

# The Truth About Orbs, Photos and Analysis

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Well, if you are going to address a tough topic in paranormal circles, ORBS would be it! The analysis of photos and EVPs are our stock and trade, but as anyone who has been around awhile can attest, there are many opinions on what is solid paranormal evidence.

While I hate to generalize, I personally subscribe to the thought that all ORBS are dust! That is in keeping the ASUP's general rule for all evident, "When in doubt, throw it out!" The truth is that no really knows what an ORB is, some say it is simple energy, the fact is no one really knows for sure. Unlike Spook Lights or Ball Lightning, which can be measured and reproduced in a lab, true ORBS are more illusive and are all too often misidentified. Let me explain.

In photography you are capturing an image through a lens onto a sensitive medium, be it film or a digital plate. But cameras do not have the ability that a person does, they do not rationalize, they simply capture whatever is in front of the lens at the moment the trigger mechanism is released. The camera is recording light, pure and simple and as a result captures all the tones in the light spectrum. In black & white photography, the color is translated in thousands of shades of gray. If a flash is used to illuminate the scene to be photographed, the light bounces back to the lens off of anything in front of it. If there is a particle of dust, the light will bounce off it and it will be captured, but the image will show all the movement captured while the shutter is open, as well as the illusion of an infinitely small object reflecting light so it looks much bigger. We compound that problem in most cases by shooting the photo with the camera focused on a more distant point of the frame, so anything that is in front of that point will be out of focus.

When light bounces back from a fleck of dust and is captured in a photo where the more distant point puts that dust out of focus and the shutter is open for lets say a 60<sup>th</sup> of a second, the result is a picture of the more distant object, with the dust particle reflecting back from somewhere between the camera and the focal point. The result is an ORB! The light from the dust is reflected, then reflected again, as long as the lens is open, causing a halo effect that causes the viewer to see something that the photographer did not, namely reflected light from the dust.

Now, when a camera has a small, inexpensive lens that is sometimes made from plastic, the distortion only adds to the problem. When using a more advanced camera system, many photos that should show ORBS, simply do not capture them and there are several good reasons for this. First, the more expensive camera probably has some sort of polarizing filter in place, all UV filters serve this purpose. The polarization of the reflected light filters out artifact from glare. The best example of this is

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when you take a photo of fish swimming in a shallow pond on a sunny day. Without a UV filter to polarize the image, you would not get a clear picture of the fish, you would most likely get the glare of the sunlight off the water's surface. With the filtration in place, the glare is eliminated and you get a photo of the fish, swimming in the water below the surface.

Most inexpensive cameras do not have the ability to add a filter in front of the lens, thus there is no polarization, no UV filtering. In the more expensive camera the photographer automatically adds the UV filter simply to protect the lens and as an added bonus, he eliminates the element of glare and flair. I have seen hundreds of photos taken with inexpensive cameras that have an ORB, which the same scene taken with a higher priced SLR has none.

Now, we started by saying that ALL ORBS ARE DUST. But obviously, that is not true in the empiric sense. Some ORBS are balls of energy, most enlightened paranormal investigators will tell you. What kind of energy, where it comes from, etc. is still in question, but you have to concede the fact that there are ORBS that are not just light anomalies caused by unfiltered lenses. How do we know? Because sometimes, only rarely, do we see a photo with a true ORB, taken with a good camera and properly filtered. Those ORBS, first and foremost are solid in form, not a matrix of reflected light. In additional cases the ORB appears behind something, a pillar or piece of furniture, that is obscuring the total image of the ORB. That of course proves this is not reflected light because a false ORB is always round. If part of the ORB is obscured, then it would have to have been a solid object, not just a reflection.

A true orb will appear to be a solid object, something that will give the viewer pause because it is in the frame, properly illuminated and looks like a round lamp covering that is floating in air. We have actually seen ORBS that were mistaken to be a ceiling fixture, only to realize it was not present in other photos of the same view. So, a true ORB appears to be SOLID, not transparent. How often does this happen? Only rarely. Getting a photo of a true ORB is as about as likely as getting a full apparition in a photo. So, are any of these photos a true ORB?

1.



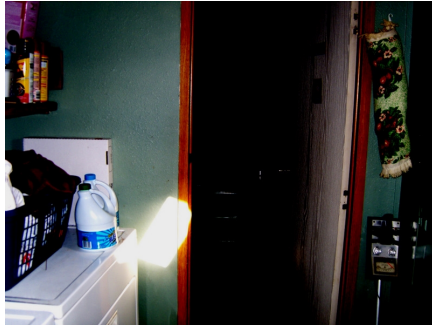
2.



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3.



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6.



7.



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Sorry folks, with the exception of photo six, none of these photos are ORBS. I will reserve judgment on #6 because it was reported that the ORB was “cut off” on top due to an overhanging beam at the residence where it was shot. Not having the full image, it is impossible to debunk it, although while the image is very pretty, it is certainly not solid. It should be noted here that we do not have a true ORB photo at ASUP, that is to say an ORB that is perfectly solid, in focus and at a reasonable distance. That is not to say that a true ORB does not exist, although this might be a question of semantics. Spook Lites are ORB-like spheres, they are solid and have been tested to show that they are in fact charged, thus a ball of energy. Likewise a good photo of ball lightening meets the same physical criteria, although it moves too fast to be photographed without a blur. Finally, Sprites, those self luminescent little balls found occasionally in a cemetery could be called ORBS, but again act differently and are electrically charged. The difference between ORBS, spook lites, Sprites and Ball Lightening is in the nature of the element.... In other words people see the last three without using a camera! They are physically present and obvious to the observer, where ORBS are not visible.

While it would be easy to debate this all day, the fact is that ORBS did not exist before the invention of the digital camera, it is simply an artifact found in their design. The fact that they show up in ghostly situations is in the eye of the beholder. I will not go so far as to say there is no such thing as a real ORB, I am aware that they do exist, but in such relatively few numbers that the chances of getting a photo of one is about as good as capturing a visible ghost through the lens. I will not say that ORBS should not be accepted for study, that would be foolish, but I do hope that everyone consider the reality of the situation before firing off copies of reflective dust as a paranormal occurrence.

While we are about it, I draw your attention to frames #3 and #7. While not orb-like they are also common enough and I think #7 is an artifact caused by a relatively fast moving insect. The photo frame #3 is another story. I am not sure what it is, although I would guess it is a reflection from the shiny white surface next to it. I bring these into account for a very good reason. In order to actually explain them, you have to refer back to the most basic ghost hunter's tool...the note book. With #7 we would be able to better explain it if the investigator had good notes and if an environmental field unit (weather station) was in use. It is a good idea to look at what you have when you are snapping away and if you have something like this, note the time and atmospheric conditions in your notebook and pass it along on your evidence log. Was it hot, humid, snowing, were there a lot of bugs, etc. and what time was the shot taken. Now we can judge the photo on a level playing field.

In #3 we have only one frame, not two, so there is nothing to compare this photo to, it is just “something” but will remain a mystery photo without further information.

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Obviously, photography is a blessing to the ghost hunter, pure and simple. A photo is worth a thousand words, but in the analysis phase, words are the key to understanding the photo as a piece of evidence. We can't jump to conclusions! I offer one other photo here for your consideration, taken in Jefferson TX, the same day as the famous OOPS photo of the apparition on the stairs, it was a shot of two ASUP investigators sitting in the parlor.



So, what is that shiny little “bug” on Stacy’s collar?

From this one photo, you can only guess, but if you look at the TWO photos taken in a row, the answer become more obvious.... It is a BUG! Note that in frame one, the bug is actually on the pink throw that is covering Jesse and Stacy (below), in the second it is on Stacy’s collar (above).



I trust this will assist you all in your photo analysis, and remember the rules, always shoot twice, always look for the obvious answer first and when in doubt, send it for further analysis to your Director for Evidence. And don't take this personally, but when we are in doubt, we will throw it out!

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