

Ghost Hunting 101.

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←Chapter One: Before You Read→

Definitions:

Ghost Hunt- going to a place where there have been no sightings of ghosts and trying to catch some on film (video and photos), sounds, eyewitness, etc. (graveyards are the number one place to start, churches, schools and older buildings too)

Ghost Investigation- going to a known haunted place and recording data (video, photos, audio, temperatures), notes, interviews and other evidence to prove/disprove the haunting *and* to assist the owners and the spirits in moving on and leaving the place if they want that. The assistance can be either you directly assisting the owner with the situation or putting them in contact with experienced groups or individuals that will try to resolve the situation. Your assistance can be something as simple as educating them on what is going on and their options.

What you may encounter:

There are generally two types of spirits you may encounter. One was a human at one time and it has remained on this level for some reason. It may not know it's dead, may be held here by unfinished business, guilt, etc. These spirits are like the person was when they were alive, so they could be good or bad, just like the living, but not normally dangerous. This human spirit is the type you will encounter 95% of the time. You could also witness a residual haunting which is just a playback of a past event. This is just like watching a video from the past playing over and over. The other types of spirit you may encounter were never human and are generally bad news. You must be aware of this type but not obsessed with them, the chances that you will encounter them in a regular ghost hunt are slim. I have experienced both types and I just want to make you aware of their existence. So be aware and protect yourself and you should have no problem.

Types of Haunting

The first type of haunting is exactly like a video playback of a historic or tragic event. This is called a residual haunting. The event unfolds in front of you and there is no interaction between you and the ghosts. They seem to not notice you and go through the motions of the event that occurred in the past. This event has been imprinted on the area or building and is replayed back later when conditions are right. The ghosts that you see in this type are not earthbound spirits; they are just visual playbacks. Since everything is made up of energy, the theory is that some of the energy from an event can be recorded by certain materials and played back when the atmosphere triggers it. Remember that video and audiotape is just oxidized (rust) film that enables the images and sounds to "stick" to it. This type may be frightening when you see it, but you are in no danger so enjoy the experience.

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The second type of haunting is an interactive spirit that manifests in many ways. You may see a full bodied or partial bodied apparition. More frequently than that, you may here voices, music, footsteps, etc. You may also smell odors which sources cannot be found (i.e. pipe tobacco when no one smokes). You may also see orbs, mists and other light effects. You may feel touches, cold spots, and other light physical contact. This ghost is the spirit of a deceased human being. They may be stuck here (earthbound) for reasons such as tragic sudden death, fear of moving on, guilt or unfinished business. They also could be here visiting loved ones or to warn or pass along a message. These human spirits are the same as they were in life, so they may be good or bad, but not really evil. Think of all the people you know, probably a bit of good and bad, some worse than others. This type can cause some scary situations but you must think about the situation they are in, you don't see them but they see you. They will try to get your attention any way they can. Many times this is the terrifying event people will write to me about like the lights going on and off, items moving, noises, etc. For the most part these are just attention getters and nothing more. There are a few more mischievous human spirits that will do these things to bother you and scare you on purpose. They may just be a prankster or maybe they want you to leave the old home or not to change something in the home. They have all the same motivations you and I would have. These human spirits account for a majority of the haunting we encounter and are relatively harmless. Yes, there are extreme cases and sometimes they can cause dangerous situations, but this is not the norm and is rare.

The third type of ghost you may encounter is not a rare one, but is rare that they interact with the living. They are non-human spirits, commonly known as demons and devils. They are mentioned in the bible numerous places in both the old and new testaments. People like Ed and Lorraine Warren have been dealing with this type of spirit for years. This type is dangerous and can cause you harm. I believe that if there is good, there must be a counter balance, evil. These non-human spirits often disguise themselves and friendly and helpful human spirits. They often appear in cases dealing with Ouija boards, black magic and satanic worship. This is why I recommend not trying to contact spirits and doing ghost hunts without some understanding of what's out there. It's also why I recommend you go with or learn from experienced people before hand. That way you can ghost hunt with relative safety from these entities.

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←Chapter Two: General Tips→

Check out the area in daylight so you are familiar with the area. Look for dangerous places and obstacles that you will not be able to see in the dark.

Look for no trespassing signs. Make sure you are not trespassing. If you are on private property you are risking getting a ticket or arrested in some areas. You can get permission from many owners and or caretakers. We will often notify the local Police that we will be in a graveyard "taking pictures" so they are aware of our presence. If you are asked to leave do so immediately, you will not win this argument and you make other investigators look bad if you make a scene.

Make sure you bring you ID. (Drivers license, etc.) So if the police question you you can prove who you are.

Never go alone. This is just common sense. If you get hurt, who will get help?

The best times are from 9pm to 6am, these are the psychic hours, but anytime can produce results. Photos have historically been better in the dark but don't let that discourage you from taking them during the day.

Find out all you can about the history of the locale. Newspapers, town historians, WWW and books can be helpful finding folklore or hard facts about the site. The books and web pages dealing with this type of info is enormous. We have a haunted places listing here with over 1000 places listed.

If it is raining, snowing or foggy and you are scheduled to do an out door ghost hunt, reschedule it. You cannot conduct a proper investigation in these conditions.

Keep an open mind; any negative feelings may drive the spirits away. Be respectful of the locations and the dead.

Be skeptical; look for causes for any phenomenon such as natural or man-made causes. As an investigator you have to make sure your final evidence will stand up to scrutiny. By eliminating all other explanations, your evidence becomes stronger proof.

No smoking, alcohol or drugs at an investigation for mostly obvious reasons.

No whispering, it can taint your recording results.

The Tax Assessors Office can give you historical info on many locations you visit.

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Do not wear perfume, cologne or anything else with a very noticeable scent. This is so someone does not mistake the smell for a supernatural occurrence. Spirits often use scents and smells to get our attention.

Make sure you let someone know where you will be so they will know in case of emergency.

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←Chapter Three: Where to Look→

These are some places you can start your ghost hunting at. These are suggestions and you should not limit yourself to just these, spirits can be anywhere. Don't let the age of a building or area fool you. Also, remember do not trespass.

Cemeteries - The age of the cemetery doesn't matter but the older it is, the more time it has had to accumulate restless spirits. Why cemeteries? Well there are theories such as they are portals to the other side or that some spirits are drawn to their former bodies.

Schools - Schools and former sites of schools may have the build up of psychic energies and imprints of all the highly emotional events that have transpired there.

Theaters - The actors have run the gambit of human emotions inside the walls of a theater plus many have interesting haunting attached to them.

Battlefields - These are great locations simply because of their nature. Many violent deaths in one area will always hold some spirits and psychic energy there.

Churches - There is a long history of the faithful returning to the church they worshipped at. They may be looking for the salvation they were promised and cannot find.

Hotels/Motels/Boarding houses - Many dark dealing and highly emotional events take places in these rooms.

Historic Locations - Many historic buildings, because of their age, have had more time to have spirits attach to it. These buildings are often open the public and can give you a easy place to start. Many even have known histories of haunting and you may be able to gain access to the building after hours after speaking with the caretakers.

←Chapter Four: What to Bring→

The Basics:

* 35mm Camera - Nothing fancy with at least 400-speed film. 800-speed film is also good at night but you'll have to test your camera's flash strength to see which speed works best for you. Even those single use 35mm cameras have gotten good results. If you are more experienced photographer you may want to try infrared film. I have seen results from Polaroid's but I suggest you only use these along with a 35 mm camera so you can compare the results. I have used Fuji film primarily but I have also used Kodak and a department store brands with similar results. When you develop them you don't need to go to a camera shop, the local drug store or department store is fine. Let them know you want all the pictures developed so that you get the pictures that they might think are bad ones. These "bad ones" are normally your best ectoplasm mist photos.

* Digital Camera - Regardless of what you've heard digital cameras are great tools for ghost researchers. Once upon a time they had their limitations and problems but that is no longer the case. Not only do they allow you to see instantly if you have a positive photo, they can also take photos in limited infrared range of light.

* Flashlights w/ spare batteries - a common sense item. Remember to bring spare batteries for everything. Due to spirit activity, batteries often run down very fast and you don't want to miss anything because of dead batteries. I recommend using a red lens flash light to help preserve your night vision. More info on red lenses and how to make your own here

* First aid kit - just in case, it's very easy to trip in the dark and get cut.

* Notebook w/ pens and pencils - you need to write and log in everything that happens. If you don't then you really don't have much research information. An example of this is one investigator gets a EMF reading that's high and never writes it down. Another investigator takes a picture of the same area but is not aware of the reading and gets an anomalous image. Without that EMF reading the picture may be good evidence, but with a report noting the reading, the picture greatly increases in evidence value. Many investigators use a pocket tape recorder in stead and that is fine, just make sure you have spare batteries and tapes.

* Jackets or weather appropriate clothes - if you are cold you are not at your best and your observation skill could suffer, pretty common sense.

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* Watch - so you can log in the times of events and your arrival and departure.

Advanced and Optional

* Video camera (optional tripod) - Video cameras are an important instrument for an investigation. Unlike still cameras they provide us with constant visual and audio surveillance for review and observation. The video cameras we use are equipped with infrared capability and this is the mode we use. With video any phenomena occurring can be documented in its entirety. This will show the length of time the phenomena occurs, what is happening, the conditions surrounding the phenomena, and possibly even the cause of the phenomena.. The Sony line of camcorders has an infrared night shot feature that enables you to video tape in complete darkness and see beyond what the human eye can see. You can use these on tripods or walk around with them. You should also invest in an infrared light extender which will help your camera see in the darkest places and make the quality of the video better.

* Tape recorder w/ external microphone and high grade tapes - recorders or digital voice recorders are without a doubt one of the most important pieces of equipment that you should have in your investigators toolbox. audio recorders are used for many different purposes throughout an investigation. Recorders are used for interviews, spontaneous thoughts, your notes and electronic voice phenomena (EVP). You have to use an external microphone when recording EVPs (ghost voices). If you rely on the internal microphone you will also be recording the internal gears and motors and this will make your tape worthless. Any sound you hear on the tape could not be used as evidence because of this, so use the external mic they are pretty inexpensive. The type of tape that is most often recommended is high bias tapes or metal tapes.

* Digital audio recorders - This recorder is small and easy to carry. You can also use the voice activation feature so there is less audio to review. I use this for my notes as well. Most units record the time of the recording as well which is very useful. When using audio recorders be sure to state the location, time of investigation, and investigators names. When recording investigators names it would be wise to have each individual present state their own names, which will make it easier for distinction amongst voices heard on the tape during review. Voice activation mode should be deactivated on tape recorders during use when electronic voice phenomena is trying to be achieved due to the fact that it usually cuts off beginnings of words, sentences, and phrases. This is not necessary with digital recorders and they actually seem to work better in voice activation mode.

* EMF Detector - The Electromagnetic Field Detector, also known as an EMF, is the modern day ghost researcher's tracking device, a very important piece of equipment. With this instrument it is possible to locate and track energy sources. It will detect fluctuations in electromagnetic fields and low strength

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moving EMF fields that have no source. It is a common theory that spirits disrupt this field in such a way that you can tell one is present by higher than normal readings with this meter. Before using the EMF, as a ghost research tool on an investigation be sure to walk around the area and take initial readings around energy sources such as light poles or electrical outlets to be sure of the readings you receive while scanning the area during the investigation. Most units when purchased come with a manual describing most household and major appliances and their corresponding electromagnetic reading. When using the EMF as a tracking device look for fluctuations of 2.0 to 7.0, this usually indicates spirit presence. Anything higher or lower is normally has a natural source.

* Cellular phone - if you have one it can come in handy in case of an emergency.

* A Compass - it's a useful instrument to an investigator due to its compact size and low cost price. When used on an investigation this will indicate spirit presence when the needle cannot come to a precise heading or spins/moves erratically. This works on the same principle as a EMF meter.

* Candles & matches - batteries often run low during hunts so you may run out of them and still need a light source. Another good idea is a camping lantern that runs on lamp oil. Be careful using the candles around motion detectors, they will set them off.

* Motion Detectors - these can be used to sense movements by often unseen forces or spirits. You can get battery operated ones for about 20 dollars and they are great for inside but I have seen them used successfully outdoors as well, just watch the placement. You don't want a tree branch setting it off.

* Thermometer or Thermal Scanner - Thermometers are an instrument that is also very useful. There are two types used regular digital thermometers and infrared non-contact thermometers. When used on an investigation this will aid as a detection system for spirit presence. Rapid temperature drop of 10 degrees or more could indicate spirit presence. I recommend using the infrared non contact thermometers but cause they react in less than a second to a temperature drop and you can scan a large area quickly.

* Hand Held Radios - Or Walkie Talkies are very useful in a large outdoor area and a building with groups spread out in various rooms. They could be great in emergency situations or just to rotate groups. Be sure to be aware they could interfere with your EVP recording though.

←Chapter Five: Step-by-Step Procedure→

Here's a condensed version the most popular procedures for conducting outdoor ghost hunts:

1. Have everyone meet near the location and decide who will work each piece of equipment and divide into teams if necessary. Pick a person or leader that will talk to anyone who comes in contact with the group (i.e. Police, Reporters, etc.)
2. Enter the site and either privately or as a group asks for blessing or protection for the duration of the hunt. You can use this time to put yourself in a positive frame of mind. It does not have to be a religious thing so everyone can do this in some way. I do encourage everyone to take the 10 seconds this takes and do this. What can it hurt? It's better to be safe than sorry. Many experienced groups believe that there are evil spirits in many areas such as cemeteries and by saying a 10 second prayer or making sure you are in a positive frame of mind you can safely go about your business without worrying about them. An experienced demonologist will tell you that by doing this in the name of God or whatever good deity you worship, you will keep any non-human spirits at bay since they have to leave you alone when told so in this manner.
3. Walk around the area to get a feel for the surroundings and allow the spirits to get a feel for you. Do this for about 20 minutes. Log in your start time and weather conditions and any other relevant information. You can also begin to set up any stationary equipment like camera on tripods or motion detectors. Make note of any areas that may cause you to get false readings or false positive pictures.
4. Now go out there and get some pictures and recordings. Be sure to note anything unusual that happens especially meter and temperature readings, visual sightings and strange sounds. Also make notes of any feelings or emotions you feel that may be odd or out of place. You can compare notes after the hunt and look for similarities in readings and feeling in certain areas or at certain times.
5. Whether you stake out a spot or you walk around try to give everyone the opportunity to try everything and be everywhere. This keeps every one fresh and at attention. Rotate a few times during the investigation.
6. When you are done have everyone meet in one spot and ask the human spirits here not to follow you home and to remain here. Tell the others they must remain here in the name of God (or other good deities). Again this takes 4 seconds, it's simple and it can save you some problems down the road. If we are

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wrong about these prayers at the beginning and end of the hunt and they are not necessary then you wasted 14 seconds of your time. If we are right about them, you saved yourself from a lot of problems and grief.

Some additional steps for a house or building ghost hunt/investigation

- * Every investigator or team should keep a log of events/times - everything needs to be logged, no matter how trivial. You sneeze, log it in, it may have sounded like something else to another member elsewhere in the building.
- * All members and owners if possible, walk through the location. One member maps location noting: air vents, heater, and electrical appliances, fuse boxes, computer, etc. Mark down the temperatures in the rooms and any EMF reading you get during this walk through. One member takes 5-10 test photos during the walk through. Do not discuss the details of the case during this walk through.
- * 1-2 investigators and taped/recorded should interview any witnesses that have not been interviewed before if it's ok with the witness. The other members should walk around the location and record any feelings or observations. Only the interviewers will know the location of events and sightings.
- * Make no conclusions. Share no conclusions or opinions with the witnesses or owners until all the reports, photos and tapes are reviewed. You need to see the evidence and correlate it before you can give an educated opinion.

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←Chapter Six: Taking Pictures→

- * Open your film and load your camera after walking around the location for about 20 minutes first.
- * Use at least 400-speed 35 mm film. 400 and 800 speeds work the best. Black and White film also works well.
- * If you are an experienced photographer, you may want to try infrared film, which also has had excellent results in the past.
- * Make sure you note any other lights in the area so when you view your developed pictures you will not think a streetlight is an orb.
- * Make sure you clean your camera's lens regularly.
- * no smoking at the location, this can appear like mist on the photos so you don't want to contaminate your evidence.
- * Watch for dust or dirt being stirred up in the area you are photographing. They can give false positive pictures.
- * All long hair should be tied back or under a hat, again this is to eliminate any false positive pictures and to give the skeptics less ammunition.
- * Remove or tie up any camera straps so you don't take a picture of that, it looks like a vortex when photographed.
- * Watch for reflective surfaces and make notes of them. The flash reflected off shiny surfaces such as windows, polished tombstones, etc. could look like an orb or other anomaly. Make note of streetlights and any other light source that may appear on the film.
- * Let fellow investigators know when you are taking a photo so that you don't get double flashes and the night scope operators can look away. If you think you have a double flash photo or any other false positive, log the picture number so you can exclude that photo from the batch when they are developed. Night scope operators can get eye damage if they are looking at a flash through the scope so this is important.
- * In cold weather be conscious of your breath so you don't photograph that, it'll look like ectoplasm mist. If you think you may have, log that picture number and discard it when you develop the pictures.

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- * Many people like to ask the spirit if they can take their picture, it can't hurt.
- * Take pictures anywhere and everywhere. If you feel some thing or someone else does, take a picture. Did you think you saw something, take a picture. Take photos whenever you get a positive reading on any piece of equipment.
- * Sometimes you will see an orb, mist or sparkles in your flash or others flashes, take more pictures right there, you may be near a spirit.
- * You may only get about 1- 2 pictures for every 50 you take, that's about the average, so don't get discouraged. I've been at sites where I didn't get any and others where 30% of the ones we took were positive.
- * Don't pay for fancy developing, you can get them developed anywhere. Just let them developers know to process and print every photo. I use the local discount stores photo service.

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←Chapter Seven: Audio and Video→

* You can set up stationary recorders and just let them run or you can walk around with them. During audio recording, ask questions whether general ones or one specific to a certain spirit. You can find a few ideas of question on or near the gravestones (i.e. how did you die, ask who left flowers, etc.)

* Make sure you view or listen to the whole tape. EVPs are usually not heard at the time of recording but are heard only after the tape is reviewed.

* Review notes where you should have recorded any normal sounds as well as unexplained ones (dogs barking, cars, etc.) This way you can tell what a sound is that wasn't heard by you at the time but is now on the tape.