
Support your camera

Whenever possible try to use some kind of physical support for your camera. This may be in the form of a tripod or simply a convenient ledge or table top.

Supporting your camera in this way will result in clearer pictures with much lower levels of motion blurring than handholding, especially in poor lighting conditions.

If you have to hand-hold the camera, hold it using two hands with your elbows tucked in to your body to provide the maximum stability and support when taking a picture.

With camera phones and compact digital models that have a viewing screen instead of a conventional viewfinder there is a natural tendency to hold the camera away from your body. In these circumstances resting your arms against a wall or shelf will provide extra stability and support.

If all else fails and you are forced to take a hasty picture with minimal support then try to set the camera to use either the highest available shutter speed or select the highest possible ISO sensor speed rating.

Fingers and things

A common cause of anomalies appearing in pictures are camera straps, fingers and other obstructions partially blocking the lens.

Clean the lens

It is not uncommon to find that anomalies thought to be paranormal are the result of the lens or the sensor becoming dirty or contaminated with finger prints and smudges

Have your camera ready

It is likely that any camera you have, including your smartphone will be used for more than investigation use. When switched on, many cameras will still use the settings from the last picture taken which may be entirely wrong for your current circumstances.

Prior to setting off to the investigation. Check the camera settings and if necessary change any that are unsuitable.

If lighting conditions are likely to be poor choose a higher ISO sensor speed or pre-select a low light or night mode.

If the camera has an interchangeable lens, fit a lens that is suitable for the environment you will be in. A long telephoto lens will be of little use in the confines of a house.

Check that the battery is fully charged and that the memory card is not filled with pictures from a previous investigation or family day out.



Photography

A camera is now routinely used during every investigation. Many investigators and witnesses now carry and use a camera that is built into their smartphone. Thousands of pictures are presented every year as evidence of the paranormal

Using Equipment

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

Investigation Quick Guide



Setting up the camera

Using a default automatic (point and shoot) picture taking option will generally produce a usable image under the majority of conditions; however, the settings selected by the camera may result in unexpected anomalies occurring which can confuse some people.

Beforehand, it is worthwhile taking a series of test shots under the sort of lighting conditions that you might expect to encounter i.e., low light etc. Familiarise yourself with the way in which the default setting chosen by the camera can be altered by taking manual control of the exposure.

Select the highest image quality that is available. This includes selecting the lowest level of image compression. In general, always choose the option which gives the largest file size per individual image.

If the option to use a RAW file format is provided, this should be chosen in preference to using the jpeg (.jpg) file format which is compressed.

Fit the camera with a large capacity memory card to allow you to take plenty of pictures. It is advisable to also have a spare card available. Fully charge the battery immediately before you intend to use the camera and if possible have a spare battery readily to hand.

In low light conditions choose a higher ISO speed. This will reduce motion blur caused by the camera choosing a slow shutter speed. The use of a tripod is also advised whenever practicable.

Why use a camera?

There is a tendency for investigators to only take a picture when they think that something unusual has occurred. Using a camera in this way is rarely of much help, even if the picture appears to show something unusual.

Instead, taking an extensive series of pictures all around a location can be much more for the investigation. Pictures can then be used to check viewpoints in witness statements or to confirm the placement of objects or location of individuals. Digital cameras allow an almost limitless number of pictures to be taken during a visit.

Important Privacy Notice

Most camera phones and many ordinary digital cameras automatically attach a geo-tag onto every picture that they take. This can be used to indicate the precise location and time that a picture was taken.

Whilst geo-tagging can sometimes be helpful, investigators must use this capability carefully. Inappropriate or inadvertent use of geo-tagging may compromise the confidentiality of the client. This is a particular issue if the photograph is to be used or presented in a public forum.

If desired, geo-tagging can normally be switched off. However, some devices may switch this back on when the device is restarted.

Investigators should ensure that every member of their team who is using a camera has checked that the geo-tagging option is correctly set i.e., OFF or ON

Megapixels

Cameras having a more megapixels normally reproduce greater detail than those having fewer. Physically larger sensors gather more light and have less image noise

Changing settings

Print out or download relevant pages from the instruction manual. These can be stored in your kit bag or on your smartphone so they can be quickly referred to.



Further Information

For those seeking more comprehensive information about choosing and using cameras; 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.

Email: secretary@spr.ac.uk

1 Vernon Mews, London, W14 0RL