

## THE ANCIENT ART OF DOWSING

Dowsing is the ancient practice of searching for water, metal or other objects, usually underground. It is also called water witching, divining and doodlebugging.

Dowsers believe that objects, including water, possess a natural magnetic, electromagnetic or other unknown "energy" they can detect with their senses. To a dowser, sensing this energy is natural and can be developed through practice.

While many dowsers use favorite tools like dowsing rods and pendulums, some say the tool is only an "interface" or "communication device" that acts as a connection between the hidden object or water and the subconscious.

Dowsing devices come in many shapes and sizes. For the experienced dowser, the choice of dowsing tool doesn't really matter, because the ability to sense things is all in the mind and the tools are merely responding to the mind's subconscious processes. Some dowsers operate totally free of a dowsing rod or other tool.

This ancient divining technique has many adherents, but it has never been scientifically proven. Dowsing, common since medieval times in Europe, in Colonial America and even today, is still practiced the same as it was 1,000 years ago, as you see on Frontiers.

Even though some dowsers claim they have a special ability to detect electrostatic fields associated with water, skeptics say that without scientific instruments (like the magnetometer shown in the story), it is impossible for a person to detect minute differences in magnetic or electric fields that may be associated with groundwater.

## ACTIVITIES: Be a Water Witch ... Scientist!

How can you find out if dowsing really works? Here are some scientific ways to evaluate dowsing.

- Set up a science experiment!
  - Materials:
    - Water hose (hooked to faucet)
    - Dowsing rods (at least 3 types; 2 wood & 1 metal)
    - Blindfold
    - 3 people: Dowser, Scientist, Witness
    - \*Measuring tape (optional)
  
- Apply the scientific method to a dowsing experiment? (Remember, the key to scientific testing is the ability to test and repeat an experiment. If a dowsing technique works every time when done exactly the same way, can we say it is scientifically valid?)
  - Question: Does dowsing or water witching really work?
  - Hypothesis: (What do you think the answer to the question is?)
  - The Experiment:
    1. The Scientist snakes the water hose through a yard.
    2. The Scientist turns the water on.
    3. The Scientist blindfolds the dowser.
    4. The Dowser uses one of the 3 dowsing rods to find the water hose. (Stepping on the hose does not count.)
    5. The Witness and Scientist judge whether or not the find is valid or true and record data.
      - Use data sheet provided to record data:
        - “Science Experiment Record: 1” – choose yes or no to record data. This is the answer to the question: “Did the dowser find the water hose?”
        - “Science Experiment Record: 2” – similar to 1 with the addition of measuring how far away the dowser is from the hose. You may find similarities in measurement.
    6. The Dowser repeats two more times with the same type of rod.
    7. Repeat steps 4 – 6 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> type of rod.
    8. Repeat steps 4 – 6 with the 3<sup>rd</sup> type of rod.
  
- Psychology tells us that the power of suggestion is very strong. Sometimes a phenomenon known as ideomotor action (subconscious thoughts cause involuntary movement) causes the rods to act.
  
- You can learn more about dowsing from the [American Society of Dowsers](http://www.newhampshire.com/dowsers.org) (www.newhampshire.com/dowsers.org).