

Six Tension Building Techniques

Authors use different techniques to help build tension in their writing.

Tease with Clues

- Keep the reader interested with hints about what might go wrong.
- Gives clues as to how the problem might be solved.
- Slowly reveal information about a threat. Don't give away everything until the end.

Use Five Senses

- Create atmosphere by using all five senses in your writing.
- Describe what the reader should see, hear, feel, taste and smell.
- Make the reader feel as though they are right there in the story.

Vary Sentences Length

- Short sentences (2 or 3 words) are great for expressing action and urgency.
- Use short sentences after a long sentence for extra impact.
- Include sentence fragments (incomplete sentences) to show intense action.

Personify Abstract Nouns

- Personify an abstract noun to give it more power than it would otherwise have.
- Give human qualities or abilities to abstract nouns. For example: loneliness, pain, fear.

Use Dynamic Verbs

- Use dynamic verbs (physical actions) to express exciting events.
- Choose uncommon verbs to give your writing extra 'punch'.

Rising Action

- Don't have the problem or conflict solved too quickly or too easily.
- Have the threat get closer and closer before it strikes.
- Make the reader believe that the protagonist might fail.