ADVICE FOR NEWCOMERS TO PARAPSYCHOLOGY I.
PRELIMINARY NOTES ON EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE FOR GESP STUDIES

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These comments can be divided up into general categories of procedures to do with the stimuli, procedures to do with the subject, and procedures to do with the judging of subject response/target characteristics.

Stimuli / Target Pictures

<u>Stimulus Content</u>. Pictures that have specific emotional content or which tell some kind of "story" work better than neutral landscapes, sunset scenes, etc. Positive emotional content works better than negative emotional content, unless you're interested in psi-missing. Many people now are using active pictures e.g. short video clips rather than magazine pictures because they seem to work better. If you plan to have people sort pictures by category, make sure there's no overlap – e.g. 2 categories occurring in the same picture. (also turn the picture over and check the back of the page!)

<u>Avoid the "Sensory Leakage" hypothesis.</u> Wrap the pictures, in their plastic jackets, in aluminum foil and then securely seal them in opaque envelopes. Obviously this will make it inconvenient to open these packets afterwards for feedback, so the scoring should be done by the numbers on the envelopes, using some master list which is kept in a location that the subject has no access to. The experimenter also has to be blind to which numbers go with which pictures.

<u>Avoid the "Greasy Fingers Hiypothesis".</u> If pictures will be handled by a sender, and then later judged against subject's responses, put all the pictures in plastic jackets for protection. Better yet, do this and also make duplicates of each picture to be shown to the subject, without any dog-eared creases or greasy fingerprints resulting from handling of the target picture by the "sender". Slides work well for this, or video clips presented on a computer.

Preparation of Target Pictures for Telepathy/Clairvoyance Studies<u>.</u> The person who prepares the target pictures should not be the same person who acts as "experimenter" with the subject. This target-preparing experimenter should divide the target pictures up into groups of 4 or 5, and make sure that the pictures in each group are unique enough that they do not share overlapping content elements, and yet similar enough that structural differences do not bias the judging decision (e.g. don't mix color pictures with black and white, make sure they're all about the same size). Pictures should be numbered and a specific target pack should be randomly selected for each session. Then a specific picture inside each pack should be randomly selected as the target. This should be done by number, without opening the envelope to look at the picture.

Subject Experimenter

The experimenter who interacts with the subject should be blind as to the target pack that is chosen, and also to which picture in that pack is the target, until all data collection is completed. This avoids the possibility that inadvertent body language might influence the subject's responses. This also means that the experimenter should not act

as a "sender". You should have another person to perform that function, and that person should have their own experimenter assigned, who does not interact with the percipient.

Interaction with the subject should be calm, friendly, positive, and unhurried. If the subject arrives late and there really isn't enough time to go thru the procedures without being in a terrible rush, reschedule for another day.

Procedure:

All targets should be presented in randomized order, and all experimental conditions counterbalanced either within or across subjects, following principles of good experimental design.

Feedback: do you plan to let the subject know on every trial if they made a correct sort? If so, there might be some learning curve involved, and you should assess change in performance over time. Or afterwards, give them a general score on how well they did? Each of these has theoretical and practical implications. The absence of feedback is also a decision that you should make carefully, since it may affect motivation.

Mentation: If the subject's responses are verbal, these should be tape-recorded (or video-taped) and accurately transcribed for later judging.

Data Collection & Scoring. All data should be documented immediately, don't write things down from memory after the fact.   Preferably have the sorting results independently checked by an assistant. Scoring should be independently checked by a second person, to make sure there are no mistakes in recording or calculation. This second person should be blind to the experimental group to which the subject belong, and ignorant of the specific hypothesis to be tested. Resolve any discrepancies before making final statistical analysis.

For procedural details, you might want to look at some of the following references: (these are just the ones I can locate off-hand, surely there are many more)

Milton, J. (1996). "Establishing methodological guidelines for ESP studies: A questionnaire survey of experimenters' and critics' consensus." *Journal of Parapsychology* 60(4): 289-334.

Dalton, K. S., R. L. Morris, et al. (1996). "Security measures in an automated ganzfeld system." *Journal of Parapsychology* 60(2): 129-147.

May, E. C., J. M. Utts, et al. (1990). "Advances in remote-viewing analysis." *Journal of Parapsychology* 54: 193-228.

Targ, R. (1994). "Remote viewing replication: Evaluated by concept analysis." *Journal of Parapsychology* 58: pp ?

And for a more detailed discussion of research methods, look at

1) Gertrude Schmeidler's chapter on "Methods for Controlled Research on ESP and PK" in B. B. Wolman's <u>Handbook of Parapsychology</u> (NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977, pp. 131-159)

or

2) John Palmer's chapter on "Experimental Methods in ESP Research" in <u>Foundations of Parapsychology</u>, (Eds: H.L. Edge, R.L. Morris, J.H. Rush, J. Palmer) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, pp 111-137).