

Is My House Haunted?

A Practical Guide for the Young Ghost Hunter

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Footsteps walking down an empty hall. A cold spot lingering in the back of your closet. Unusual light orbs caught on camera. Hollow laughter in the dead of night.

These are but a few of the signs that your

house might be haunted. Throughout my years researching the paranormal world and tracking

down ghost true ghost stories for the Haunted Canada series of books, I've largely focused on places like old churches, abandoned hospitals and hotels filled with unsettling history. But the unsettling truth I've discovered along the way is that many of the homes where my readers live (houses, apartments, condos, etc. — ghosts aren't too picky) are every bit as creepy — and creaky — as any other haunted location.

Are you living with the dead? Here's how to find out.

1. So You Think Your House Might Be Haunted

To determine if your house is haunted, first ask yourself these questions:

1. Have you ever seen a ghost in your home?
If you answered **yes**, then yeah, your house is most certainly haunted (obviously). Proceed to Section 2.
2. Do you ever hear unexplained sounds coming from empty rooms?
3. Are there cold spots or unusual draughts flowing through your home?
4. Do lights flicker or do electronic devices malfunction?
5. Have you ever captured odd lights or mists on camera or video?
6. Do you feel like you're being watched when you're all alone?

If you answered **yes** to two or more of the above questions it's quite possible your house is haunted. Proceed to Section 2.

If you answered **yes** to one of the above questions, your house might be haunted, but you also might have eaten some bad pizza and are suffering from a food-related nightmare. Take an antacid and lie down for a nap. If the problem persists, proceed to Section 2.

If you answered **no** to all of the above questions, congratulations! Your house is not haunted. Proceed to a peacefully undisturbed sleep.



2. The Gear

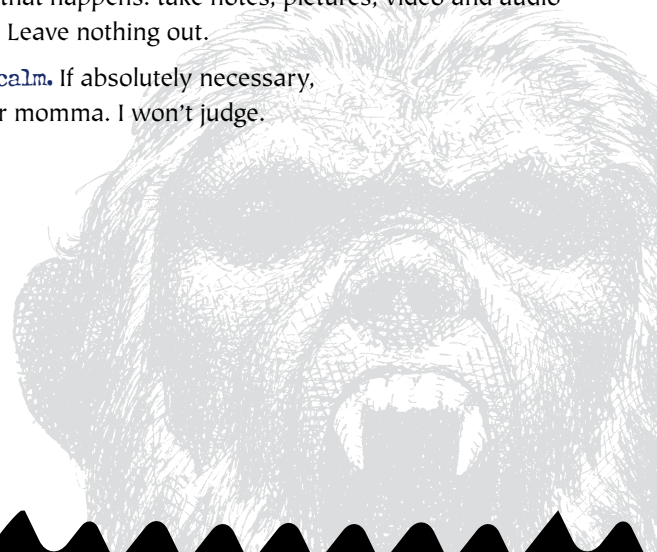
So your house is or might be haunted. If this prospect excites you, you're in luck! If you're a 'fraidy cat, my condolences. Regardless, it's time to dig a little deeper to decipher what's really going on. To do that, gather some gear that will help your investigation. Most are household items that should be easy to find.

- **A flashlight** with plenty of spare batteries. Flashlights always shut off at inopportune times during ghost hunts. Experts believe that spirits can draw energy out of batteries and charged devices in their vicinity.
- **A notebook and a pencil.** You'll need to write down everything you observe. Hopefully your flashlight doesn't run out, so you'll actually be able to see what you're writing. Illegible scratches and scribbles will prove useless upon review.
- **A watch.** You'll need to know what time it is when making your notes. It's also important to be certain when the clock strikes twelve so you can begin eating your midnight snacks (see below).
- **A camera or video camera.** You'll be amazed what a camera will catch that is invisible to the naked eye. Plus, you can post cool footage online and become an Internet star! With parental permission, of course. You don't need ghosts' permission since (a) they're dead, and (b) they rarely use the Internet and will likely never see the video anyway.
- **An audio recorder.** It's not just what you see, but what you hear. Audio recorders are very effective at picking up nearly inaudible whispers, knocks and footsteps, which is very effective at chilling your blood.
- Speaking of blood, a **first aid kit.** I'm a bit of a klutz, and walking around in the dark is not my forte. It's best to be prepared to deal with a minor bump or two.
- **Midnight snacks.** The rumbling-grumbling sounds you hear might not be a spectre, but your stomach.
- **A friend.** Invite a brave buddy over for a sleepover or enlist your stoic sibling into your service. There's safety in numbers and it's also a lot more fun to have some company — if nothing spooky happens, at least you'll have someone to enjoy your midnight snacks with. They might even bring some of their own to share with you!

3. The Ghost Hunt

Here comes the truly terrifying — or exhilarating, depending on your point of view — part: the investigation. You might want to plan ahead by taking a long nap earlier in the day — you're going to need it.

- **Find a home base.** It should have plenty of space to store all your gear (especially the midnight snacks) and it should be a room where you feel safest in your home. Attics cluttered with cobwebs and unfinished basements might not be ideal for this task.
- **Go over the plan.** Assign roles for different people. (Who will take notes? Who will take pictures? Who will take the biggest portion of the midnight snack?) Draw a map of your home and highlight areas that appear to be the most haunted.
- **Wait for something to happen.** Ghosts are more active in the middle of the night, so it's best to wait until it's late. Midnight is when you're most likely to witness paranormal activity. It's also the perfect time to eat your midnight snack. With any luck you're the one who was assigned the biggest portion. Suddenly, the air becomes supernaturally chilly. The lights turn on and off on their own. You hear loud footsteps clomping towards you. Goosebumps break out across your arms and a shiver snakes down your spine and someone — or something — whispers your name into your ear!
- **Check on your buddies.** Make sure these phenomena aren't being created by your prankster teammates (which is quite common behaviour during a sleepover, particularly after all the midnight snacks have been consumed).
- **Record everything.** If no one living is to blame then record everything that happens: take notes, pictures, video and audio recordings! Leave nothing out.
- **Remain calm.** If absolutely necessary, cry for your momma. I won't judge.



4. The Wrap-Up

After a sleepless night, dawn breaks and the sun rises. You made it! Did you experience anything unusual? Did you have fun? Did you enjoy the midnight snacks? Of course you did! But your work isn't over. Now it's time to review your findings and do a little further research.

- **Read through your notes.** Reflect on what you saw and heard. Ask others if they had similar experiences.
- **Look at your pictures and review your footage.** Go slowly and pay close attention — you might miss something hidden but important during your first, second or even third pass.
- **Listen to your audio recordings.** If you hear anything creepy, allow your blood to be chilled.
- **Clean up the cheese puffs you spilled when you called for your momma.** Don't worry, I'm still not judging.
- **Search for supporting information.** Run an Internet search to see if anything weird has ever happened in your home or neighbourhood before. Head to the local library and ask for assistance to dig up old newspaper articles or records. Interview people who live with you — it's possible your parents have also seen a ghost in your home (in which case, your momma might be calling for you one of these nights!).

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