

### Ten Ways to Create Suspense

1. **Create a promise in every chapter.** Almost anything can be a question to the reader— What's hidden in the box? How will this character get out of the crashing plane? Who planted the bomb beneath the bus? Any question you've raised contains a promise that you'll answer it.
2. **Create a hidden identity.** One of Dan Brown's favourite tools for creating suspense is creating a character with a hidden identity—a puppet-master or mastermind who controls things from behind the scenes, but whose identity is unknown.
3. **Create a puzzle.** Sometimes a quest revolves around solving a riddle and following a series of clues that build up from the first chapter right up through to the story's climax. This could be a trail of symbolic information that your characters need in order to figure out escape routes, for example, or a straightforward solving of a murder mystery.
4. **Open a chapter or section with a question.** Or an interesting fact.
5. **Use flashbacks** to open new sources of suspense.
6. **Finish a chapter with a cliffhanger ending.**
7. **Give characters complicated histories.** Withhold information to keep the reader guessing about the dark secrets in someone's past (and how it may affect that character's behaviour today).
8. **Use internal monologue to heighten tension.** Anything your protagonist worries about will worry the reader. Their thoughts and feelings can create apprehension and set a mood of anticipation.
9. **Introduce parallel plot lines.** When you've got subplots for villains and secondary characters, you create more places for suspense and raise questions in the reader's mind about how the various stories might be related.
10. **Compress a story's timeline.** This ensures the characters are under more pressure. If your story takes place over the course of two weeks, try making it happen in one. Compressing time may feel like an artificial imposition, but the effect on your characters can be immense, and the resulting tension can often jump-start a struggling story.