

# Paranormal Investigation

## *A Beginners Guide To Paranormal Investigation*

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# Introduction

A quick scan through the vast range of TV channels available through cable or satellite or a careful look at the titles of magazines and books various book shops will bear witness to the explosion of interest in "The Paranormal." The industry now boasts dozens of self-styled experts and a plethora of Paranormal Investigation Teams. All of this begs the fundamental question....

"when Paranormal Investigators do "investigations" what are they looking for?"

Now the quick answer is 'evidence' I guess - but of what?

You see one of the real challenges has to be the presuppositions that are made about what is being looked for; how they will know when they have found it and what finding it will actually mean.

All investigations, be they scientific or 'paranormal', have the same challenges.

So here's the question again, rephrased slightly...

What kind of evidence would support a hypothesis that there is something specific happening of a paranormal origin?

Being able to answer that question then immediately creates a second...

What quality of evidence do you require to support that there is something specific happening of a paranormal origin?

What is always apparent in any discussion of paranormal investigations are the 'beliefs' of the investigators and their apparent swiftness in jumping to some kind of paranormal explanation of (often) spurious observations.

Let's face it our mind is sometimes not the best judge of what is 'really out there'. It invents things, changes what our senses sense into things we can process. It drives the way

we understand the world. The fact that a noise has been heard or a shadowy shape has been seen does not mean that it was actually 'out there'. The illusions our mind can, and frequently does, create are so convincing and so 'real' that they must exist outside of our own head.

Perception is an active process and as such is shaped by our attitudes, emotions and our beliefs. If we are to engage in meaningful 'investigations' we need to be fully aware of this and think about how we can (could) control for these perceptual variables.

Most "paranormal investigations" do seem to base themselves on what the television has depicted as being the 'right way' to do them. Hence the plethora of misunderstood, misused and inappropriate 'ghost hunting tools' out there.

Research, when conducted, tends to be quite superficial, poorly referenced and one-dimensional.

Research is a specific process of questioning, recording, checking and cross-checking, but for some of the groups I have worked with seems to be a quick check on Wikipedia and perhaps a mention or two of an 'interesting book' that was read sometime ago.

The biggest problem of all with paranormal investigations is perhaps the 'intention' behind the 'research'.

It is often to 'prove' something - like a place is haunted - or to 'look for something' - in other words to anomaly hunt!

I feel that most Paranormal Investigation 'events' and not investigations but entertainments despite what the organisers claim

Investigations need to start with some very specific questions, based upon some very specific research or hypothesis.

Entertainments do not need to do so... they are fun walks in the dark, with some like



minded people all out to find evidence to support pre-existing beliefs. Now there's no problem with that - in fact that's great fun and will almost surely provoke some kind of emotional response. BUT let's be honest about what they are and what they are not!

If you are serious about investigations then there must be clearly defined protocols which set out to control as many variables as possible; that attempt to define what is being investigated with some very clear hypothesis or rationale. More importantly any observations resulting from such an investigation need to be reported and verified by other groups following the same methods and approaches.

In other words SHARING what is being investigated.

It is because of a lack of sharing; questioning, challenge, intellectual honesty and experimental rigour that this type of 'work' will remain on the fringe of science and

frequently fall into the pit of psuedoscientific oblivion where it will wallow spawning future generations of Most Hauntedesque hacks and wannabees...

I'm all for the ENTERTAINMENT - hell, who doesn't like a scary movie or ghost train... and I'm happy to play with that. I'm also fascinated by that part of the human experience which revels in such 'twilight' goings on. Heck, the mystic in me knows that from these experiences we can create meaning and personal learning.

But If we're INVESTIGATING then let's at least think about what that really means!

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# The Basics of Paranormal Investigation

The word paranormal comes from the words "para" meaning beyond, and normal. So the term paranormal really means something that is beyond the normal scope of science or being beyond a scientific explanation.

According to the Journal of Parapsychology, the term paranormal describes "any phenomenon that in one or more respects exceeds the limits of what is deemed physically possible according to current scientific assumptions."

Ghosts generate strong electro-magnetic fields. These fields cause disruptions in the magnetic field of a location which makes it detectable by both specialized equipment and psychics. Ghost hunters use many different types of equipment to detect an paranormal phenomena. A 35mm or digital camera is

probably the easiest and least expensive way to begin. Pictures, whether digital or recorded on film have the ability to capture paranormal activity that is usually invisible to the naked eye. In addition to a camera, it's important to have a flashlight since most paranormal investigations will be in dark places like cemeteries, basements, attics, or old buildings.

Also, most investigations occur between 9pm and 6am when it's dark. This is believed to be the best time to record paranormal activity. Along with the flashlight you'll need extra batteries, since batteries will sometimes mysteriously lost all their charge during paranormal investigations, literally leaving you in the dark.

Once you have these basic items, you're ready to start exploring the world of paranormal investigation. Some important things to remember are: never go on an investigation alone, and be respectful of the of the people, places and situations you encounter.

The first step in an investigation is selecting the place you're going to investigate. Once you choose a location, be sure to get permission to access the property to ensure you won't get into any trouble for trespassing.

It's also very important to do some research on the location before you go out and physically investigate it. You can go to the library and look up old newspapers, visit the local historical society to find out about the history of the place and if anything strange has happened there, and of course talk with the owner of the property.

Once you get all your data collected you have to analyze it. Every picture, video, audio recording is reviewed to look for any sign of a haunting. When doing your analysis, be sure to be skeptical. Make sure you rule out any explainable causes for anything odd that may show up. Check for mirrors, shadows, light sources or anything else that may cause something weird to be seen or heard in your collected data. Most of the time, the things

you initially detected during your investigation will have real world explanations as opposed to supernatural ones. It's important to make sure your evidence will stand up to any scrutiny by eliminating any other explanations. This will give your data more credibility.

Once you complete your analysis, you need to present your findings property owner. At this point you would recommend whether the owner needs to seek additional help, such a having the property blessed or if there is really nothing that needs to be or even can be done. Sometimes just having someone investigate the place and find nothing can help ease the mind of the person experiencing the haunting.

# Paranormal Investigation Then and Now

Paranormal investigating has been performed since the late 19th century with the formation of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Much of the procedures performed in those days can still be found in paranormal investigations today. The members of the SPR would interview witnesses, gather information, and keep well organized records of each incident.

There was however, no EMF detectors, EVP recordings, or any other electrical ghost hunting device you may have seen or heard about modern paranormal investigators using. The use of technology gradually found it's way into the paranormal field over the past century.

The first individual to use current technology during a paranormal investigation was

actually once a member of the SPR himself in 1920. Harry Price, during his ghostly investigations he would use equipment such as a camera with film to capture pictures of apparitions, electronic bells that were used as motion detectors, and measuring tools such as string and measuring tape much like modern ghost hunters use.

Even though many are skeptical of his work and have also suspected him of fraud, he has seemed to create the foundation of which modern paranormal investigations have evolved from.

The next technological step taken in which helped form the modern paranormal investigation happened in 1959 When Fredrich Gurgenson discovered Electronic Voice Phenomena while he was tape recording bird songs.

He began to make many recordings of EVP and later wrote a couple of books called Voices from the Universe, and Breakthrough.



Because of the tremendous discovery by Gurgenson there are websites, books, and associations completely dedicated to the audio phenomena.

The next sparks that seemed to push technology even further into the paranormal investigation happened in the 1980's. It happened in two parts. First was the movie "Ghostbusters" which further inspired the use of technology in paranormal investigations and study.

It brought about the idea that a ghost could be detected and even caught with the right technological equipment. We still do not know how or even if a ghost can actually be trapped but we do believe we can detect ghosts with the use of EMF detectors and finding unusual cold spots with the use of non contact thermal gauges which leads us to the second part.

At the end of the 80's technology began to advance to the point in which most people

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