

How to Write a Horror Story for Halloween: Guidelines

1. Setting the Scene

The Purpose

If you want the reader to get into your story and see what you see, then first of all you have to describe where the story takes place and the events that have led up to the present situation.

The Language

Vocabulary: Be precise. Do not repeat the same words. Another way of saying “a very old man” is “an extremely old man”.

Verb tenses: Use a combination of past simple and past continuous to set the scene. For example: *It all **happened** last Friday. It **was raining** and I **was walking** home from the cinema alone.* Use the past perfect (continuous) to describe what had happened before the story started, e.g. *It **had been raining** all day and the crows **had been** very noisy.*

The Questions

These questions will help you decide what to write:

- When did it happen?
- What time was it?
- Where were you? Why?
- Who were you with?
- What were you doing? Why?
- What was the weather like?
- How were you feeling? Why?

2. Starting to Spook

The Purpose

Before you shock the reader, you must introduce some spooky elements to make them feel a little scared and uneasy.

The Language

Verb tenses: You can use the past simple to describe finished actions and past continuous to depict actions in progress and give background information. For example: *I **reached** the crossroads and **was waiting** for the traffic lights to change when suddenly I **heard** a weird noise beside me.*

Conversation: A little direct speech would help now. For example: “*Who’s there?*”

Vocabulary: Use adjectives to describe what things looked like. You can start getting really spooky now. For example: *No one answered but I could feel someone or something watching me. I bumped into a tree and made a **terrible** noise. I feared for my life and wanted to cry but remained silent. I had never been so **afraid**!*

The Questions

These questions will help you decide what to write:

- What happened next?
- What did you do? Why?
- What did you say? Why?
- How did you feel?
- And then, what happened?

3. Getting Scary

The Purpose

You want to terrify the reader. You want the reader to be so involved in the story that they won't think about anything else until they've finished it.

The Language

Keep your sentences short and continue using the past simple and past continuous. For example: And then I **heard** its voice: "I am going to kill you," it **roared**. Use adjectives and adverbs to explain how things happened. For example: **Suddenly**, my heart **started** beating **faster and faster**. **After a while**, the traffic lights **changed** to green and I **started** running across the road. I was **already** halfway across when I **heard** this **terrible** laugh behind me. **Then**, I **saw** a **big, black** car which **was speeding** towards me and I **fainted**.

The Questions

There is only one question that needs answering at this stage:

- What happened next?

4. The End

The Purpose

A good horror story should end in such a way that the reader knows that it's not really the end. The horror can and will strike again. Suspense is in the air even after it has finished.

The Language

You can end your story with the present simple. This will bring the story back into the present and make it even scarier. For example: *I woke up in hospital with a broken leg. They told me that the traffic lights had a malfunction and had caused the accident. I **don't believe** this, though. I **know** somebody tampered with those traffic lights and tried to kill me and I **guess** they will do it again. Since my adorable grandmother had left me her entire fortune, I had been involved in too many strange situations...*

The Questions

These questions will help you decide what to write.

- How and why did it happen?

- Will it happen ever again? Why (not)? WHY is always the most interesting



question... ☺

For more information on narrative tenses, see
<https://www.elbase.com/notes-201-narrative-tenses>