Batteries

Battery failure is the most common cause of equipment failure.

Check what type of battery each item of equipment uses. Different types of battery technology have different care and storage requirements in order to maintain their proper level of operation.

Batteries don't last forever, over time they will deteriorate and hold less charge. Try to have several spare batteries, ready for use.

Rechargeable cells are normally good for around 500 charge cycles. Numbering each battery will help you even out their use. If you are using non-rechargeable cells, check their use-by date.

Some devices require a specially designed type of battery, which cannot be changed by the user.

Bargain basement batteries rarely perform well and in some cases their use may even cause damage to the equipment.

Batteries do not perform well when they are used in cold damp environments. Keep them in a warm dry place until they are needed.

Never store loose batteries

Throwing the batteries into a bag or pocket will inevitably lead to them shorting and discharging.

In extreme cases this can also result in the battery catching fire or exploding.

Use the correct type of charger

Different rechargeable battery technologies need to be charged in different ways. Use only the correct type of charger and always refer to the instruction manual.

Memory cards

Many devices now use some form of memory card or disc in order to store the data they produce. The correct type of card that is required will be indicated by the manufacturer.

Makes sure that the card you are using is not just of the correct type i.e. SD or microSD but also has the correct data transfer speed for the device it is being used with. Cameras normally require very high data transfer rates whereas a data-logging thermometer can use a card with a much lower data transfer rate.

Label or number memory cards to prevent accidental erasure or incorrect use.

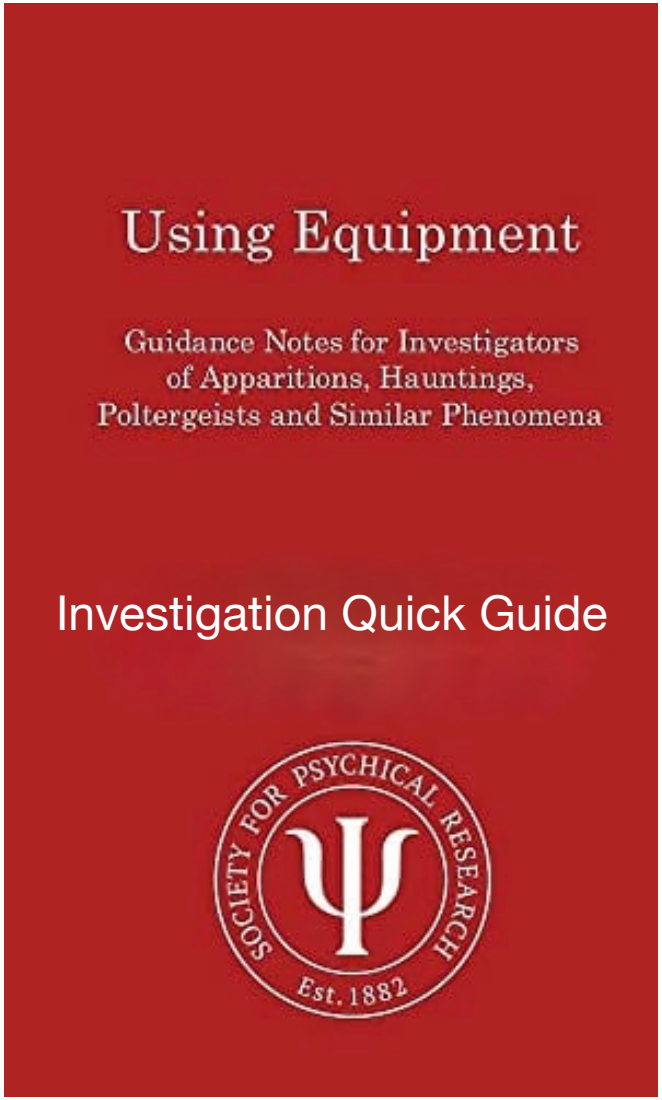
When not in use, store the memory cards in a cool dry place, well away from any strong magnetic fields.

Using several smaller capacity cards is often a better idea than using one or two large capacity cards. If a card does become damaged or lost, you will lose less data or information.

Beware of buying counterfeit cards which can cause equipment to malfunction or even lead to permanent damage if they used.

Caring for your Equipment

The reliability of every measurement depends upon the reliable performance of the equipment.



Storage and transport

Investigation equipment will be used in a variety of locations and situations. It will also be necessary to move it from place to place and store it between each investigation.

Don't store or carry expensive equipment in a carrier bag. Flight cases and camera bags offer a customisable and protective means for storing and transporting your equipment.

Don't leave electronic devices in a damp or cold environment. This can cause condensation to form which can damage the electronics.

Condensation can also occur when a device is brought into a warmer location. Allow a few minutes for the condensation to clear before operating any device. Use silica gel packs to absorb any excess moisture.

Read the makers instructions for the correct way to store equipment. If it is not to be used for some time, remove and store the batteries separately.

After each investigation, check that each device has been collected and packed. Don't forget to also collect the accessories, cables, etc.

As soon as possible, each device should be thoroughly inspected for any damage and for proper operation.

Periodically check every item of equipment. Electronic devices should be switched on and each function tested and checked for correct operation.

Handle with care

Don't just place devices down onto the nearest convenient surface. Make sure that the surface is clean, dry and that it won't cause damage to the device.

Keep fingers and other objects away from lenses and sensors. If an item needs cleaning, refer to the maker's instructions and only use recommended cleaning materials. The sleeve of your coat is not a good lens cleaner.

If others are also using the equipment, advise them about its proper use, care and handling. On public access investigations this is often overlooked and is a common cause of equipment damage.

Keep a record of who is taking or using each item of equipment, this makes it much easier to trace missing items. Placing a contents list inside each equipment case or bag is helpful when it is time to pack things away.

Don't neglect cables, wires and other accessories e.g. microphones, lights, etc.

Carefully coil up the power and other cables before packing up. Label each cable and accessory with its intended use. Visit your local DIY store and beg some left-over cable reels to store longer power or CCTV cables.

Take care of tripods and microphone stands. Clean them and check that they are working as they should.

Don't leave equipment in the boot of your car.

Cleaning solutions can be harmful to equipment

Some domestic cleaning products can damage your equipment. Check the instructions for the correct way to clean and care for each device.

Label the equipment

Label each item of equipment with your name or group's name and include a contact number.

Don't forget to register the warranty.

Further Information

For those seeking more comprehensive information about caring for equipment; 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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