



Forming A Ghost Hunting Club – Part 1

So you want to start a ghost hunting group?

There are lots of books out there that will tell you how to investigate and give you examples of haunted sites, but few give you insight into the fundamental aspects of becoming a ghost hunter and forming your own paranormal investigation group.

So, where do you turn for help to decide what form you want your group to take? Do you know how to make contact with possible clients, what type of equipment is essential or how to you track investigations and the evidence collected? And once you collect the evidence, what do you do with it? What you really need is a comprehensive guide to becoming a ghost hunter? But trying to find the help you need in books stores can be challenging.

So, where does that put you? On the road to forming and maintaining a viable ghost hunting group. Puget Sound Ghost Hunters are here with information designed to help form and maintain a paranormal investigation group. You will learn how to determine the best structure for your group, what type of investigations you want to perform, what equipment is necessary to get started and what to purchase later as you build your tool kit. You'll get advice on membership structure and training methods, investigation techniques and evidence collection and maintenance. In short, I'll tell you everything you ever wanted to know about ghost hunting but didn't know who to ask.

Before you jump right into a haunted house, take a few moments to think about why you want to be a ghost hunter. What do you hope to get out of the experience and what can you bring to the field of paranormal investigation and research? Figuring out where you stand will help you later when you decide what form your group will take.

Take this short quiz to help you set your goals.

1) What is your primary focus for your group?

- Serious research, experimentation and publication of findings
- Investigation, evidence gathering and research
- Getting together with friends and going to spooky places

2) What makes a good ghost hunter?

- Skepticism
- Belief in life after death
- A degree in parapsychology
- Belief in the Occult
- Desire to have fun and be scared

3) What is the most important tool of a ghost hunter?

- Camera
- Audio recorder
- EMF (electro-magnetic field) meter
- Motion sensor
- An open mind

4) What qualifies you to lead a ghost hunting group?

- I watch the TV shows so I know how to do it
- I had my own paranormal experience
- I want to prove that ghost don't exist
- I know how to break into haunted buildings
- I want to help clients be comfortable in their own homes
- I have read all the how-to books and apprenticed with another group

Now that you have an idea of why you want to form a ghost hunting group you are ready to start building. Paranormal investigation can be challenging and fun provided you

While each group is as different as the individuals who come together to form it, ghost hunting groups basically fall into two categories. Based on your goals and focus, your group will either be a casual ghost hunting group or a serious ghost hunting group. Most groups fall into the "Casual" category.

A casual ghost hunting group is one that is made up of ordinary people who come together to explore the paranormal. They do weird things like hang out in cemeteries and go to haunted locations and have a lot of fun doing it. It is more of a social club than a scientific organization but one that is devoted to understanding the paranormal. Regardless of how serious they are about performing investigations and documenting their evidence, most ghost hunting groups will remain first and foremost a social club.

The serious ghost hunting club is a completely different breed of animal, made up of well-trained scientific individuals who are serious about performing paranormal experimentation and documenting their evidence. Most will use the term *Paranormal Investigator* instead of *Ghost Hunter* to illustrate the distinction.

While a casual ghost hunting club may get together several weekends a month to visit and explore haunted locations and perform investigations for clients, the serious ghost hunting group will only perform one or two long-ranging investigations per year. They will repeat their experiments over and over in an attempt to duplicate results in control settings and determine the exact cause for anomalies. Ghost hunting to the serious group is a vocation similar to a career not a hobby and their goal is to publish definitive proof of their work.

To illustrate an average group let's look at the Ghost Hunters A, a typical causal ghost hunting club. They hold regular monthly meetings. These meetings allow members the opportunity to discuss recent and upcoming cases, other paranormal

topics and to plan excursions and social gatherings. In addition, GHA schedule regular trip to haunted locations that are not client related, such as cemeteries, parks, historic sites and other public locations. These trips often involve investigations but are also a chance for members to test out new skills and equipment or get together in a social setting.

GHA is also contacted by clients wishing investigations or information through a number of avenues, including their website and referrals. Client investigations are performed when and as often as necessary for the client's needs. And although they take those client investigations very seriously, they perform few of them and focus on their trips, meetings and other social events.

A serious ghost hunting group will attract academics such as parapsychologists, psychologists and other professionals and may have laboratory and experimental space and equipment at their disposal. Serious ghost hunting groups will most likely be associated with a university or other research facility. Members in the causal group have more fun and that's really why the majority of us get involved in it.

Don't be discouraged if you had in mind something that falls between the casual and serious group. Most paranormal investigation groups do lie somewhere in the middle. It's the diversity of the paranormal community that makes it thrive.

Here are a few more things to consider when deciding what form your group will take.

1) How much equipment will you have?

Consider now whether each member will be responsible for purchasing and maintaining their own equipment or if you will pool your money and purchase equipment for use by the group as a whole. There is something to be said both options.

When each member is required to purchase their own equipment, the group will not have to hold a bank account or maintain an inventory. On the other hand there is no standardization of equipment between investigations and that can create some reporting and evidence issues later on.

The other option is to pool your resources and put together a comprehensive tool kit. With a group tool kit, each investigation starts at the same point. With standardization of equipment, you can ensure that each member is fully trained before they operate the equipment and that all evidence collected can be compared using the same criteria. The down side about starting a group tool kit is that it is a large initial expense that many groups find impossible to meet.

Equipment is the primary expense when forming a ghost hunting group and good tools can be expensive. Deciding early how to handle this issue will save a great deal of headache later on. You can always build your tool kit slowly by having each member purchase bits over time and adding to it as you go.

2) How many members can you support?

Ok, this is a hard one. You probably have two or three friends that want to join you on your ghost hunting adventures. So, decide what functions each member will perform and whether or not you need to look around for others to fill any extra positions. Most teams will have someone to operate the equipment, someone to document the investigation and someone to act as primary contact with clients. You may also want to consider whether your group will include psychics and sensitives. Philosophically, you will have to make that decision on your own, based on the opinions your members and the community in which you live. Many people have a religious or philosophical opposition to psychics in general, so take that into consideration before you decide to promote the use of sensitives during investigations.

Our recommendation is that you keep your membership small to start off and increase over time based on the number of investigation requests you get.

3) How will you publicize your group?

Think about things like setting up a website, free advertising, making contact the public. There are lots of low or no expense ways to publicize your group. Start brainstorming early in your group development so that when you are ready to reach out to the public, you have avenues in place to do that.

4) How will you handle calls for investigations?

Dealing with the public about paranormal issues can be tricky and there are many aspects to consider. You will need to determine who in your group will be your primary contact with the client; how you will interview the witnesses and research the property. How much information will be provided to team members prior to the investigation; will they go into the investigation cold or will you give them all the information up front so they know what to look for?

And what about when the investigation is over? How will you follow-up with the client and how will you report your findings and evidence to them?

If you don't plan to offer options for dealing with the spirits once you've identified that a location is haunted, put together a list of referrals in your area for people who can. This list should include everyone from religious people to feng shui masters. Also think about including mental health facilities and drug and alcohol treatment centers. Not every location you investigate will be haunted. Consider how to deal with clients who won't take no for an answer and may need professional help that you can't provide.

Taking the time early in your group development to consider these things will go a long way to making your group successful.