



Hollow Hill's Free Basic Ghost Hunting Course – Part Four

Welcome to the final lesson in our free, four-part course in basic ghost hunting, created by Fiona Broome, the founder of [HollowHill.com](http://www.HollowHill.com)

This lesson appears online at

<http://www.hollowhill.com/courses/IGH/part4.htm>

Be sure to listen to Fiona's audio version of this lesson at

<http://www.HollowHill.com/courses/IntroGhostHunting-Part4.mp3>

We've discussed the basics of ghost hunting. You've learned how to find a haunted site near you. You've found a couple of people who will go ghost hunting with you. In addition, you've visited at least one haunted location.

Now, let's talk about what you can do next.

Before you join or start a ghost hunting group

Many people join a ghost hunting groups. Here are some things to think about.

Establish your likes and dislikes

There are several important things to consider before joining a ghost hunting group or team. Don't assume that you know the group's policies, beliefs and practices, just because you know someone in the group or you've been to a few of their investigations.

These are some of the points to ask about.

- Locations
- Spiritual context of the group
- Investigation and meeting schedules
- Membership requirements

Let's talk about a few of those.



Locations

What kinds of haunted sites interest you the most? Do you like (or hate) cemeteries? Private residences? Well-known haunted places? 'New' haunted locations that no one else has investigated?

Ask what the group prefers to investigate. Also ask if there are any kinds of sites that the group definitely will *not* visit, and why.

Spiritual context

A few groups are open about their spirituality. All of the members might belong to one church, or one religion.

However, I continue to hear stories of people who *thought* a group was inclusive when they joined. Then, they realized that every investigation starts with the team holding hands and saying a very church-specific prayer or following a particular ritual.

If all of the members are passionate about one belief system or view, you need to know this before you join. If your beliefs, practices and attitudes are the same (or at least compatible) with the group, that's great. If not, look for another group to join.

Schedule

Find out when the team usually schedules investigations and meetings, and whether that will work for your schedule and routines.

For example, do they usually do research at night or during the day? Do they meet on weeknights or weekends?

How long are meetings? How long are most investigations?

Does the group keep a strict schedule? If you value punctuality but the group is more casual -- or even consistently late -- it may be difficult to leave the group without sounding critical.



If you prefer to keep your own schedule, will it be a problem if you arrive early and stay late, or vice versa?

Requirements

Ask what's expected of group or team members. For example, are you required to attend all non-investigation meetings? How many investigations must you participate in, and how often?

Is there a training requirement? Who is teaching and what are their qualifications? Must all team members follow the training advice exactly, or are you free to use what works best for you?

Ask about money. Dues to cover the group's website hosting (if it's not supported by advertising or a sponsor) is reasonable. Also, if your team carries liability insurance -- a good idea if you're hosting paid events or doing private investigations -- the team may need to share that expense.

However, you should get everything in writing before you join. And, if you have any questions, ask to see the bills or receipts for group expenses. (Some groups show everyone their bookkeeping records during a monthly or quarterly meeting.)

Personalities

An assertive or even boisterous ghost hunter may seem impressive first, but after a few ghost hunts their constant comments can become annoying. This is one of many reasons to go on several ghost hunts with a group before agreeing to join.

These are the most common issues, but there can be others. Some ghost hunters think it's okay to have a beer or two before an investigation. Others smoke at the site. Some bring their small, fussy children when they can't find a babysitter. Some ghost hunters don't hesitate to bring along skeptical or giggling date.

So, before committing to regular membership in a ghost hunting group, it's wise to spend time with them. See what their interests and standards are.

What happens if you don't find the kind of team that you want to join? In that case, consider starting your own group.

Starting a ghost hunting group



For most people, the first step in setting up a ghost hunting group is to go on multiple ghost hunts with four or five people. Each time, you can slightly vary the mix of people.

It's not just about getting along. For example, consider balance. What if you have four people with EMF meters and no one who records EVP? You can either form a group that specializes in EMF, or you can add a team member who'll focus on EVP.

When you've found a group of people with shared interests, psychic compatibility, and a long-term interest in ghost hunting, discuss forming a formal team. If enough people are interested, schedule a meeting to launch the group.

Have an organizational meeting

Someone should take notes and, at the very least, the group should have something like a mission statement. The group can modify that statement later. It's important to start with something that everyone agrees with.

Discuss the structure of a group. Will there be one leader, or do you prefer co-leaders? Who speaks for the group when dealing with the media?

Assign responsibilities and titles to every group member so each person understand the various roles in the group.

Possible titles can include:

- lead EVP investigator
- lead EMF investigator
- psychic investigator
- team historian
- lead photographer
- media (or PR) contact person
- new member contact person
- investigation coordinator
- video analyst
- webmaster

After that, go through the same issues listed at the beginning of this week's lesson: The types of locations you'll investigate, and how to handle issues related to spirituality. Decide the schedule you'd like to work with, if you want to have regular organizational meetings, and what you expect from members, and so on.

Liabilities

If you are going to conduct private investigations, speak with an insurance expert about liability issues. There are two sides to this.

From the homeowner's standpoint, you may need insurance in case someone claims physical, emotional or psychic damage resulting from the investigation.

Your team may also have safety concerns, especially since you'll be working in low light conditions.

Some outdoor settings have natural risks – snakes, irregular depressions at unmarked graves, broken pavement – and personal security to consider.

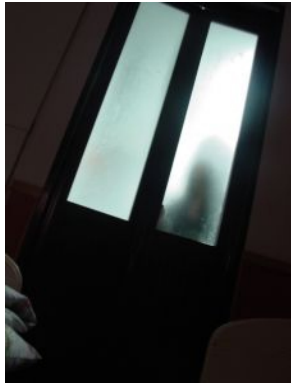


While these situations are *extremely* rare, discuss them ahead of time so you're always prepared for the unusual things that can happen in this field.

New members

Decide how to deal with new members and guest members.

Guest members may be anything from celebrity ghost hunters who are visiting the area, to your cousin from Saskatchewan who's always wanted to see a real haunted place.



Some guest members may become new team members as your group evolves.

In every ghost hunting group, a few team members lose interest. Others move or their schedules change. And, now and then, there are personality conflicts or a team member is unreliable and has to leave.

You may also expand the size and scope of your group. If so, you'll need new members to support growing demand and responsibilities.

Decide now how new members are chosen and whether the founding members of the group must approve their memberships.

Look professional

Always represent yourselves as professionals. This can involve anything from team T-shirts to business cards to your own ghost hunting videos and media appearances.

Conduct yourself in a professional manner when discussing paranormal subjects with anyone... including your friends.

Many groups and individuals set up websites to share their research results and discuss ghost hunting in general.

If you're setting up a group website, you'll need a name. Unless you form some kind of legal partnership, one individual will own the rights to that domain name.

Usually, group members will need to help with the site. The larger the site becomes, the harder it will be for one webmaster to handle it all... and still have time for ghost hunting. Be considerate of his or her time.



Forums

Forums are especially popular among ghost hunting websites. They're a fast way to attract fans.

Many sites are able to maintain forums without problems. However, at the time of this writing, Hollow Hill does not have a forum. Here's why.

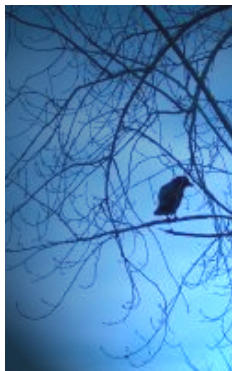
Forums must be closely monitored. Of course, you need to watch for unreasonable criticism and flame wars.

There are always liability issues if children are visiting your forum. (Most *will* lie about their ages to have access to the discussions.)

With forums, you can lose control over content. Wild claims and ridiculous stories in your forum can dilute your website's integrity as a reliable source of ghost hunting information. Copyright violations can be a headache, at best.

The group must unanimously agree if you decide to create a forum. You'll need a minimum of two or three people to moderate each section of the forum. Trolls can get the best of anyone's discretion; remember that every moderator speaks for the group as a whole.

Summary



This lesson has included a lot of information and many issues to think about. There is no reason to rush into anything. In fact, it's wise to take your ghost hunting adventures one step at a time.

You may decide that ghost hunting is more fun to read about or watch on TV. In real life, it's not that exciting to sit for hours in a damp basement, or bone chilling cemetery, especially when nothing seems to be happening.

On the other hand, if something terrifying happens, you may wonder if ghost hunting is worth it.

After you've been on about a dozen or so informal ghost hunts, you'll have a much better sense of what you want to do next.

You have many options, from joining a group, starting your own, or working independently in this field.

With more experience as a ghost hunter, you'll be better able to make a decision.

This concludes your introduction to ghost hunting. I hope that this course has been helpful, and you've had some interesting experiences, learning about ghosts and encountering them.

Next week, you will receive a link to a printable certificate of completion.

Supplementary report: Scams and con artists

Scams and con artists can be in any field. Unfortunately, ghost hunting is especially vulnerable to people whose primary interests are financial gain, celebrity status, or power.

I'm not talking about people who mistakenly think they're more skilled than they really are. I mean people who look you straight in the eye and tell you lies for personal and/or professional gain.



If you join a group with a self-styled guru, or a con artist works his (or her) way into your circle of friends, here's what you need to know.

The first rule is: Never give or loan money to anyone without getting a receipt. I don't care how nice the person seems. If it's a loan, have the terms in writing before you give the person anything. And, never give or loan money that you can't afford to lose.

Keep your money safe. Then, look for other signs of a scam or a con artist.

- **Con artists are charming.** They're usually fun to be with. They tell great stories, and they seem to have lived the kind of life *you'd* like to live. They're successful or they're rising stars. Around them, you may feel as if you have a connection with greatness.
- **Con artists collect friends as quickly as possible.** This is partly because they'll lose so many of them, as people become suspicious of what's going on. But, the larger their apparent entourage or fan club, the more you're likely to believe their extravagant claims. You aren't likely to suspect that dozens (or hundreds) of friends and fans have been deceived, too.
- **Con artists seem to have dazzling credentials.** Their friends are famous people. Their degrees (or titles) are impressive. They talk about their past experiences and current connections, pending TV shows and events they're planning. Their claims are *so* extravagant, you think, "Who'd make this up?"
- **Con artists separate people so they don't swap notes.** A con artist leads you to believe that you're one of the *only* people he likes and trusts. He'll say that he *doesn't* trust this person and then that one. Following his advice, you'll stay away from them, too, even if you used to be good friends. The con artist knows that, if you all got together and exchanged stories, his lies might be exposed.

The con artists' larger-than-life claims lead to their downfall. They simply can't stop lying for very long... and they're often lying on a grand scale.

It's vital to check the person's claims and credentials. Check *all* of them, not just the first few that he or she mentions. (I'll talk about the con artist as if the person is male. However, female con artists can be just as prevalent as male con artists.)

Let's say that he claims **a degree or a title**, such as 'doctor' or 'reverend'. Ask what kind of degree (or title) it is, and where it came from. Anyone can become a legally ordained minister, for little or no expense, through the Universal Life Church and similar organizations.

<http://www.themonastery.org/?destination=ordination>

Some con artists claim far loftier credentials. If it's **a degree from a university**, you can check the alumni records office to find out if the person is actually a graduate of the school, college or program. Many schools proudly post online a list of their graduates.

If someone claims **a British (or other) hereditary title**, you can check Wikipedia. It lists *all* qualified holders of hereditary titles, including their actual surnames, and when the title was created.

If the title is vague, David Beamish has compiled a list of members of the United Kingdom peerage from 1801 to the present day, and indexed it. It's online at http://website.lineone.net/~david.beamish/peerages_az.htm and other pages at that website.

If the person claims to have worked with or for **a celebrity**, you can confirm that. Find the official website of the celebrity, and contact the person's manager or press agent. Ask if the celebrity has worked for or with the person who's making the claim.

If the person claims to have been a paranormal investigator for **many years**, there should be clear evidence of that, online. Even if the person didn't have his own website, other people will have mentioned the person, at least in reference to a case, a "ghost story" or an investigation.

If someone suggests that they've been on a **TV or radio show, or appeared on stage**, you can check that online. Go to the show's *official* website and search for the person's name.



Thanks to the Internet, almost any person's claims and credentials can be verified using independent sources.

Don't assume that the person is "too nice" to lie to you, or their friends are too bright to be conned. The more impressive the person's stories and claims, the more you *must* verify them, independently.

If the person *is* a con artist, it's better to find out early. Thankfully, they're in a tiny minority.