhere or you are the only person in a few miles with a well, there is nothing to pin point it cant be missed

Posted by: did you think of this | Nov 20, 2007 12:24:19 AM

Dowsing was used to find out well. Don't know how it works, but appears to work. I also find it sad that some people don't even accept the possibility of dowsing, as if we know everything there is to know about world already. That's real 12th Century attitude.

visited on 1/3/2008

Posted by: strangely brown | Nov 20, 2007 1:02:17 AM

@ Knower (who is clearly the same single person who keeps posting under increasingly amusing names -- my favorite is the sober and fair-minded "Jack Watson"): I love how you are now attempting to charm the "extremely intelligent" people who haven't bought what your selling in any of your dozens of posts. You're making the same argument over and over again. We get it. 1) Someone you know was a driller/water-seeker/civil engineer; 2) you swear you personally are a rational, skeptical engineer or IT person or whatever other profession you think Wired readers will find more credible than whatever it is you really do; 3) glory be, you or someone you know has found water with a couple pieces of metal; 4) you desperately want us to equate the fact that we don't know everything about everything with the possibility that your (repeatedly and resoundingly debunked) dowsing theory isn't utter garbage.

You know what? I'm gonna bet that you're really just a single, masochistic evangelical Christian nutbag who thinks it's his duty to troll forums like this one, inserting what you must think are terribly sneaky and disruptive criticisms of science and reason. Well, they're not. They all read like they're written by the same idiot who can't quite conceal his contempt for thinking people.

You're clearly not going to piss off and let us have a productive discussion, but thought you'd like to know that you aren't fooling anyone. Tooodles!

Posted by: Sigh | Nov 20, 2007 1:08:49 AM

Will someone list the sites and/or references where these hundreds of experiments disproving dowsing were done. That's other than the Randi one.

I have seen it work, and have done it myself and had it work. I don't think it has anything to do with the paranormal, psychics or even religion. I'm sure though, that it has something to do with the way these rods, and for us it works both with coat hangers and brass rods, react to water flowing underground or even pockets of water underground and nothing else.

Posted by: Francois | Nov 20, 2007 1:39:14 AM

"For all of those that are saying to go to the Amazing Randi, this is not an occult or supernatural event, which is what he offers his reward for."

It would be nice if you actually knew what you were talking about. Not only WILL Randi test dowsing, he HAS tested it numerous times (it's failed every time, by the way).

Dowsing IS supernatural, in that it violates the known laws of physics.

Feel free to contact Randi.org and pass the testing to win the million bucks; you seem so certain you would win, after all.

Posted by: Cranky Media Guy | Nov 20, 2007 2:03:24 AM

How about pear Wi-Fi Cables. They have been missed in the article

Posted by: Amlendu | Nov 20, 2007 2:08:45 AM

How about pear Wi-Fi Cables. They have been missed in the article
Read Hi-Fi

Posted by: Amlendu | Nov 20, 2007 2:09:35 AM

wow, so dowsing works? Go grab your million dollars from James Randi then! Do it! Ill watch his webpage with anticipation! Do it now! Before someone else grabs the cool million!

Posted by: Simon | Nov 20, 2007 2:41:34 AM

Tesla did use waves that were not Hertzian, Every object has a resonant wave, which has harmonics & opposites.

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As for Steorns Orbo it is no more perpetual motion than a solar panel. It looked like a toy as it was a (failed) proof of principle model.

Using Permanent Magnets to create rotary motion, which real models have been displayed on YouTube.

An electric motor runs on electro-magnets so why not permanent-magnets.

Free Energy is hear and your refrigerator is living proof with a efficiency of say 50% yet a COP of 3-4

Posted by: ImZane | Nov 20, 2007 3:24:40 AM

My dad, born in a small town in Michigan in 1921, remembers a water witch who could find water where no one else could. Almost everyone in the town hired him. He would tell you not only where to dig, but how far down. My cousin, (born around 1940) was a water witch himself. He was no "New Age" bliss ninny, but he could find water, gas lines, etc.. just by walking over the property with a bent piece of copper wire.

Posted by: David | Nov 20, 2007 3:29:50 AM

Dowsing works and the explanation is very simple: the rods act like an electroscope as they "read" changes in the electromagnetic field caused by water, pipes or whatever. It works with rods, forks and many other simple and dirt cheap tools you can make yourself.

No need to buy "expensive" rods (THAT is a scam). I dont' care about Randi. IT WORKS, anyone can do it, IT IS SIMPLE, it can be explained!

Posted by: Frank | Nov 20, 2007 3:58:50 AM

@Sigh

sorry to dissapoint you, but IP logs will reveal that I am in europe and that the above was my first post.

Before you babble on, do take a look at Viktor Schaubergers research, which is taken quite seriously by several universities here in Germany.

Posted by: Knower | Nov 20, 2007 4:11:22 AM

Yeah, dowsing rods aren't any more magic than a magnet. I'm sure James Randi would get a good laugh at someone honestly trying to collect his million dollars with a magnet.

"Behold, unbelievers! The paper clips themselves are now infused with magic, clinging together with the life given to them by my black magic!"

Posted by: mattknox | Nov 20, 2007 4:11:58 AM

it is all a matter of choice, whether it is all a matter of choice, whether or not these items are practical or relevant in your world, thousands of individuals over the years have had positive experiences from some of them

who cares if the positive was psycho-symatic or only effected that particular person, who cares if these results cannot be replicated consistently in a lab - you cant start a fire in the rain

why is someone a 'moron' or 'foolish'

simply because they find value in something you don't ?? why must you require 'proof' through studies that this or that works

if it is not for you ignore it, but why deride others who do find it of value ???

everyone fixes their mashed potatoes a little differently

Posted by: russ | Nov 20, 2007 4:40:23 AM

Why do rods need to be almost free floating in your hands - answer - because all the dowsing rods to is apply operator bias to laws of chance. you will be making imperceptible movements to your hands based on what you see visually. it may be that biologically we have ways and means using our standard senses, to detect water. these rods are an expression of that and not directly due to "electro" anything.

anyone dowsed blindfolded, with no hearing and noseclip on?

from what i've read no one does proper experimental controls so they have statistical significance between positive and negative cases.

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good example is "cellphone radiation makes the side of my head hot". yes the cellphone does, by preventing your body heat radiating from the area around your ear. try holding a calculator to your ear for 30mins it gets hot too.

Posted by: amcg | Nov 20, 2007 4:58:56 AM

My god, what kind of mornons work at Jonathon A's water treatment plant that they need help finding the same water pipes every single day?

That's like finding out that NASA has to use dowsing rods to find where they've parked the space shuttle.

Posted by: Ian | Nov 20, 2007 5:05:52 AM

You have to laugh or maybe cry about these sceptics who probably have never tried dowsing.

Why do they think that the U.S. government train their soldiers to detect mines using dowsing rods - just for a laugh.

The problem is these sceptics are so close minded they aren't able to take in that it works. Try explaining how gravity works. I don't believe how electricty exists or fully works can be explained either but it does. I travel all over the U.K. and abroad giving talks and teaching dowsing and meet many sceptics but they can't explain how or why complete beginners are getting results. Strange when it is not supposed to work.

Posted by: Keith | Nov 20, 2007 5:23:57 AM

Wow, typical of sceptical comments, not only attack the object of contention but also personally attack the poster with name calling...That just adds so much credibility to your point. Furthermore, pretty daring to attack peoples religious beliefs in the name of your own: science, which is a religion itself. That behaviour is as beneficial as witch burning. You've obviously gotten what you need from your arrogant assaults. Like the typical bullies who can only feel better about themselves by attacking others. I'm curious about something, like true skeptics who maintain an openmindedness, can your religion of science explain quantum physics to me? Maybe you bashers could help me understand Schrodinger's cat, or why the subatomic world is influence by human thought and perception? Maybe you can go call your GP a moron for the medical community's appreciation for the placebo effect.

Posted by: John | Nov 20, 2007 5:25:58 AM

So a politician wanna be is going door to door.. "I'm running for office because there is a graft and corruption in Washington." Lady: "You want to clean the place up?"

Pol. "Heck no, I want to get in on it."

Anyone ever tempted to try some great BS scam like these? I'd do it, if I didn't have to look at myself in the mirror now and then..

Posted by: Chuck | Nov 20, 2007 5:49:28 AM

I don't know if dowsing rods work or not but most people who use them seem to get pretty good results but it is not magnetic you need a ferrous metal for that, copper and brass are not magnetic.

one more comment they dowse all over the south georgia to florida but if you drill in any of those locations you will eventually hit the aquifer that runs from georgia to florida

Posted by: Bob | Nov 20, 2007 6:26:05 AM

1. I don't think that Divining/Witching rods can help in finding places to dig for water unless you plan on tapping into current water pipes but I could be wrong on that.

2. For anyone that doesn't think you can use bent rods to locate underground pipes (pvc and metal) just need to speak to any of the people who do line locates as a job. Yes, they have their electronic devices that work more accurately but in cases where there is not locating wire installed they can use bent rods. Just ask them and I'm sure they'll show you. I want to re-iterate that the accuracy is no where near the electronic equipment but it does work.

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Posted by: Scott Newton | Nov 20, 2007 6:56:53 AM

@ all taking this opportunity to attack religious beliefs.

However valid your points may be, your addled little minds have forgotten that this is a post about gadgets. Lets keep the socially intolerant discussions in places where they belong and just laugh at the idiotic gadgets.

For something really funny, do a Google search on Funnycide and Q-Ray. This stupid product was brought down by the Kentucky Derby.

Posted by: A Different Bob | Nov 20, 2007 7:21:25 AM

had to correct michael jones's warped view of atomic bonding as what he said is just plain wrong. the oxygen atom in a molecule of water does not go around with two electrons hanging off it. if it did it would not be in water it would be an oxygen ion which has a charge of -2. however a hydrogen ion has a charge of +1. if you know your electron shell chemistry you know that an ion of hydrogen will need an electron to become neutral in its only electron shell as there are two electrons in the first shell of a molecule. this is why it is bonded to an oxygen molecule. that is also why there are two of them as there are two electrons on the oxygen ion. therefore the water molecule is a STABLE molecule. it may be polar but very minor only enough to allow other water molecules to 'stick' to it which is why water flows.

thats about enough chemistry. i hate chemistry but his post reminded me of creationists misquoting the laws of thermodynamics to 'prove' their thinking.

peace

Posted by: stevo | Nov 20, 2007 7:44:30 AM

Dowsing passes scientific muster if the appropriate technique and study design are used.

<http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/research/1281661.html>

Oh, yeah, and it works.

Posted by: JonahInTheWhale | Nov 20, 2007 7:52:03 AM

John-

Regardless of what you may think of it, science is not a religion. A religion is a set of made-up stories that is supposed to prove a point and impose morality on the reader.

Science is the search for factual evidence regarding how, why, where, when, and what. There is no blind acceptance in science. Nothing is considered to be "true" until it has been proven through controlled, repeatable experimentation, and even then it is generally considered to be "probable" instead of "definite."

The biggest difference between science and religion - religion believes everything without asking why, science believes nothing and never fails to ask why. So, no, two groups of people that function on entirely different principles for entirely different reasons and entirely different methods of rationalization are not the same.

Some people are as zealous about science as they are religion, but that doesn't make them the same thing. Just because the followers of both can be just as dense as the other doesn't mean that the objects of their affection are even remotely related. It means that those people are stupid. It does not mean that all people on either side are stupid.

Sorry.

And yes, science can absolutely explain the theories of quantum physics, the phenomenon of Schrodinger's cat, the influence of human perception on the subatomic world and the placebo effect.

However, none of those theories are at all applicable to this discussion, as they are all 100% theory (possible exception to the placebo effect). None of them have been proven to be either true or false.

Dowsing, however, has been proven time and time again to be a con. If you want to believe it, that's fine.

Some people choose to believe in a God that can't possibly exist either. Some people like to think that Harry

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Potter may be truth-based. Whatever. That doesn't make it real.

Posted by: Laura | Nov 20, 2007 8:05:07 AM

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Posted by: Laura | Nov 20, 2007 8:05:15 AM

The diving rod thing is probably true. I haven't tried it for myself. But one thing I have learned is that a long length of pipe lying out on the ground tends to pick up a slight magnetic charge. I don't know if its even measurable but when welding it tends to push your arc all over the place. But this arc wandering thing is not present on fresh pipe thats short and been indoors.

Posted by: What? | Nov 20, 2007 8:30:27 AM

You forgot Homeopathic medicine. That B.S. has been ripping people off for years.

Posted by: Mike G | Nov 20, 2007 8:49:04 AM

On dowsing... I don't think Randi will pay up - because dowsing is not paranormal. How do you think metal detectors work? How does the traffic light know when a car is waiting? How does the drive-thru buzzer go off when I car approaches?

The answer is resonance.

All of the above mentioned devices work with a coil of metal. The coil is part of a circuit. When a metal object gets close enough to the coil... it changes the resonance in the circuit, and creates a potential that's pulled off by resistance to power a light, buzzer, or anything else you want.

The combination of the rod and the person holding it are a circuit. When a metal object or water gets close... the resonance changes and results in a potential... which manifests itself in an attraction between the rods and the object, or in the rods themselves (if you are using two.)

As for "mysteries" like this - consider that batteries are just stacks of copper and zinc. You can make a capacitor out of pennies and aluminum foil.

Just because something isn't made in China and selling at wal-mart doesn't mean that it's snake-oil.

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Posted by: Elvis Oswald | Nov 20, 2007 9:06:05 AM

I think the believers just want to believe.

I've worked in statistical analysis for years. Some of the most popular requests have been finding inappropriate relationships, bizarre or dumb sample results and writing lottery number generation code. It is kind of sad to hear from all the dowsers, they are just victims waiting for a conman.

Posted by: QRay | Nov 20, 2007 9:13:45 AM

Laura, you said:

Some people choose to believe in a God that can't possibly exist either

And you also said:

Nothing is considered to be "true" until it has been proven through controlled, repeatable experimentation, and even then it is generally considered to be "probable" instead of "definite."

I think its great for you to point up the differences between science and religion, but you spoil your argument by making a faith based statement. Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God, His existence (or lack thereof) is a matter of faith.

Posted by: Sy | Nov 20, 2007 9:21:30 AM

@Kowner: Goodness, is it already time to pull out Web troll defense #4 (i.e., "I am real, check the IP log")? Oh, and you also brought in creationist defense #16 ("serious-sounding citation of a person who is considered a joke by people who actually know how to perform scientific experiments"). Have fun, I think the only people listening at this point are your various alter egos.

Posted by: Sigh | Nov 20, 2007 9:30:06 AM

Sy-

I said "Cannot possibly exist."

And God can't possibly exist.

As in, based on science. That doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. If it does, then it is outside the realm of science, which is the point of the post - that the two are different. The choice to make is do you take science or faith.

Posted by: Laura | Nov 20, 2007 9:37:31 AM

Laura,

good points. Science being a religion is my opinion. It meets all of your criteria. Of course methods, reasons, and goals are different as they are between all religions. The continual manipulation and falsification of statistics and perceptual interpretation of results in the name of credit or funding is akin to making up stories to impose a morality. There is much belief behind science like in the accepted Carbon dating practises which is highly inaccurate. Quantum physics is not fully understood as it cannot be accurately predicted and repeated. That point and the one in regards to the placebo were only made to demonstrate that the spooky world of mind over matter does in fact exist. It is not true that religions accept everything. There is much questioning, as in the popular quest of: why would a God that is all loving send anyone to a hell indefinitely? Science is probably (another opinion) responsible for as much disinformation and deaths as religions. I am not religious, just open minded. I would however like to know the detailed scientific explanation of the mind over matter effect behind the placebo (detailed as in the mechanics neurologically that can fix the unfixable, not statistics to which i already know). Take this as a request, not a challenge, perhaps you can recommend a good paper, or book on the study. I never began any argument with you or anyone else, I was simply pointing out that a healthy approach to scepticism is through a logical open mind as opposed to name calling and religion bashing. If these gadgets work for people regardless of how, that is great. The only negative part in regards to it is the creator's intent.

Posted by: John | Nov 20, 2007 9:40:25 AM

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AWESOME. I'm dropping out of college and starting a dowsing rod store.

Posted by: tmd | Nov 20, 2007 9:41:59 AM

When in the case of water tables, why does one spot make the rods move and the rest of the water doesn't? I ask because hundreds of scientists with PhDs in their field can't find a change with sensitive instruments designed to pick it up on a level that humans can barely comprehend. Yet a stick can figure it out. Doesn't sound particularly credible. Does it?

Pardon my skepticism. But I've seen it done. It appears to work. Then you walk 5 feet to the side of where they say water is and lo and behold there is water there, too. And 10 feet. And 20 feet. So, sure they found water. And anyone with a shovel could have as well. No dowsing required. That happens to be the beauty of ground water - it's pretty much everywhere.

If it is supposed to work, when the rods are attached to a fixed point such as a cross bar which is held by the human (therefore not disrupting the "circuit") why is it that the rods don't move? If the water is actually moving the rods, the lack of human control over the actual moving parts should cause a greater reaction, not the total lack of any reaction.

The fact is that neither brass nor water have electrical or magnetic properties that are anywhere near significant enough to overcome the forces exerted by gravity, not to mention the magnetosphere of the Earth itself. They just don't. In order for the rods to move in the presence of anything, they would have to overcome that force. In order to cause it to happen, a great amount of electricity would have to be moving through both the rod and the water. Unless those operating the rods have some immunity to electrocution, we can pretty well rule that out.

So, since we know that there is no way for it to be scientifically possible, that means that if it works, it is magic. That's right. Magic. That really makes a lot of sense, right? I mean, it makes so much more sense then it being a hoax perpetrated by people who know where water is (basically everywhere) on people who don't.

Those that claim that the water companies use this method are totally full of crap. If the method is so reliable, then why would they spend so much money on all that equipment used for the sole purpose of locating it. That is just ridiculous to even try to convince people of. Not to mention they would have a lot to explain to the tax payers as to why they spent thousands of their dollars instead of just bending up a coat hanger.

Now, you take the experiment out into the vacuum of space where these outside forces are not being exerted, and you may have some movement.

It just doesn't wash on any scientific basis. Now, let's assume that there is a paranormal aspect to it. I personally think that such things are the height of bullshit, however if true that would be a different story. But, that still wouldn't make it scientifically plausible. If it's supernatural, then by definition it is not bound by science, and cannot therefore be explained using such.

People can say stuff like "we don't know everything" and they are right. But you know what? We know enough about water and metals (at the very least, brass) to know that this doesn't work on any scientifically reliable level.

Playing on the ignorance of average people to not know that anywhere they point is likely to produce a result does not make a fact. It makes a scam.

Posted by: Reasonably Doubtful | Nov 20, 2007 9:56:45 AM

John-

The placebo effect is the same concept as conversion disorders. It is basically that because the brain controls the body, when the mind is ultimately convinced of something, it will impose the proper results on the body. I have seen conversion disorder in person (comes with the degree - they don't let you study psych without making you work with some cases) and it is one of the oddest things you will ever see. A person with nothing medically wrong with them is unable to feel their legs. Even with pain and heat stimulus. However, a little therapy and an open mind will generally cure it (you have to truly convince the subject

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that it really is all in their head).

It is very weird, and for many years it was considered supernatural. However, in recent years, more understanding on the connections between mind and body have been made.

As for papers. Go to the APA website and type in conversion disorders or placebo effect and many good papers done for publication by leaders in the fields will pop up. Many of which you can simply register to read or can obtain from your local library.

Wanted to let you know that I didn't intend to be argumentative with you. I just simply don't agree that they are the same. Some can take it to the same level, but that is a personal issue, not a religion/science issue. They have to be different, because the basis of faith is that there is no proof, but the basis of science is that there has to be proof. These are the fundamental concepts of each, and are in direct conflict with one another. Sometimes they overlap, but generally they are not particularly similar outside of the zealous attitude of followers.

Hope this helps.

Posted by: Laura | Nov 20, 2007 10:06:15 AM

No Laundry Balls?! I'm disappointed!

And the reason why dowsing doesn't work as well as it used to is that more people are using magnetic water treatment devices that "defragment" the water :-)

Where's the Cosmic Ray Evasion Society when you need them?

Posted by: Ghostof CarlSagan | Nov 20, 2007 10:21:48 AM

Magic is real! People can walk on water! Water turns to wine! Snakes talk! Dousing rods work! Witches are made of wood and float on water! Hell is below the ground! Heaven is up in the sky! The Earth is flat and at the center of the Universe! Humans are not animals! God Bless the USA because he likes 'us' better than 'them'! Death to all non-believers! Repent! Repent!

Posted by: GaryGnu | Nov 20, 2007 10:27:39 AM

@Michael

The principles surrounding moving water, under or above ground, are pretty well understood, and do not generate a "field" of any sort (even if you included your beloved metallic ions). There is a glut of scientific proof which is contradictory to your claims (and dowsing in general) but only anecdotal claims in their favor.

@ K

No, you fool. The anti-static warnings on fuel pumps are warning people to discharge static before getting close to the fumes. Static discharge is the number one cause of gas station fires.

Careful checking of the surroundings of MRI's is because the water main that you were talking about is MADE OF FUCKING STEEL. Steel is ferromagnetic. So whirling a gigantic, high powered magnet around while there is steel in the room would rip the water main out of the wall, or damage the machine.

Divining rods seem to be popularly made of brass, which isn't magnetic at all, so even if there were some sort of magnetic field, the rods would remain unaffected.

So, to recap:

- Big magnet in MRI make placing near steel bad idea.
- Moving water/liquids no makey static or magnetic field,
- (Real) Science has repeatedly determined that dowsing is a load of bull.

Posted by: Laocoon | Nov 20, 2007 10:47:46 AM

Re: Divining rods - Don't knock it until you've tried it / seen it in action.

I was a disbeliever until a friend of my grandfather's was witching at the farm next door. He walked around in a grid having another person mark spots the rods crossed and going on how hard they 'pulled' he estimated how far down the water was. they picked the handiest / best spot and brought a driller. They hit good water within 10 feet of what the old guy said.

Another time a different guy was witching. A number of disbelievers gathered. He had a few people try. It

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did nothing for me, but by 8 year old daughter had it showing the same places as it had worked for him, and she wasn't there when he was doing it.

A few others fetched their kids and it worked for almost all of them. I don't know why, but I saw it. Oh, and by the way, the 'best' location was later confirmed by a driller.

At a third site the driller himself did the witching. he said water by 50ft. They drilled to 60 and got nothing. he then drilled another 30 feet at his cost because he was so sure there was water there. Still dry. The owner decided to use the 'well' as a cistern and put in pipes and hauled in water. He filled it once. Something opened up and he had LOTS of good water with the level sitting at the 45ft mark as the driller predicted.

Posted by: JA | Nov 20, 2007 10:59:35 AM

Laura,

Thanks that does help. I am curious how that plays into cellular memory. Supposedly, epithelial cells can initiate a response to heat and such before the signal of threat/action can reach the brain back to the stimulated area again. But anyway, that's way outside the realm of this forum.

Thanks

Posted by: John | Nov 20, 2007 11:08:44 AM

I have a rod with two orbs suspended beneath it. When it points at a female, I know she is naked beneath her clothing. It never fails. Works 100% of the time.

Posted by: Dion Korge | Nov 20, 2007 11:21:24 AM

I can't resist saying something regarding this.

First of all about James Randi. He's one of the worst con-artists of all. He took video-tape evidence that was done at Yale and Harvard in a study of people claiming they could talk with the dead. He took the tapes, cut them up in segments to show how he could perform the same feat. The irritating part is he cut up the footage in a way that discredited the scientist at these universities who had proven statistically that something was occurring.

Then it was put on Fox as a special, supposedly looking fair and balanced because it had both sides, even though Randi had cut out all the science to make these tests look like they were performed by a bunch of quacks.

Randi will do anything to get attention for his scam. He doesn't have 1 million dollars to pay, it's in "bonds/funds" which he refuses to disclose. He refuses to disclose anything about his competitions and insists on controlling everything and having a binary ONLY outcome which should never be expected in most of these kinds of tests.

Randi, who refuses to acknowledge that "remote viewing" exists and is real, even though more than 100 US universities and institutions, including the CIA, NSA, Whitehouse, FBI, LAPD, US ARMY, Airforce, and countless other military organizations have proven this. Don't get me started on how remote viewing is a proven IEEE standard (yes it's true), that's not good enough for Randi, who tricks remote viewers by saying they have to look for numbers only, which don't seem to work in the ether.

There are things out there that don't add up. Try remote viewing, how the HELL does it work? Most scientific tests will disprove it, but you can't deny the results, and when done on a larger scale it has huge results.

In the US Army the Drowsing Unit was the most successful military mine removal unit ever. Never mind how it worked, it worked well and was statistically significant. We tested subjects, we notice that subjects who knew they were being watched would screw up more often so people would be monitored secretly. Those who worked without knowing they were being watched did much better. Some people couldn't do it at all.

It was frustrating because those who refused to entertain the idea that it might be possible NEVER got it to work. People who were open to new ideas were the best candidates. While this might point to the power of suggestion it does matter. It doesn't matter if people were moving the rods with their hands, because they were finding mines more often than others. We even did tests putting one object in 100x100 meters, having them find it then digging up the rest of the yard first (blind test) to find that only when digging where the person said we would find the object. It seems that somehow the brain sees into some collective unconscious. In the same way that remote viewing would allow someone 2,000 miles away to draw the location of the mine on paper.

Sorry people but just because the outcome isn't an easy to measure 1 or 0 each time doesn't mean something isn't happening. Scientists working for the government have figured this out, and just because something can't yet be explained with our science doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

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By that logic quarks didn't exist 500 years ago, only until we could prove them with more than a theory. Sorry but most skeptics aren't skeptics at all, they are deniers of any possibility.

Posted by: Court Kizer | Nov 20, 2007 11:48:51 AM

Totally disagree about dowsing. Just read what Court Kizer said here in the comments. It works and very well.

Posted by: Brenna Ceallaigh | Nov 20, 2007 12:13:02 PM

(quote)
I said "Cannot possibly exist."

And God can't possibly exist.

As in, based on science.

(/quote)
Uh, WRONG!

Let's take a look at the dowsing argument. Dowsing is clearly disproved by repeatable results under controlled circumstances. That is the definition of scientific proof. If you can't get a repeatable result (utter failure in the case of the dowsers) under controlled circumstances, you can't make a scientific statement about something.

So, until you can get a repeatable result under controlled circumstances regarding GOD (of any stripe), science can't say anything about it's existence, one way or the other. God (He, She or It) remains a matter of personal belief and Science doesn't have a say in the matter.

Posted by: Whatmeworry | Nov 20, 2007 12:26:05 PM

Hard to believe anyone could be so concerned to keep on posting about dowsing, and going on and on about brass rods and coat hangers.

Also interesting that a cursory google search shows that dowsers originally used a forked stick or pendulum to find water (brass rods or coat hangers apparently being in short supply in the 1600's).

So if the tool isn't important, it amounts to a magician's prop, used to "sell" the witching.

Apparently, just being able to find water isn't enough to convince the spectators.

And why should it, when according to the USGS: "In a region of adequate rainfall and favorable geology, it is difficult not to drill and find water!"

How about that?

Excuse me while I whip out my "pendulum" and find water. TA-DA!

Posted by: dowsing yadda yadda | Nov 20, 2007 12:41:03 PM

It is true, you take anonymous comments and the ability to repeatedly post as many times as you want, and when they cross, you will find bullshit, 100% of the time.

My father let anonymous comments run on his website, and the dowser found hundreds of spots where there was bullshit.

However, on other websites where you have to log-in and anyone can see your history of posting, we had a lot more trouble finding bullshit.

Try it for your self, the most you might need to do to test it is have the IPs that comments are coming from to be posted next to the comments and *DING* you'll be able to find bullshit too!

Posted by: BS Dowser | Nov 20, 2007 12:41:22 PM

Whatmeworry:

"God (He, She or It) remains a matter of personal belief and Science doesn't have a say in the matter"

"And God can't possibly exist.
As in, based on science."

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^^Same thing, different words.

Are we struggling with that? You say science doesn't have anything to do with God. So do I. If you would like to go back and re-read and try again, I will be happy to entertain it.

Posted by: Laura | Nov 20, 2007 12:43:50 PM

I didn't believe witch sticks would work either until my contractor at a job site used them. Using 2 coat hangers as witch sticks, he was able to pick up almost every buried power cable and pipe in the area that we were excavating. He was picking up stuff that even the utility locators weren't finding.

Posted by: Darren | Nov 20, 2007 1:17:30 PM

Randi is a debunker, not a skeptic!

He carefully picks and chooses what to put on his show, and I notice that every "debunking" of dowsing is using a flawed system of trying to locate a very small amount of water (in a bottle or jug) which is not picked up by the dowsing rods.

The debunkers cannot understand why dowsing works so they mock it instead.

Posted by: Real Skeptic | Nov 20, 2007 1:23:44 PM

My physics instructor in high school started the year with a dowsing rod demonstration. He'd have a student walk from the front of the class to the back with no more instruction than hold them loosely in your hands. Every single time they would cross when the student walked over the large water pipe just under the floor.

I don't think you can detect dead bodies or other miscellania with them, but they certainly seem to work for finding water.

Posted by: Eddiebean | Nov 20, 2007 1:25:31 PM

This guy I knew found an invisible quarter once. He used it to buy a Coke and we never saw that quarter again.

We lived near this crazy man his name was Wheatly White. He used to do all sorts of insane projects - from building time machines for rich people to teleportation. One day he screamed and with a flash of vibrant light, almost like a UV light, he vanished. The bank ended up selling his house to a corporation that dismantled everything and left a vacant lot behind. Wheatly White, where ever you are - we miss you.

Posted by: Larry Dunsten | Nov 20, 2007 1:34:41 PM

Well I have to say I too am a beleiver in dowsing. I cant say I learnt to do it. It did take a little practise. I first saw it used on a construction site too trace underground 'lost' pipework and was convinced. I can now find 'voids' and water sources below the surface. Dont ask me why but it works.

its an instance wher it drives the scientific/logic community mad because there seems to be no rational explanation.

And that is difficult to accept it seems we just dont know everything is all.

Posted by: Mr Plumpy | Nov 20, 2007 1:38:47 PM

Do they still make "bullshit repellent" in the aerosol can? Do they?Do they?

Posted by: Robert | Nov 20, 2007 1:56:05 PM

Number one on the list of the world's snake oil purveyors should be science itself.

Science would not be practiced, were it not for this myth that science can make your life better. Science is like witchcraft at best. Science does not make anyone's life better.

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I'm sorry kids, and all you StarTrek fans that make a personal self-esteem statement pointing at all the crackpots you're all in so thick with. Science is a total fraud.

Science has not made our lives better, nor will it. There is no truth in science.

Life is the ultimate good and the ultimate truth all wrapped up into a single whole. Science cannot improve upon it. Nothing will ever improve upon life.

You can try all you want, and you'll come up all the worse for your efforts.

Science has made our lives infinitely worse, every step of the way.

Take a look around.

If you want to read something close to truth, search "A New Epistemology of Morality and Truth".

It's a long read for the net, and probably especially long for all you Nintendo addicts, but it's guaranteed to debunk up this "scientific truth" myth and, expose the snake oil at its source.

Don Robertson, The American Philosopher

Posted by: Don Robertson, The American Philosopher | Nov 20, 2007 2:10:58 PM

Has no one here any whiff of a life - at all?

Posted by: Thruxton Appleby | Nov 20, 2007 2:18:33 PM

@Everyone: Thanks to all the atheists, and anti-Randi, and believers in PSI for mucking up the comments section here...idiots the whole bunch.

The topic here: BS gadgets.

The reason dowsing is included:

It includes a rod. therefore a tool. A gadget.

Dowsing doesn't work for squat.

For those willing to look past their nose on the matter I provide this link:

<http://www.csicop.org/si/9901/dowsing.html>

If you question the source, great.

Problem is they are just citing outside research from German physicists. Read the article then tell me your BS tales. If dowsing works it's inconsistent and unreliable at best, and not testable by science. This makes it less worthless than going around and sitting on a random spot in the desert and drilling for water. I bet I would get better results.

@Keith from the UK: Of course you claim dowsing works you dolt, you make money off of it just like the rest of the hucksters mentioned here who "swear" it's for real.

Done now.

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 2:20:22 PM

No plausible physical or physiological mechanism has ever been proposed by which such detection might be possible (for dowsing).

It is good to note that all possible

explanations given here by dowsing proponents have been thoroughly shot down.

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 2:21:51 PM

In a scientific study in Munich, five hundred dowsers were initially tested for their "skill", and the experimenters selected the best 43 among them. These 43 were then tested in the following way. On the ground floor of a two-story barn, water was pumped through a pipe; before each test, this pipe was moved in a direction perpendicular to the water flow. On the upper floor, each dowser was asked to determine the position of the pipe. Over two years, the 43 dowsers performed 843 such tests. Of the 43 pre-selected and extensively tested candidates, at least 37 of them showed no dowsing ability. The results from the remaining 6 were said to be better than chance, resulting in the experimenters' conclusion that some dowsers "in particular tasks, showed an extraordinarily high rate of success, which can scarcely if at all be explained as due to chance ... a real core of dowser-phenomena can be regarded as empirically proven"[7] " Five years after the Munich study was published, scientist and skeptic Jim T. Enright contended that these results are merely consistent with statistical fluctuations and do not demonstrate any real ability.[8] He noted that the best tester was on average 4 millimeters out of 10 meters closer to a mid-line guess, an advantage of 0.0004% advantage. The study's authors responded[9] but Enright remains unconvinced.[10] More recently, a study[11] was undertaken in Kassel, Germany, under the direction of the Gesellschaft zur wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung von Parawissenschaften (GWUP) [Society for the Scientific Investigation

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of the Parasciences]. The three-day test of some 30 dowzers involved plastic pipes through which a large flow of water could be controlled and directed. The pipes were buried 50 centimeters under a level field. On the surface, the position of each pipe was marked with a colored stripe, so all the dowzers had to do was tell whether there was water running through the pipe. All the dowzers signed a statement agreeing this was a fair test of their abilities and that they expected a 100 percent success rate. However, the results were no better than what would have been expected by chance.

(SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA)

Explain THAT away you dowzing supporters. Uh what? Silence? Idiotic responses? I thought so....

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 2:36:50 PM

It would be interesting to see how many skeptics would indeed try to dowse for water if they were stranded in some remote area and in dire need of water. They may not believe it but they sure would want it to work, now wouldn't they?

Posted by: Don Juan | Nov 20, 2007 2:43:49 PM

I love all the desparate spin comments posted by dowzers claiming to be people giving dowzing testimonials.

It's a corollary of evolution, fools and their money will be parted.

Posted by: Steve Jay | Nov 20, 2007 2:49:09 PM

i know for a FACT that water dowzing can be done. I HAVE SEEN IT FIRST-HAND. i helped a friend of mine clear his land so that he could build a house on it. it was far away from any public or county water sources and he needed to have a well drilled to get water. his ex-wife's grandpa was brought out to the site, he had a bent piece of a coat hanger in each hand. he walked around for a bit, the hanger's crossed and he said you would find water about 15-20 feet down. a well was drilled there and indeed he was EXACTLY correct. PERIOD!!

Posted by: big O | Nov 20, 2007 2:53:06 PM

@big-O: Ignored my post huh? Random chance buddy. Random chance.

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 3:02:47 PM

The original dowzing rod was a wishbone shaped stick. Obviously that is not affected by the earths magnetic field.

Also, I thought it was called "DEVINING RODS"

Posted by: hellokitty | Nov 20, 2007 3:12:01 PM

There are many things outside the realm of mere science that we haven't discovered or haven't "fit" into a scientific paradigm. Your great-great grandmother thought TV was the work of the devil(the technology, not the garbage on it). If you were to transport yourself to a time that none of this technology we have that is "scientifically proven" existed, people would be sure to think it a form of sorcery or from demonic sources. Perhaps your great-great grandchild will look back on you and scoff at your ignorance?

Posted by: John the Baptist | Nov 20, 2007 3:15:32 PM

Re Dowzing, my daddy was, among other things a dowser who could locate missing people by swinging a pendulum over a map of the area where the person was last seen. In (about) 1973 a Las Vegas gangster was in arrears with the mob and his 8-year old boy was kidnapped for ransom. The father couldn't raise the specified sum and was frantic. He learned of my dad and called him to ask for assistance. The boy was quickly located in the desert, where he had been buried in a hole dug in the sand, covered with boards. In

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the stifling heat the boy had expired; the coppers found him dead. Suspecting my daddy of complicity in the kidnapping, some LAPD dicks flew to Atlanta and interviewed Daddy. I met them when they walked up the driveway. They quickly saw that he could not possibly have been involved in the kidnapping. Daddy had known from the start that the boy was dead, and told me afterwards that he was giving up his people searches because they had become too taxing. (sic) Finding live adults is one thing. . . but dead children is quite another paradigm. Dowsing, like everything else, depends on the dowser; not the rod.

Posted by: andy-a | Nov 20, 2007 3:33:28 PM

I was delivering papers at about 11 or 12 yrs old. An old man was dowsing with forked stick and I watched it bend as he crossed a certain spot in the alley. He let me hold one side of the stick and walk with him. That dang stick bent down by itself! It bent at the point that it left both of our hands. Now it happened when I was just a kid, and there are many magic tricks for which I don't know the secret. But this really freaked me out...

Posted by: steven | Nov 20, 2007 3:36:43 PM

@John the Baptist:

(Oh arrogant one) If there is something to dowsing thousands of years of investigation haven't been able to say what. See my multiple posts above on how it has been disproven (I'll post them again as necessary). Flawed logic won't win this one for you. I could explain to my great-grandmother the science behind TV. Not knowing the explanation for something and something having no basis in fact are two different things. Apparently you don't (or won't or can't) acknowledge the difference.

@andy-a: Anecdotal stories and statements that presume fact (like your last one) do not amount to proof.

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 3:45:04 PM

WOW ... really glad so many opinionated people are looking our for my best consumer related interests. Last time I looked, America still had a few freedoms left. One that I particularly like is that if I earn the money, it's none of your business what I spend it on, whether it be homeopathics, wooden knobs for my home stereo or woo-woo watches. Congratulate yourselves however on being so savvy ... now go home and write 1000 times, "James Randi is not a god, nor is he a scientist. I can think for myself".

Posted by: Fredrick Von Hammerschnickle, III | Nov 20, 2007 3:46:37 PM

From the time I was 14 I've "witched" 30-40 wells. Made bets and took money from those who didn't believe. Almost every time it turns into a whitching party. Everybody wants to try. Not every one can, but most can find pipe, wire, over head lines as well.

Posted by: tony | Nov 20, 2007 3:46:43 PM

From the time I was 14 I've "witched" 30-40 wells. Made bets and took money from those who didn't believe. Almost every time it turns into a whitching party. Everybody wants to try. Not every one can, but most can find pipe, wire, over head lines as well.

Posted by: tony | Nov 20, 2007 3:46:50 PM

OK, I always assumed dowsing was crap, and I think if you're just "finding water" for a well it's because water is almost everywhere and picking a random spot probably works, but seeing posts from engineers dowsing in the middle of the field, I wonder: has Randi ever done a double-blind test dowsing for buried pipes carrying moving water, using brass rods?

Not impossible there could be some esoteric effect there. Still unlikely imho, but maybe worth testing.

Posted by: TallDave | Nov 20, 2007 3:50:56 PM

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Fredrick Von Hammerschnickle, III

Ya Fred, I'm sure not only is that your real name, but also that you're an American. I do however support your right to be an absolute idiot, just remember however, other's may not want to be fooled. The desire to not want to be suckered what a concept huh? By the way I'm Shubert Van Luxenburgen, IV. You dolt.

@Tony: We may have a record for anecdotal stories now. I'll keep posting as long as forever.

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 3:53:35 PM

@balance

Congrats on your winning with impeccable logic. What is it you won? I still have an open mind. Yours is closed. Are you really the winner here? I remember a time in which it was argued we would never break the 500MHz processor barrier due to physics constraints. Good thing someone at Intel wasn't so closed minded, eh?

Posted by: John the Baptist | Nov 20, 2007 3:57:36 PM

For me #9 wire works the best, steel I think,,, I was taught with a 4ft pry bar by an old cowboy at 14. I've staked out telephone lines before they came with metal detectors, just for fun. In my mind something is going on,,, I thought myth busters proved it works with a double blind test

Posted by: | Nov 20, 2007 4:04:13 PM

Hmmm nothing wrong with snake oil... check out the origins of this term...

Posted by: Anthony | Nov 20, 2007 4:09:13 PM

@John the Baptist: Did you dispute anything I claimed or address any of my points "head on" (punny, punny!)?

No. Did you prove anything I said wrong? No. As I said not being able to explain something etc..etc..

To take your example however. At the time this anonymous (and helpful to your straw man attack argument) person argued it would never be possible to break 500mz, they either didn't know what they were talking about OR the materials hadn't been invented yet, so they thought it would never be possible. Tell me what breakthrough has not occurred to prove dowsing in the last 3,000 years? Hmmm?

Could you sight the flaw in the studies that DISPROVE logic? Hmmm? Can you offer ANY possible alternative explanation for dowsing (besides the ones that have already been shot down?) Hmmm? No. If you want to think the earth us flat, by all means attempt to sail off the edge. PS. I have an open mind, just not one open to crap. I'm willing to listen, but when things start to contradict logic, and when things (specifically dowsing) are disproven by double-blind studies, I consider the matter closed until someone can prove otherwise. By your "impeccable" logic try this one: It's possible to turn lead into gold, they just haven't come up with a way to prove it! You don't believe me? You closed minded fool!

Posted by: balance | Nov 20, 2007 4:11:19 PM

@balance

Fantastic! You went for the gig on the name and American thing right off. Good one - start with something that totally has nothing to do with the subject. Why do you support my right to be an idiot and not someone else's right to be one also and buy this stuff? If they don't want to be a sucker, then they should investigate it first. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. THEN, if they choose to buy it, it's still none of YOUR business. Still doesn't negate the fact that tens of thousands of people have purchased these "snake oil" devices and loved them. Or, perhaps the government should step in and tell us everything we can and can't buy based on their scientific evaluation. Why are there 20 different detergents on the store shelf all claiming to be the best, when we certainly could conduct a scientific test and find out which one indeed works the best. I doubt your nextdoor neighbor would stop using the Tide she's used for the last 20 years if a study shows that All is better. She basing her opinions and buying habits based on her experiences. I doubt seriously the old man down the road that got a dowser to locate a buried waterpipe could really give two rips in the wind what you thought about it either. It really is allot harder to close an open mind than it

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is to pry open a closed one. Wait ... did you somehow assume I actually believe these products worked?

Posted by: Fredrick Von Hammerschnickle, III | Nov 20, 2007 4:33:40 PM

@balance

It IS possible to turn lead into gold, and it has been done in the lab several times. It just isn't economically practicle. Oh wait, you didn't know? DOH....

Posted by: John the Baptist | Nov 20, 2007 4:38:17 PM

I don't see any proof in the top 10 list that any of them don't work, where's the research stats. I know of people who spent a lot of money digging wells with no hits and then found the spot by dowsing, it works if you believe it does, and yes, being around those who do not believe, can stop it working, read the story of Edgar Cayce, and the times they stuck him with pins because they did not believe him. You create your own reality. And really it does not matter if one does not believe it, those who do will use it well... Ask and it will be given Seek and you shall find...

Posted by: KnowAll SeeAll | Nov 20, 2007 5:27:26 PM

Divining does work. There is no need to prove it scientifically because it is common knowledge. That is like asking someone to prove that if you let go of something, it will fall to the ground. There is no need to prove what you can see with your own eyes. Mr. Randi has also attacked Uri Geller, buy Geller has shown time and time again that he can bend spoons with whatever power he has that he has tapped into. Why can't Randi just accept that? Divining does not work by a method that is appropriate for mainstream testing. The nature of the rods, whether wood or some sort of metal, is unimportant because this is what people would call a psychic phenomenon. Some people have the gift and the rods are merely a tool in tune with their psychic mind. They fail in the tests set up by "scientists" because of the overwhelming negative energy in the local atmosphere which is known to disrupt psychic fields.

Yes, the government has a website sited above which says that divining is a fraud, but this is the same government which has brought you the war in Iraq an the FDA, which has suppressed many successful treatments for everything from diabetes to cancer. Why? Money. Arrogance. Corruption.

No "double-blinded" test will every prove what outsiders would call alternative methods life dowsing because they are blinded - they blind the mind of its special powers. But if you people will calm down and have an open-mind, you may be able to tap into these principles and lead a more successful life.

I have been a successful psychic for 30 years and have done everything from dowsing to helping law enforcement agencies locate missing children - and with great success when everyone involved was at least open-minded so that my psychic energies were not disrupted. That is what no one seems to understand. I will admit that I have participated in Mr. Randi's challenge, and I agreed to the nature of the experiment and the ground-rules, but I, like all the rest, failed, but it was because of the negative energies involved. I can honestly say that this was the only time I failed to dowse successfully.

Posted by: James Erwin | Nov 20, 2007 5:37:43 PM

My Father worked for a major metropolitan sewer company as an safety inspector. Over the twenty some odd years he was with them, he located thousands of buried pipes and accurately told them what depth to dig. This is documented. He used the standard welding rods as well as the high polished copper. On one jobsite there was a cave in and several men were burried alive. They brought in backhoes, but were afraids to use them. My Dad ran over to his car and took out his devining rods and as police and fire personnel laughed at him walking back and forth located the first man burried under four feet of dirt. He directed them where to dig and pulled the man out. The other two bodies were located exactly where and at what depth my father had told them. Afterwards, several of the policeman came up and told him, they were sorry for doubting.

I can also use the rods to locate water sources and like mentioned above, they will cross if you move over pipes. It has to do with using your natural magnetic fields. They are amplified through the copper/metal. It is not that far fetched or mystical. Some people have a stronger aura and magnetic resinance.

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Posted by: Dowser Wowser | Nov 20, 2007 5:45:55 PM

I believe in dowsing (actually, water-witching) because I've tried it for finding buried irrigation pipes & valves, of which I had no idea where they were placed.

I work for a city in California as a Parks Gardener. I've successfully found & uncovered old forgotten valves & sprinkler line runs.

I use two coat hangers shaped into ells, held apart & parallel to each other slightly out in front of me. I begin to do a grid walk. when I pass over a line or underground valve(s), the wires point to each other. If I walk past the object, they begin to rotate back towards me & the object I passed. I then take a few steps backwards until they point again to each other. Voila! There it is. Try it yourself sometime before passing judgement.

Posted by: Andy | Nov 20, 2007 5:50:35 PM

@James Erwin

OMG - who is this douche? I give up! How can you argue with that. Hell, who needs science? It only works if you believe it works and if you believe it works then clearly it works! But if don't believe it works, it won't work? No sh*t! Can I send this guy some money or something?

Posted by: UR A Moron | Nov 20, 2007 5:53:44 PM

I reminded of the story of the dowser who accidentally found Jimmy Hoffa and had to fight off the mob with help from dowsing supporters.

Yeah, i just invented that. But that would make a cool movie. Actually, no.

Posted by: Fango | Nov 20, 2007 6:01:08 PM

If you actually read through all these comments, you may have an interest in the subject of dowsing. And if you have a few hours to spare reading an actual scientific paper on the subject, try this one.

http://www.scientificexploration.org/jse/articles/betz/betz_toc.html

Posted by: Henry Melton | Nov 20, 2007 6:08:23 PM

@Henry Melton

Okay, thanks for the link to the parapsychology website. If I need any articles proving the existence of UFOs, astrology, or ESP, I will be sure to go there for some "actual scientific papers" on the subject. Oh, and BTW, maybe you should learn the difference in science and parapsychology. Oh crap, here comes a UFO. Gotta go!

Posted by: UR A Moron | Nov 20, 2007 6:16:10 PM

Re: Dowsing.

I was sitting at the side of the road eating my lunch after having done some work on a house in a well-off suburb in Thousand Oaks, California.

A utility vehicle marked with the logo of a well known company drove up and parked across the street. A man got out with his dowsing equipment and walked around for a while then spray-painted symbols on the street.

I asked him what he was doing and he told me they had to dig up the street to lay cable the following week and he was marking where to dig.

Draw your own conclusions.

Posted by: Dennis | Nov 20, 2007 6:18:34 PM

@ Dennis

Okay, I conclude that major companies in well-to-do suburbs in California employ stupid people, just like

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small companies in BFW. Thanks for the info.

Posted by: Bill | Nov 20, 2007 6:21:47 PM

I used some dowser's rods once. When I walked over a certain spot they just take off and move all by themselves !!!

Very strange, and it did the same thing for other people, each in almost the same spot. We thought it was water but not certain, it was also near a water faucet so the dowser was saying see its the water that triggers it.

THERE BE DEMONS IN THEM THAR WATERS !

That's it, water is a plasma of highly polar molecules, plasmas carry the spirits of beings of other realms.

Posted by: Mr. Toad | Nov 20, 2007 6:40:16 PM

I am a scientist. I don't believe in anything. I have used dowsing rods myself and they work.

Posted by: Hilary | Nov 20, 2007 7:01:55 PM

@Hilary

Well, I guess that settles it. I didn't know that you had used them and they worked! They must work then. Plus, you are a scientist. Great! BTW, how is the presidential campaign going? Do you think illegals should get dowsing licenses?

Posted by: Bill | Nov 20, 2007 7:06:08 PM

I think some people just have a huge need to call other people names who believe in things that they themselves do not.

I've never tried it, I don't know anyone who has, but I am also not foolish enough to say that something isn't real just because of those reasons.

I will try it now, just to clear it up in my own head. However, whether it works or not, I will still say that for some it may be possible, for others not so much...sure this doesn't fit into the neat well defined area of KNOWN science, but then again you really don't know everything do you? If I were you I'd stop pretending that you do, and open your mind to the fact that there ARE things that have occurred in this world (and continue to) that YOU or anyone else will likely never be able to quantify in any way that is meaningful to you.

Stop trying to fit every single thing into neat little boxes folks...it makes you come off as quite nutty...at LEAST as nutty as you claim other are who believe in the things you do not.

It does not hurt you if others believe in things you do not....calm down and leave people the fuck alone for the love of, well, God I suppose.

In closing, if it works for you then it works. If it doesn't then it doesn't. Why the need to ridicule others? EASE UP.

Posted by: fortwynt | Nov 20, 2007 7:44:35 PM

you had me for the first nine items
but....

lost all credibility with your tenth
choice. Dowsing WORKS

Posted by: anne | Nov 20, 2007 8:05:30 PM

All these "double-blind" tests with buckets of water under five sheets of plastic or something like that, it's just completely ridiculous. Doesn't it even occur to these people that it needs to involve water that is actually flowing within the earth? I guess it would be a bit more difficult to set up a "controlled" experiment with water in the earth. Nothing bothers these "scientists" more than something they can't control!

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Posted by: sullymandias | Nov 20, 2007 8:23:41 PM

I watched several people take a "professional" dowsing tool, advertised in publications devoted to water and sewer departments, and walk over a sewer pipe in the road, and the rods would stick straight out. And when I take them, noting, nada, squat. The explanation: "It doesn't work for some people."
I know licensed PEs who swear by their accuracy...

Posted by: harold | Nov 20, 2007 8:48:00 PM

What about that junk peddled in the back of automotive magazines?
From the vornado to all kinds of magnetic junk to all the "love life boosters".
I wish someone would test that crap...

Posted by: EJ | Nov 20, 2007 9:25:33 PM

MY friend has a Q-Ray Bracelet and he claims it works- given to him by his daughter. I know dowsing works, I picked the winning horses with it and in their order. I placed a particular jockey 4th and he came in 4th. at retirement. Telephone-Cable locater's -- Engineers have used dowsing for years. It works.--mick

Posted by: mick | Nov 20, 2007 9:39:38 PM

The main cause of premature aging is los off hope, living on acid foods and drinks (junk by great tasting) 24/7. And not to mention over immunization. It is the pharmaceuticals answer to world population illimation of over..., cause the wolf disease that is troubling people today. Just think like soldiers prepared to die for a cause the war games they play. Immunization is the same except that the war games become real when the soldiers turn on the hos. (YOU!!!)

Posted by: mick | Nov 20, 2007 9:46:29 PM

The main cause of premature aging is los off hope, living on acid foods and drinks (junk by great tasting) 24/7. And not to mention over immunization. It is the pharmaceuticals answer to world population illimation of over..., cause the wolf disease that is troubling people today. Just think like soldiers prepared to die for a cause the war games they play. Immunization is the same except that the war games become real when the soldiers turn on the hos. (YOU!!!)

Posted by: mick | Nov 20, 2007 9:46:35 PM

My friend swears by it. his daughter gave him one and he wore it only for pleasing her. Today he will not take it off as he is convinced!!!

Posted by: mick | Nov 20, 2007 9:48:14 PM

You desire to live long and healthy..., Think of your future as the window in front of you. The present as the window along side of you and the past as the window behind you. Take only the good and let go of the other remembering it not. Eat 85 percent Alkaline, 15 percent Acidity. Join the KENGEN = water users. loose weight naturally! Look younger! Feel Better! Find it's natural way to feel like not eating toxic foods or drinks! I advise a test of 60 Days And know from experience that it works! The AMA will not agree and will not let it be used in the USA, But it also will not let the Russian Equivalent to the little tool that the Doc would use in the Enterprise Films. And it does exist. A natural Turn it on and zap the area of your problem with revitalization energies that heal, it is used in Europe and Australia.

Posted by: mick | Nov 20, 2007 9:57:12 PM

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[http://video.google.com/videoplay?](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7461912885649996034&q=randi+dowsing&total=5&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=1)

[docid=7461912885649996034&q=randi+dowsing&total=5&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=1](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7461912885649996034&q=randi+dowsing&total=5&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=1)

The tests weren't done with buckets, but with pipes. Dowsing is fake, and somebody is definitely doing an astroturfing job.

Posted by: | Nov 20, 2007 10:26:39 PM

Ive used coat hangers to find pipes for over 25 years at golf courses and our sod farm, and gardening residential landscapes. Look up the Stubblefield effect, and earth batteries and youll understand how it works. Deffinetly not magic. Our security gate works off the same process, just a coil of wire on the side of our driveway. Look up military ground sensors.

Posted by: Bushman | Nov 20, 2007 11:55:28 PM

Wow...Seems like this webpage scientifically proves it by the preponderance of evidence presented here: strongly left-brained, scientifically-minded individuals tend to have no manners and closed minds. So I guess since consciousness cannot be scientifically measured, hence it does not exist, then all of you are unconscious.

Posted by: so_sad | Nov 21, 2007 4:48:58 AM

Don Robertson -

I had to laugh at your "science doesn't make anyone's life better" ...which was typed from your technological magic box called a "computer". Thank God science didn't have anything to do with the creation of said box. Or the electricity used to run it.

Good for you.

Posted by: WTF? | Nov 21, 2007 6:01:25 AM

It IS possible to turn lead into gold, and it has been done in the lab several times..

@John the Baptist:

This is more fun than I imagined.

I hope you're having as much fun as I am. I did find this from Wikipedia however:

Matter transmutation, the old goal of alchemy, enjoyed a moment in the sun in the 20th century when physicists were able to convert platinum atoms into gold atoms via a nuclear reaction. However, the new gold atoms, being unstable isotopes, lasted for under five seconds before they broke apart.

So you are right, it's been done, in a way--on the atomic level---for five seconds. On the macro scale (say a gold bar) it has never been done.

As the above quote stated it has nothing to do with expense. You can't store something that lasts 5 seconds.

Now maybe thousands of years in the future, through some greater understanding we will get true

transmutation. Until then the pinnacle

of human history's greatest acheivement--the deepest understanding of nature on the atomic scale--nuclear

energy--the very fabric of nature manipulated--and we can get lead atoms to gold atoms for five whol

seconds. Please try and go spend some gold atoms at your local store. They'll have vanished from existance

before you think of what you want to buy...

PS. You're still wrong on your stance, despite the parlor trick!

Have a fun life with your superiority complex.

Posted by: balance | Nov 21, 2007 8:02:39 AM

Fantastic! You went for the gig on the name and American thing right off.

@Frederick: You're a few sandwiches short of a picknick if you think I will buy someone's last name is the following: Hammerschnickle.

Yes I'm Wulfpuck Bon Literhosen V.

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Also I live in a city in the clouds.

Also I have a magic tree that grows golden oranges, and another that grows dollar bills, and another that grows euros! It's all done through genetic engineering. You doubters can say what you want but I KNOW it to be true!

Posted by: balance | Nov 21, 2007 8:09:07 AM

@Laocoon - Moving water does not produce a field? How do you explain lightning? A charge of awesome power generated by moving water.

Hydroelectric power is used all over the world. The source of that power is moving water.

Concerning dowsing - I notice that the opponents express considerable emotion, and that the other side sites personal experience. People with a weak point of view tend towards "yelling" and ridicule to reinforce their inadequate knowledge of a subject. I have not investigated "dowsing"; but based on the posted comments the proponents are making a much better impression.

From a technical/scientific perspective, it would seem that the person is the sensor and the object being held is the indicator.

One last observation - People are not all the same. Just because you are not able to do something does not guaranty that no one can.

Posted by: Clifford | Nov 21, 2007 8:28:56 AM

Note to Don Robertson, The American Philosopher - You sir, are a complete moron.

First read WTF?'s post.

Secondly, if you don't believe in 'Science' - then stop using it. Oh that's right, you can't because the next time you have any type of pain you too will reach for medicine that 'Science' has provided for you. Or you will go see a doctor which owes their entire field of study to 'Science'.

Or have you forgotten that mathematics, chemistry, engineering and physics, just to name a few, are 'Scientific' subjects?

All that humans have and use today were discovered by scientists.

So please stop calling yourself an 'American Philosopher'. It truly sounds like you're twelve years old and only have one train of thought. Try multi-processing more data and how it all relates to everything (including History) then you might understand how to transition into a real philosopher.

Data will always king!

By the way, Philosophy is the birth of Physics.

Posted by: VRB | Nov 21, 2007 8:44:10 AM

amazed by how many ignorant people still buy in to the dowsing rod bullshit.

Moving water does not produce a field? How do you explain lightning?

Squeeze me? Read a freaking book.

Posted by: yoiks | Nov 21, 2007 8:45:58 AM

@Clifford. Ya emotion starts to occur when damn idiots like yourself start spouting off with out a shred of empirical evidence: In a scientific study in Munich, five hundred dowsers were initially tested for their "skill", and the experimenters selected the best 43 among them. These 43 were then tested in the following way. On the ground floor of a two-story barn, water was pumped through a pipe; before each test, this pipe was moved in a direction perpendicular to the water flow. On the upper floor, each dowser was asked to determine the position of the pipe. Over two years, the 43 dowsers performed 843 such tests. Of the 43 pre-selected and extensively tested candidates, at least 37 of them showed no dowsing ability. The results from the remaining 6 were said to be better than chance, resulting in the experimenters' conclusion that some dowsers "in particular tasks, showed an extraordinarily high rate of success, which can scarcely be at all explained as due to chance ... a real core of dowser-phenomena can be regarded as empirically proven"[7] "

Five years after the Munich study was published, scientist and skeptic Jim T. Enright contended that these results are merely consistent with statistical fluctuations and do not demonstrate any real ability.[8] He noted that the best tester was on average 4 millimeters out of 10 meters closer to a mid-line guess, an advantage of 0.0004% advantage. The study's authors responded[9] but Enright remains unconvinced.[10] More recently, a study[11] was undertaken in Kassel, Germany, under the direction of the Gesellschaft zur wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung von Parawissenschaften (GWUP) [Society for the Scientific Investigation

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of the Parasciences]. The three-day test of some 30 dowsers involved plastic pipes through which a large flow of water could be controlled and directed. The pipes were buried 50 centimeters under a level field. On the surface, the position of each pipe was marked with a colored stripe, so all the dowsers had to do was tell whether there was water running through the pipe. All the dowsers signed a statement agreeing this was a fair test of their abilities and that they expected a 100 percent success rate. However, the results were no better than what would have been expected by chance.

(SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA)

EAT SCIENCE BUDDY!

PS. I have not investigated "dowsing"; but based on the posted comments the proponents are making a much better impression.

I'm glad you let impressions of posts make a determination as opposed to science. Science isn't a religion as some claim, it's a method of determination based on testable, repeatable measurement and observability.

From a technical/scientific perspective, it would seem that the person is the sensor and the object being held is the indicator.

What technical perspective? You just contradicted yourself! Science is about observability and investigation. You claim yourself you have done no investigation. Here is your quote again: "I have not investigated "dowsing", "m but then in the next sentence claim a scientific perspective?! Were you misquoted? What you really mean is "in my opinion". Nice. That's pretty much worthless.

One last observation - People are not all the same. Just because you are not able to do something does not guaranty that no one can.

We all make spelling mistakes, but even a 3rd grader can tell you that's not how you spell "guarantee". Nice phonetic spelling with "guaranty".

Unless you're claiming some psychic ability or paranormal phenomenon Clifford it DOES mean no one else can do it when something is NOT REPEATABLE. What an absurd claim. Do any of your people have anything backing up your claims besides blathering on like cult members? I thought not.

Posted by: balance | Nov 21, 2007 9:52:22 AM

Thank you for the article and for the most entertaining comments. I suppose those who commented FOR dowsing are honest and sincere people as are those of us who don't believe in this huey. There have been some entertaining stories here so keep them up. Fiction is more fun to read than non-fiction.

Posted by: funguy | Nov 21, 2007 10:53:59 AM

I was a plumber for 10 years and when I needed to find a water/sewer line I would dowse for it and it seemed to work fine. granted I usually knew in the area to look but it nailed it 90% of the time.

Posted by: jeru | Nov 21, 2007 2:44:08 PM

Dowsing for water works.. my cousin is a plumber, he was looking for a pipe underground and it wasnt where it was supposed to be from the plans, so he got a metal clothes hanger, bent it to an L shape, and found the pipe using it. he demonstrated this in front of us and then we tested it with pipes, even with a bottle of water... IT WORKS

(deal with it skeptics, or try it yourself)

Posted by: Fadi Zeitoune | Nov 21, 2007 6:34:42 PM

A good fun read, but I've also experienced dowser rods application with success. Nothing as special as looking for gold or even water. I just saw one of my customers looking for buried power and communication cables in his back yard using dowsing techniques. He marked it all out, and I called digger's hot-line just to be sure. They were confused why I called them out seeing as all the lines were already clearly marked... WHATEVER!

Posted by: Alex | Nov 21, 2007 7:25:46 PM

I use dowsers when there is a fire

Posted by: fFire Marshall Bill | Nov 21, 2007 8:34:14 PM

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Enjoyed the wacky gadgets. Enjoyed the patter of all the posts. Found it rather strange that almost all appeared to "believe" they would persuade others to accept their side of the argument. Truly interesting. Have the best possible.

Posted by: |20|30+ | Nov 21, 2007 9:47:19 PM

Copper wire rods work best. I've found septic lines and buried irrigation pipe 18" deep prior to digging. Hold the rods loosely and they will cross on their own over the pipe. Works on PVC as well.

Posted by: Greg | Nov 21, 2007 9:49:56 PM

I'm an engineer and make my living from hard science fact, i dont belive in a god or ghosts or anything of the supernatural. But, I have used dowsing to track an underground stream through a friends garden so we could divert it. I was a sceptic, but it works, i dont know how or why, but ive used it and as far as i am concerned it works, for those of you whou doubt i suggest you try. Copper coat hanger wire bent into two L shapes is the easiest dowse to make.

Posted by: Joby | Nov 22, 2007 1:11:48 AM

I never believed in divining rods. But one day I was at work in a mine and seen someone using them. As he passed over an area, the rods would turn. I was still unconvinced. I challenged him and asked to use them. He said OK and gave them to me. When I passed over the same area they turned. Come to find out there was a water pipe line that nobody knew were it was at since it had been buried by the old crew and they were retired or gone. So I do believe it works for either, like some posters said, for finding pipe or moving water. It supplied water for some of the screen decks at a rock mine. It did work, the pipe was right were the rods turned. Believe me, its no hoax.

Posted by: Rdo | Nov 22, 2007 1:42:22 AM

About the pipe at the rock mine, it was PVC. So I concur with a previous poster, it works with PVC.

Posted by: rdo | Nov 22, 2007 1:47:07 AM

For a long time science did not know Black Matter existed. Yet the evidence is showing that there is something there. My point being, maybe there is something going on with dowsing that someday will be explained with science. Dont disprove something just because science hasnt been able to understand the physics behind something yet. Or cant measure it. Or cant see it, etc. Like black matter.

Posted by: rdo | Nov 22, 2007 2:21:38 AM

I should of used discredit instead of disprove in the above post. Sorry. And I am not an expert on Black Matter (I am sure it shows) but the general idea I hope came across. Cheers all!!

Posted by: rdo | Nov 22, 2007 2:42:02 AM

Maybe Wired should do an investigation or something because there is so much interest in dowsing? I mean, so many people have "seen it happen" or have "done it", maybe there is something worth writing about?

Posted by: choel | Nov 22, 2007 6:27:11 AM

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rdo, no one is trying to discredit dowsing, we're merely requesting your prove it works in a double blind test. It seems strange that so many people swear up and down dowsing works but then refuse to make a million dollars for it.

<http://www.randi.org/research/index.html>

Posted by: Jared | Nov 22, 2007 6:28:28 AM

I pretended to be psychic once and successfully guessed the middle name of the daughter of a new acquaintance. Only because I picked the statistically most likely name, of course... but I had a hell of a job convincing them I wasn't really "a psychic".

They pestered me for all sorts of odd advice for some months thereafter. Some people really want to believe, and even poor evidence will convince them, in the face of strident denials.

Posted by: Nic | Nov 22, 2007 7:23:48 AM

@Wes "I think the anti-dowsing comments are all one guy who works for a company that makes water-locating sonar-type device and charges \$500 to survey property for water sources.

I've seen it work to find a leak in an irrigation pipe where no visible signs of water seeping existed."

Thats probably because the person who dug down to the supposed leak caused it with their spade :D

Posted by: @Wes | Nov 22, 2007 9:09:18 AM

I was driving along one day an saw a hard-hat engineer walking around with these two brass rods parallel in front of him.

"What's that?"

"A psionic pipe locator."

So I went back to college and built a wooden platform with a pipe hanging underneath that you could spin.

At that year's science fair I put the device in the gym with all the rest of the projects.

I asked the judges to spin the pipe and the brass rods found its orientaton every time coconut.

The judges failed me because I could't produce any math.

Posted by: Tom Dennen | Nov 22, 2007 11:21:38 AM

I am a skeptic. I am an atheist. There are no ghosts, magnets do absolutely nothing for your health and having sex upside down doesn't improve chances of conception. However, I am also a lineman with many years of experience with high-voltage power. Divining rods do work for finding buried power lines; in most cases better than a \$1000 sub-site detector. My crew and I put them to the test weekly and I can tell you that if the rods fail us then the sub-site usually fails us too.

Water though is different. It may work for others, but in my experience the rods only cross over power lines, sometimes phone lines. Too, I'm not talking about walking 40 feet across a yard; I'm talking about walking over a mile on several occasions and only hitting over power. We had no knowledge of the area as we're military and were in Idaho, New Mexico, Bahrain, Egypt and Saudi Arabia; so educated guessing couldn't have been a factor. We have never accidentally come across water pipes when dowsing for power lines.

I am always the guy who's saying "yeah right" when people talk about anything that requires faith as opposed to scientific proof, but this one does have at least a little substance to it.

Posted by: sgtcody | Nov 22, 2007 12:16:04 PM

Waving these rods over my screen, I can reliably detect posters with dormant brain capacity.

Dowsing. You guys.

Posted by: Doody | Nov 22, 2007 12:28:26 PM

The principle behind (real) dowsing is the same one that a magnetic compass uses.

Ever tried using a compass next to a pile of scrap iron? It doesn't point north, it points to the scrap heap,

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and it is this behavior that makes dowsing a perfectly rational idea.

The issue is that most people who CLAIM to be able to dowse are simply charlatans, as are the people who think that it works on some kind of 'magical' or 'spiritual' energy.

In order for it to work the rod must be made of the right materials, and the item to be located must be magnetically noticable.

The reason why some people are 'better' than others is due mostly to differences in conductivity between the hands (through the body) and insulation to the ground.

In all reality, if you truly want to try dowsing, you would have better and more reliable results by using a compass to track the deviation from true magnetic north in the local environment, and standard triangulation methods to locate the specific location.

Posted by: Skeptikal | Nov 22, 2007 1:30:45 PM

Disagree- big time . Tell me what is so magnetic about PVC pipe and water. Answer - nothing. The compass will only respond to metal of certain types, never water or plastic. Triangulation and conductivity are red herrings.

Posted by: greg | Nov 22, 2007 2:58:31 PM

Skeptikal: You are not sceptical enough. Compass needles are very small and light mounted so they can move very easily. The reason? The forces that turn the needle are very small. Dowsing rods are simply too heavy to work as a compass.

Most dowsing devices are not even magnetic at all.

The magnetic disturbances caused by underground water, for example, are very very small. A hand-held compass just isn't capable.

If you really have the answer and can find just ONE good dowser, go and claim Randi's million dollars.

Posted by: apgaylard | Nov 22, 2007 2:58:48 PM

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Posted by: apgaylard | Nov 22, 2007 2:59:03 PM

the last guy to talk to me about dowsers was a con artist with a cocaine habit. they were nice ones too. I didn't buy them . missed my chance I guess.

Posted by: shmaaig | Nov 22, 2007 7:11:50 PM

A few years ago I hired a well driller to find water at our cottage. To my surprise and dismay the guy pulled out some dowsing rods and walked about with the rods dancing in his hands. He claimed to have found an underground stream and set up his drilling site. Out of curiosity I got him to give me a try. Sure enough the rods did move about but randomly. He said it takes practice but that anybody could learn how to use them with time. Oddly, at the time there was a good three feet of snow beneath our feet. Apparently the rods detect only liquid water. Later that year an environmental engineer did a mandatory assessment of our land to get approval for a well. After looking over the land he came to decide on the exact same spot for a well, with no prior knowledge of the dowser. I'm not sure either used science but it might have been a coincidence that it was the one spot with easy access for the drilling truck. We did find water, 200 feet below the snow.

Posted by: 3+speckled | Nov 22, 2007 7:36:20 PM

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Is there a TV producer reading all this? If this was a TV special I'd watch it.

Get this guy (<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg14820095.400-branches-twigs--rods.html>) or someone like him to go to some area where water is scarce and he can't possibly have prior knowledge. Show geophysical studies, whatever, indicating how much water is around and where it's likely to be found, but obviously not to your dowser guy. Have him try to find water. Show whether random drilling has the same success, test for statistical significance, etc. Invite some representative of JREF to help design the tests so no trickery is possible - we're not trying to prove the paranormal so there's no risk to their \$1M, but they should be able to provide good skeptical observer.

Assuming the dowser's results *are* significant, have some other person who claims to be able to dowse in their backyard or with plumbing or whatever, see if they get the same results on the same area with no prior knowledge. Also get some random person who has never tried to dowse before.

Also try with the 'dowsing rods' in some kind of swivel mechanism that can't be easily influenced by the 'operator'. Does anything happen? How about if there's no person holding them at all? Get a small RC vehicle to drive over the same spot with the rods attached. Does anything happen?

So now we've established if 1) this guy can do anything, 2) if he can then whether it's him or the rods.

If it looks like it's him, take him to another location where he has no prior knowledge, blindfold him and try again. Does sight make a difference? How about blindfold, noseplugged and listening to white noise?

I have no idea whether it's possible that people can 'detect' water with coathangers - it seems unlikely, or at best that they are subconsciously tapping into some intuitive ability. But some kind of experiment along these lines would surely give us a good idea.

Posted by: Jools | Nov 23, 2007 7:00:47 AM

Hey, the Q-Ray bracelet is identical to some torque bracelet sold to celtic festivals all over north Italy. It is simply a piece of jewelery with celtic origins that indicated the social status of "warrior" (or "free man", sorry, i don't remember). Nobody ever tried to sell it as something with pseudoscientific healing abilities. I bought one, silver plated, for 50€, just because i like it :D

Posted by: Druzya | Nov 23, 2007 11:55:31 AM

Screw dowsing and your fraudulent bastards promoting it.

Posted by: balance | Nov 23, 2007 12:26:02 PM

Screw dowsing and your fraudulent bastards promoting it.

Posted by: balance | Nov 23, 2007 12:26:08 PM

It kinda made me chuckle that there was a Chevy "Gas friendly to gas Free" commercial at the end of this article. I actually thought it was part of the story...

Posted by: david | Nov 23, 2007 5:00:55 PM

the Clarins spray is not a gadget, and therefore, does not really belong on this list. it is disappointing to have such a bogus product from Clarins, the make some incredible products, including the best skin lotion in the world.

Posted by: AgentG | Nov 23, 2007 6:35:33 PM

I have a device similar to the dowsing rod, but much more valuable. It is a special rock that is 100% effective at preventing tiger attacks. It works even if I don't carry it - I have now gone over 23 years without a single attack. In fact, it works even if I don't have the rock! I made the rock up! and I still haven't been attacked by a tiger. Contact me for info.

Posted by: Matt | Nov 23, 2007 10:42:14 PM

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Umm yeah, dowsing rods? I've seen something like like that. Take a small piece of metal, like a sewing needle, rub a magnet against it, and then let it float in some water, it'll point north. But don't ask me to explain how it works. Ever heard someone say a compass is a scam? No, because assuming there aren't any magnets nearby, they *always* work, for *anyone*. I could hand a baby a compass and it would still work. If the same were true of dowsing rods, we wouldn't have expensive technical equipment for finding water.

Posted by: Jonathan | Nov 24, 2007 12:08:08 AM

Amazing how many believers there are in the concept of science! Science can not prove it self scientifically. As is proven by Godel. Yes science is a very helpful tool in gaining knowledge. But not necessarily the only way. In fact, through experience we gain the most of our knowledge, that we than try to understand universally though scientific scrutinising. But since gravity and magnetism to name just 2 are not understood still scientifically, I am surprised to see so many strong believers in science. On the other hand I I'm happy to see so many people to stand up and speak about there experience with dowsing even if they have a scientific background. Not that i know it to work, nor believe it does work, but i don't want to rule it out, and i do like to experience it...

Posted by: jam | Nov 24, 2007 3:02:07 AM

OK, I didn't read EVERY one of these posts (I do have a life) but I did notice two things: everyone who believes in dowsing seems to do so because they have tried it or seen it demonstrated, and not one of the critics have tried it at all. Just sayin'...

Posted by: SisterCrystal | Nov 24, 2007 12:57:07 PM

Dowsing is not magical it is scientific that is why you could not win the 1 million from randi. Electricity flows through the easiest paths therefore many underground pipes and waterways have a small electrical current. A conduit with current passing through it creates a magnetic field... this is how a motor works. the magnetic field interacts with the dowsing rods if they are made of a ferrous material. It won't work for just a pail or pool of water, and it won't detect snow because there would be no electrical current in those situations. The force would be small an dit would require practice to hold the rods properly and steadily enough to make it work, but it could. Just because people used to do it and call it witchcraft does not mean it actually works. Indian medicine men used to call spirits to remove headaches they also made tea for the patient before hand made with bark that we now can use to produce aspirin.

Posted by: Deft | Nov 24, 2007 1:36:02 PM

To all of you who are asking for documented proof that dowsing works:

My father (or was it my grandfather) (my uncle?) actually read a scientific study somewhere that proved that dowsing worked. QED.

Also, I'm an engineer and use dowsing every day in my job. But contrary to most engineers in existence, I have no natural sense of curiosity about this and so have done no tests or experiments that could give me a real clue about what's going on.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to make up a few more names for myself and post some more entries.

Posted by: Just You Average Joe | Nov 24, 2007 4:14:16 PM

A couple of years ago I had a friend come to my property with his dowsing rods to help locate a new well. We were all stumped when he couldn't get any reaction from the rods even when he stood over a creek. A week later I pointed to a spot on the ground and the well driller went from there. By the next day he had drilled a well that gets 50 gallons per minute at 145 feet. I think in this case, the dowsing rods didn't work because there was water everywhere under my property.

Posted by: H2O | Nov 24, 2007 7:21:55 PM

human beings are 90% water and yet when I stand under dowsing rods, bugger all happens. Explain.

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Posted by: steveio | Nov 25, 2007 9:33:39 AM

I'm actually starting to believe in this dowsing bollocks.
if this page proves anything, it's that brainwashing is quck and easy.

Posted by: idiot | Nov 25, 2007 9:59:49 AM

I have a lot of friends that work for a utility locating company. For some reason, if you bend two utility flags (you know, the little one put in the ground to mark an underground pipe to avoid while digging?) and use them as dowsing rods / witching sticks / whatever you want to call them, they find buried gas lines and water pipes. I had just chalked it up to constant flow in the same direction causing a light magnetic field - I have no clue if that would also help find underground water that wasn't in pipes.

Posted by: Ryan | Nov 25, 2007 7:23:29 PM

Great article, Wired should do more stuff like this, but I'm surprised at all the dousing supporters. Hello?

Posted by: Ross | Nov 25, 2007 9:36:21 PM

"Amazing how many believers there are in the concept of science! Science can not prove it self scientifically. As is proven by Godel. Yes science is a very helpful tool in gaining knowledge. But not necessarily the only way. In fact, through experience we gain the most of our knowledge, that we than try to understand universally though scientific scrutinising. But since gravity and magnetism to name just 2 are not understood still scientifically, I am surprised to see so many strong believers in science. On the other hand I I'm happy to see so many people to stand up and speak about there experience with dowsing even if they have a scientific background. Not that i know it to work, nor believe it does work, but i don't want to rule it out, and i do like to experience it..."

My god, this is ridiculous. There are so many things wrong with this.

There is a misconception spread by pseudo scientific / paranormal supporters. Science IS how we understand the Universe. Saying that a person's personal experience somehow trumps scientific tests and trials is ridiculous!

And it has nothing to do with Science being a 'Faith' (which it can't possibly be, by it's very definition). It has to do with the fact that human beings are easily deceived, not just by con artists but by themselves. Science is the best way we have to weed out falsehoods and test observations.

There is a reason why dowsing has never, ever worked in a scientific study or trial. It's because it doesn't work! Move on!

Doubting the scientific process because we don't 100% understand certain things is also ridiculous, as we are constantly filling the gaps. It's like saying 'Well, sure, the scientific process may have disproved countless myths and created our modern society, but I'm gonna pick and choose which parts of Science I want to believe in'.

Eventually, we might understand gravity, eventually we might understand magnetism. Would you still then rather trust a bunch of anonymous anecdotes, or would you still refuse the concept of the Scientific Method because we don't understand x? Will you just move the goal post?

Posted by: Ross | Nov 25, 2007 9:50:05 PM

And, one last thing, skeptics aren't dismissing dowsing because 'science doesn't understand how it works' as some have said. Skeptics dismiss it because scientific studies have shown that there is no effect. It's all the dowser's head!

Posted by: Ross | Nov 25, 2007 9:56:24 PM

"And, one last thing, skeptics aren't dismissing dowsing because 'science doesn't understand how it works' as some have said. Skeptics dismiss it because scientific studies have shown that there is no effect. It's all the dowser's head"

one last thing, read it again, and more precise :)

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Posted by: jam | Nov 26, 2007 12:21:44 AM

Fuck me, there's more sock puppets here than an episode of Sesame street.

Posted by: Gilbert Wham | Nov 26, 2007 7:28:35 AM

>> I like the way the zune ad at the bottom looks like it's the next item in the list. Funny, the ad I saw there is about Chevy alternate-fuel vehicles. Maybe snake oil, too? Hmmmmmm???

Posted by: Bubba Smith | Nov 26, 2007 8:14:27 AM

Man. I'm totally floored by the number of posters here who are obsessed with trying to bring me around to their point of view, berating anyone who disagrees, and who act like they have a personal stake in my conversion to their way of thinking. And then on top of that, there's the people who believe in water witching.

Posted by: Ross | Nov 26, 2007 9:31:51 AM

I've read the comments posted here and I concede I must be a total moron. So is my husband. He's a trained philosopher, I have a Ph.D. We are both complete, utter, absolute skeptics. James Randi is a personal hero of mine. I'm a member of the Brights. I know Dawkins and Dennett's work very well - not just their writings on religion. I know and work with evolutionary theory as part of the work that I do. OK?

Here's the thing. Fifteen years ago we needed a new sewer line. A man came to the house to locate the water line. He had two bent pieces of metal in his hand. We almost fell over laughing. "You're going to locate the water with that. You're going to dowse?" He said he did it all the time. Uh-huh. Well, sure enough, the pieces of metal started to turn in his hand as he walked across our lawn. Impressive - yeah, right. So he hands the rods to me. I walk over the lawn, and the damn things start turning in my hands! My husband was still laughing. Then this supremely rational philosopher tried it - and the metal turned in his hands as well. It's a very strange feeling, I might add.

What does this mean? We both went temporarily insane? Indeterminable, but it has never happened before or since. We were hoodwinked? Yes, possibly, but how? I felt what I felt, and saw what I saw.

I have no explanation. We three dowsers (two of whom did not believe it even as it happened to us) located the water line.

There must be a rational explanation for this, since there's a rational explanation for everything. I just don't know what it is. Saying we are stupid or delusional may make you feel better, but it does not happen to be the truth. What the truth is, I confess, I do not know.

Posted by: Elena Tobias | Nov 26, 2007 9:41:26 AM

I've read the comments posted here and I concede I must be a total moron. So is my husband. He's a trained philosopher, I have a Ph.D. We are both complete, utter, absolute skeptics. James Randi is a personal hero of mine. I'm a member of the Brights. I know Dawkins and Dennett's work very well - not just their writings on religion. I know and work with evolutionary theory as part of the work that I do. OK?

Here's the thing. Fifteen years ago we needed a new sewer line. A man came to the house to locate the water line. He had two bent pieces of metal in his hand. We almost fell over laughing. "You're going to locate the water with that. You're going to dowse?" He said he did it all the time. Uh-huh. Well, sure enough, the pieces of metal started to turn in his hand as he walked across our lawn. Impressive - yeah, right. So he hands the rods to me. I walk over the lawn, and the damn things start turning in my hands! My husband was still laughing. Then this supremely rational philosopher tried it - and the metal turned in his hands as well. It's a very strange feeling, I might add.

What does this mean? We both went temporarily insane? Indeterminable, but it has never happened before or since. We were hoodwinked? Yes, possibly, but how? I felt what I felt, and saw what I saw.

I have no explanation. We three dowsers (two of whom did not believe it even as it happened to us) located the water line.

There must be a rational explanation for this, since there's a rational explanation for everything. I just don't

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know what it is. Saying we are stupid or delusional may make you feel better, but it does not happen to be the truth. What the truth is, I confess, I do not know.

Posted by: Elena Tobias | Nov 26, 2007 9:41:37 AM

I wish I had the time to read this extremely long and entertaining string of comments. Scientific Method vs. I saw it with my own eyes!

Posted by: Abe | Nov 26, 2007 9:57:34 AM

I used to work at a Nextel repair shop and always got a laugh out of anybody who brought in their phone with one of those "signal amplifiers" stuck on their phone. Every phone we tested with this contraption actually showed a DECREASE in signal strength, sometimes by as much as 20%. It's absolutely crazy what people will believe these days.

Posted by: denis merchantile | Nov 26, 2007 10:37:15 AM

Very good article, with the exception of dowsing rods. They work. I work for an excavating company, and we use them when the electronic locators fail to find a pipe, a tank, or something else underground. Don't know how, but believe me, they really do work.

Posted by: David spear | Nov 26, 2007 10:55:01 AM

There was once this ad (in the 80s) on an indian news paper about a 'proven method to kill mosquitos'. The ad gave a mailing address, asked people to send in money. In return, the seller sent two pieces of large stones and an instruction manual explaining how they have to position the stones on either sides of the flying mosquito and 'clap'. Nobody could even pursue them legally, apparently!

Posted by: Sunson | Nov 27, 2007 3:50:45 AM

@David Spear
Then why bother with the electronic locators in the first place?

Posted by: Mr O | Nov 27, 2007 7:17:35 AM

@David: don't know how, but believe me, they really do work...

Screw dowsing and your fraudulent bastards promoting it.

In a scientific study in Munich, five hundred dowsers were initially tested for their "skill", and the experimenters selected the best 43 among them. These 43 were then tested in the following way. On the ground floor of a two-story barn, water was pumped through a pipe; before each test, this pipe was moved in a direction perpendicular to the water flow. On the upper floor, each dowser was asked to determine the position of the pipe. Over two years, the 43 dowsers performed 843 such tests. Of the 43 pre-selected and extensively tested candidates, at least 37 of them showed no dowsing ability. The results from the remaining 6 were said to be better than chance, resulting in the experimenters' conclusion that some dowsers "in particular tasks, showed an extraordinarily high rate of success, which can scarcely if at all be explained as due to chance ... a real core of dowser-phenomena can be regarded as empirically proven"[7] "Five years after the Munich study was published, scientist and skeptic Jim T. Enright contended that these results are merely consistent with statistical fluctuations and do not demonstrate any real ability.[8] He noted that the best tester was on average 4 millimeters out of 10 meters closer to a mid-line guess, an advantage of 0.0004% advantage. The study's authors responded[9] but Enright remains unconvinced.[10] More recently, a study[11] was undertaken in Kassel, Germany, under the direction of the Gesellschaft zur wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung von Parawissenschaften (GWUP) [Society for the Scientific Investigation of the Parasciences]. The three-day test of some 30 dowsers involved plastic pipes through which a large flow of water could be controlled and directed. The pipes were buried 50 centimeters under a level field. On the surface, the position of each pipe was marked with a colored stripe, so all the dowsers had to do was tell whether there was water running through the pipe. All the dowsers signed a statement agreeing this was a

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fair test of their abilities and that they expected a 100 percent success rate. However, the results were no better than what would have been expected by chance.
(SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA)

Posted by: balance | Nov 27, 2007 8:32:43 AM

The academic community that produces the scientists will fail any research paper that cites Wikipedia because the content is highly questionable at best. What makes its use so many times here scientifically acceptable, laziness? Buy a book.

Posted by: Amused | Nov 27, 2007 1:18:03 PM

This is a job for Mythbusters! Jamie, Adam, grab your coats (and hangers) and head out!

Posted by: Nrd do well | Nov 27, 2007 5:46:45 PM

lol, you should submit that one.hahaha!

Posted by: lol | Nov 27, 2007 7:53:19 PM

Here is a great one you missed, the makers of this 'bubbly ozone spar reckon it can cure all manner of medical ills including cancer. I wrote about it here and it continues to lure the desperate and the gullible ... awful stuff.

medi-zone spar - the cruelty of pseudoscience @

<http://thoughtmenagerie.wordpress.com/2006/11/29/the-cruelty-of-pseudo-science/>

Posted by: Stuart | Nov 28, 2007 12:26:37 AM

"... there's no engineer out there dedicating his life to polishing ... knobs."
Isn't that what groupies are for?

Posted by: WilCo | Nov 28, 2007 12:17:52 PM

Dowsing rods work? Pfffrt.

Try finding water with a yellow-blue teddybear in each hand, you'll have just as much luck.

Posted by: Buster | Nov 28, 2007 12:53:57 PM

@buster: that could be an idea for a psychological experiment, like in dirk gently, under hypnosis, tell dowsers that the teddy bears they're holding are dowsing rods and take pictures of them turning them inwards "wow, i'm a professor of physics in MIT and i wouldn't have believed it unless i had seen it with my own eyes!!"

then draw cocks on their faces.

lousy physics professors...

Posted by: timmy-joe michelsen | Nov 29, 2007 2:01:46 PM

Commenting on the long forgotten original thing - some truly amusing, and, believe it or not, kind of terrifying pieces of equipment.

My scientifically tuned mind easily sees through such scam words like "quantum" and "evil radio pollution" and it's a let-down to see people get cheated by such products.

Now back to dowsing - i'm offering a discussion here. "Scientific method" vs "it works". PAH! Scientific method my ass. Ever heard of indeterminism? With tons of unrepeatable and variable effects,

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allmighty "scientific conditions" are a dillusion of wannabe scientists. I'm talking about magnetic field generated by liquids in motion, Earths magnetic field and thw "x" factor of mans placebo effect. Dont get me wrong, i'm not saying that magic and those small green goblin things exist, I'm merely mentioning a thruth partially forgotten - science in its core is not about "i told you sos" and "prove me wrongs", its about appreciating things we dont yet completely understand and the will to let go of rigid asumptions for some genuine discovery.

P.S. Remember Niels Bohr and complementary principle, after all: "There are some things so serious you have to laugh at them."

Servus by Lapsus

Posted by: Lapsus | Nov 30, 2007 12:23:14 PM

Dowsing is rubbish, shame on you believers for being so idiotic.

Derren Brown, British Channel 4 magician, showed how to trick somebody into dowsing and find something, but it wasn't water: it was a note telling him it was a hoax.

Actually I heard of something that really does work, it's called seismic exploration. The way it works is a big seismic sensor truck is set up on the site of interest, and a charge of dynamite is set off nearby, and the sensors in the truck map all the features underground.

That'd be a laugh, pick a site and prove by seismic that there is one viable spring and set off a world-renowned dowser to go find it, only to dig up a box with a note from Derren Brown saying "Surprise, dowsing is bullshit!"

I'd pay to watch that on Pay Per View :)

(He did an entire show debunking Christianity among other religions/faiths/quackery, it was most capital entertainment).

Posted by: Grunchy | Dec 1, 2007 9:23:37 PM

Check here, another very interesting story in which the wooden volume knob phenomenon is mentioned.

<http://www.ethanwiner.com/audiophoolery.html>

This is actually a better article that deals with "snake oil" audiophile equipment, and helps demonstrate how susceptible we all are to being tricked, and I daresay largely because we think we are faultlessly objective when evaluating something new we hadn't heard of before.

Posted by: Grunchy | Dec 1, 2007 10:38:12 PM

@Amused: Wikipedia articles are not per se unreliable. Wikipedia was the general source for my quoted article, yet each individual part of that article has cited references at the end, from various scientific publications, which are reliable.

So to make a blanket statement about

Wikipedia is ignorant. Each article

from that source must be taken on its own merits, the additional cited sources. Dowsing is nonsense.

Posted by: balance | Dec 3, 2007 9:17:05 AM

Drugstore, <http://drugstores.wordpress.com> All Drugs are here.

Posted by: Jack | Dec 14, 2007 10:15:03 AM

Some people seem to believe in Steorn - they have recently secured another million from investors.

Posted by: C Watters | Dec 17, 2007 11:51:27 AM

I witnessed a water utility worker

doing locations for underground water pipes using a thin metal rod about 16 inches long bent at a right angle making one side about 12 inches long. He would hold the shorter end between his index finger and thumb, loosely. Then with the longer end pointing forward, he would walk and then the the long end would align itself with the water pipe.

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I tried it my self and it worked. He showed me the map of the area with the underground pipe locations.

Posted by: Monty | Dec 18, 2007 3:11:43 PM

They should have put Chiropractice at the top of the list.

Posted by: Gnuut | Dec 24, 2007 12:38:37 PM

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