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# Build Tension in Your Writing



Tension is what keeps readers on the edge of their seats! It makes them wonder: “What’s going to happen next?”

Tension happens when something in the story feels uncertain, dangerous, or intense. It pulls the reader in because they care about the characters and want to see what happens.

## Here are 8 Ways to Create Tension in Writing

- **A Ticking Clock (Time Pressure)**

- Give your character a deadline. The less time they have, the more intense it feels.
- Example: “I had five minutes to get out before the guards came back.”

- **Danger or Risk**

- Put your character in a scary or risky situation—physical or emotional.
- Example: “One wrong move, and I’d be spotted.”

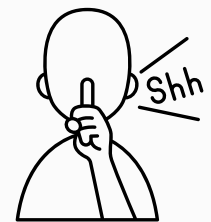


- **Uncertainty or Mystery**

- Don’t tell everything at once. Let readers wonder what’s going on.
- Example: “I didn’t know what was inside the box. But it was moving.”

- **Secrets and Lies**

- Characters keeping secrets (or being lied to) creates suspense.
- Example: “If anyone found out what I’d done, I’d be expelled.”



- **High Stakes**

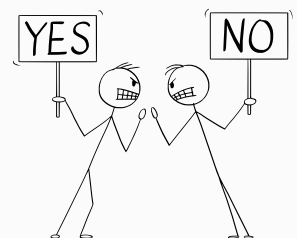
- Make the outcome important. What will be lost if they fail?
- Example: “If I didn’t win this match, my team was out of the championship.”

- **Conflict Between Characters**

- Arguments, disagreements, or emotional tension between characters adds drama.
- Example: “I trusted him... but now, I wasn’t so sure.”

- **Short Sentences & Quick Pacing**

- Speeds up the action. Makes the moment feel fast and intense.
- Example: “Run. Don’t look back. Just go.”



- **Cliffhangers**

- End a scene or chapter with a surprise or unresolved moment.
- Example: “The door creaked open—and then everything went black.”

## ACTIVITY: Tension Builder Challenge

**Goal: Write a scene of 100 words or more where you build tension.**

**Here is your scenario:**

**A student sneaks into school at night and hears footsteps.**

Here is a sample scene:

Lena froze.

The school hallway was dark, lit only by the red glow of the exit sign behind her. She clutched the notebook tighter. Somewhere behind her, a door creaked.

She wasn't supposed to be here. No one was.

Her heart thudded like a drum in her chest. She tiptoed forward, her shoes making soft squeaks on the polished floor. Then—footsteps. Slow. Heavy. Getting closer.

She ducked into the janitor's closet and held her breath. Something rattled outside. A voice whispered, too low to understand.

Lena's phone buzzed in her pocket. Loud. Too loud. She grabbed it, silenced it, and shut her eyes.

The footsteps stopped—right outside the door.

**Now it is your turn to write a scene of 100 words or more where you build tension.**

**Your scenario is this: A student sneaks into school at night and hears footsteps.**

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