

Investigations - Just the basics

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As a beginner or novice ghost hunter there are a few things to consider while on your investigations. The following is a list of the top ten:

1) Be Professional. Always maintain a professional appearance and attitude during your investigations. That does not mean you have to wear a suit, comfortable clothing is a must, but wearing clothing appropriate for the situation is best. Also, making sure to watch what is said during the investigation. Be sure to not mention names, places, swear, say negative things about someone or the condition of the home/location, etc. while on location. There would be nothing worse than the client getting offended and/or not being able to show evidence because of a slip of the tongue.

2) Make safety your first priority. If you get scared, don't run from the situation. It will be dark and you are in a strange place. You could hurt yourself or others. Also, you are a representative of the paranormal field and your actions could be projected onto others in the field as well. The exception to this is if someone gets hurt and/or is in danger. Then by all means use whatever means you feel is necessary to get to safety and/or get help.

3) Obtain a baseline of the area for the investigation. It is important to access the investigation site and look for things that could cause someone to think and/or feel like a place is haunted. This can be done with equipment (such as an EMF detector and digital thermometer) as well as visually. A few items to consider are: things that could cause power spikes or high voltage emissions; storage of chemicals or other items that could cause issues; noting open or loose windows or doors, etc. Obtaining this baseline first will help with debunking and review of the potential evidence.

4) Remember your goal. Your goal for any paranormal investigation is to capture evidence that paranormal activity either does or does not exist. There are a few points for consideration:

- When you are walking around the investigation site walk in a manner that will least impact the data you are trying to capture. Try to walk and move as quietly as possible. This will avoid noises in your data that will either contaminate real evidence and/or be mistaken as evidence.
- If you are trying to capture audio evidence (ie, EVPs) make sure to talk in a normal voice. This will help during evidence review so that a whisper between team members isn't thought to be evidence.
- If you hear a sound or make a noise and you know the source for that noise and feel that it might be wrongly identified as evidence later, call it out. For instance, someone moves a chair or shuts a door. By calling it out and/or writing it down on paper at the time it occurs, you will save yourself time during review.

5) Wear the right shoes for the job. Remember you will be on your feet for a long time and at some points won't have a place to sit down. Making sure you have the correct foot attire will be critical. There are several reasons for this, one being comfort and the second being the noise factor.

6) Leave or turn off all electronics. It is best if you leave cell phones, Blackberries, pagers, iPhones, MP3 players, etc. at the command center or in your car. If you feel you need it for safety, then please turn off the ringer. There is nothing worse than trying to review potential evidence only to find it full of text message beeps, cell phone rings, etc. The same would go for your camera. If it makes noise when you turn it on, turn it off, or when it flashes, it is a good idea to see if you can turn that feature off.

7) Use a flashlight. The use of a flashlight is important (for additional information see the **Tips for using a Flashlight** article) for investigations. This is one of the key tools you need on you at all times. However, it is best to keep the usage to a minimum. Your eyes will adjust to the dark and you'll be able to observe more activity with the naked eye.

8) Have patience and be observant. Sometimes it is best to just sit quietly and observe the space around you. This will help to debunk situations that occur as well as observe any activity that may exist. This doesn't mean you have to be silent 100% of the time, but silence is a friend to investigators.

9) Never lose the skeptic. Whenever a potential paranormal experience occurs, try to debunk it. Check for natural causes, such as wind, rain, etc. Check to see if someone or something else was in the area at the time. Check for something in the space that could cause the noise, like a furnace, dripping faucet, window, door, etc. Also, try to rule out the obvious before assuming it's proof of paranormal activity.

10) Have fun. Lastly, make sure to enjoy the investigation.