Table of Contents

About the Author.
Preface.
Acknowledgments.

Part I: Introduction.

1. The Continuum Mysteriosum.

Making Sense out of Mysteries: The Continuum Mysteriosum.
Extraordinary, Nonparanormal Mysteries.
An Invitation.

2. Why Study These Things?

The Dangers of Unexamined Paranormal Claims.
The Risk of Paranormal Passion and the Critical Thinker’s Toolkit.
Eight Reality-Checks: The Critical Thinker’s Toolkit.

Part II: The Critical Thinker’s Toolkit.

Evaluate Support for a Claim.

3. Reality Check: Are the Sources Credible?

Astrology.
Questionable Sources.
The Question of Authority.
When Experts Get It Wrong.
An Invitation to Question.

4. Reality Check: Is the Logic Valid and Sound?

Basic Logic.
Informal Logical Fallacies.
Premises, Logic, and Hypothesis Testing.

5. Reality Check: Are Claims Based on Observation (Scientific Tests and Theories)?

Observations.
Tests.
Theories.
Sagan’s Balance and the FEDS Standard.
Science and Alternative Hypotheses.

Consider Alternative Explanations.

Probability Estimates and Bias.
Math Ignorance.
Coincidences.
The Clumpiness of Randomness.
The Law of Very Large Numbers.
Science and Chance.
Summary: Psychic Bias.

7. Reality Checking for Perceptual Error and Trickery.
Top-Down Processes and Perception.
Manipulations of Magicians and Psychics: The Cold Reading Toolkit.
Hypnotic Suggestion Enhancers.

8. Reality Checking for Memory Errors.
Memory Myths.
What Is Memory?
Memory Errors.
Déjà vu.
The Déjà vu Reality Check.

What are Placebos?
Weak and Strong Placebos.
How Placebos Work.
Placebos and Superstitious Beliefs.
Placebo Controversies.
Placebos and Performance.

10. Reality Checking for Sensory Anomalies and Hallucinations.
Sensory Phenomena.
Migraines.
Tunnel Experiences.
Hallucinations.
Hallucinations and the Critical Thinker’s Toolkit.

Part III: The Paranormal Files.

History of the Spiritualist Movement.
Impact of Spiritualism.
Spiritualism Today.
Research on Life after Death.
Research on Channeling and Mediums.
Conclusion.

The Language of Parapsychology.
Research on PSI.
Conclusion: The State of PSI Research.

Contemporary Views of Energy: The Scientific Perspective.
Concepts of Energy in Children and Western History: Vitalism.
Chinese Energy Treatments.
Western Energy Treatments.
Conclusion.

The Varieties of Healing Experience.
The Evidence.
Conclusion.

The Great Debate.
Things Great and Small.

The Reality Checkup.
How to Carry on a Civilized Discussion about the Paranormal.
Parting Words: Pandora’s Challenge.
Appendix A. Complementary and Alternative Medicine.
Appendix B. Critical Thinking and Paranormal Resources.
Appendix C. Susan Blackmore on Paranormal Research.
Name Index.
Subject Index.