
Measurements made by others

Sometimes you may be provided with measurements that were taken by someone else, this may be a witness or from a device that is already installed at the location.

This data should be treated in the same manner as the measurements made during the investigation. When measurements are provided which were not under the control of the investigator, there is a greater risk of the data being erroneously gathered. Fortunately trickery is rare but it is not unknown.

You should always ascertain what type of equipment was used and the precise location and time the data was obtained

Don't disregard any data simply because it seems too good or if it does not support your own data or opinion regarding the case.

Initially, take the information at face value and set about testing and checking its reliability, precision and accuracy.

Equipment can (and will) malfunction

Equipment can fail for many reasons. This may be due to damage, operator error or simple battery problems. Any erroneous readings should be checked and the correct operation verified.

Set the correct units of measurement

Many devices allow you to set the units of measurement. Ensure that every device is set to use the same measuring units for each of the variables that you want to measure.

Recording measurements

Many devices offer the capability to store their measurements on to some type of memory. However, some items of equipment still require the user to manually record the data that is being provided.

In addition to the data from the device, it is also essential to record the precise location and the time that each measurement was made.

If necessary, devise a labelling system to easily identify each separate area of the location.

For devices that require manual recording of the data, make use of a pre-prepared form for users to fill in. The form should have spaces to record the data, together with the time and the precise location that each measurement was made.

If any measurements are missed or the data lost, don't be tempted to fill in the blanks by guesswork. Don't change or amend any data unless you also make a note about why the change was made and what the original data was beforehand.



Before You Measure Anything

Measurements allow the investigator to observe and record the prevailing conditions and to document any changes that may occur

Using Equipment

Guidance Notes for Investigators
of Apparitions, Hauntings,
Poltergeists and Similar Phenomena

Investigation Quick Guide



Choose the right item of Equipment

You should always have a good reason for making any measurement. For example, this may be to verify an experience or to test a hypothesis.

Ad-hoc measurements and those made in the hope of capturing something unusual are rarely productive.

The appropriate item of equipment should be selected for the particular variable that is to be measured.

The equipment should be of a suitable quality for the intended measuring task.

Equipment should be used in accordance with the manufacturers specifications and limitations for use.

If the equipment uses an external sensor, this should be in good working order, of a type that is intended for the task and compatible with the device that is being used.

The user should have a good knowledge about the variables that they intend to measure. They should also know what they are measuring and what constitute a normal and abnormal range of values.

The user should also have a good knowledge of how to use and each device they plan to use. Don't just assume that similar devices operate in the same way. Some manufacturers use different systems and methods of operation.

Placement is important

The device or its external sensor should be placed in the optimal position for the intended measurements or variable being measured.

The placement of a device or sensor should also be guided by the account of witnesses or suggested by other information.

Care should be taken to prevent the desired measurements being adversely affected by any nearby objects, appliances or your body.

If a device has multiple sensors, priority should always be given to the sensor which is likely to provide the most helpful information.

Handholding a device should be avoided whenever possible and with care when it is unavoidable

Preparation is essential

Make sure you read the manufacturers instruction manual and familiarise yourself with the controls and the way in which they operate.

Establish a routine for regular checking of the equipment, even when it is not being used. Doing so, ensures that it will be in good working order when you come to need it. Don't assume that because it was working when it was put away after the last investigation, it will still be working the following week / month.

Never leave it to the last minute to check the equipment. If something goes wrong you may not have sufficient time to rectify the problem.

Don't use equipment for purposes it was not intended or designed

Equipment is designed for a specific use or purpose; using it for other purposes will always result in unreliable data.

Download the Manual

Many equipment makers provide an online version of the manual. Download this to your phone or tablet so you can easily refer to them at any time.



Further Information

For those seeking more comprehensive information about making measurements; the Society for Psychical Research has published a useful book.

Using Equipment Guidance Notes for Investigators of Apparitions, Hauntings, Poltergeists and Similar Phenomena.

The book is available in soft back format directly from the SPR website: www.spr.ac.uk (books for sale) and also from Amazon in either printed or kindle formats.

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