

Suspense: Not Just for Suspense Novels!



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Suspense is the key to every romance novel. Suspense is what keeps readers turning pages far into the night.

Ways to step up the suspense:

- Create more obstacles. Write down three problems your heroine faces.
Add four more.
- Make sure the obvious solutions don't work. *I can't believe I forgot to charge my cell phone!*
- Raise the stakes. And once you think they are high enough, raise them further. Never be afraid to paint your heroine into a corner. Remember: that while our novels must seem grounded in reality, they are actually much larger than life.
- Isolate your heroine both physically and emotionally. *Why did the power suddenly go off?*
- Create uncertainty. How can you add specks of doubt into your heroine's character and yet keep the reader on her side?

- Use inner and outer conflict and keep the reader guessing about the romance. *Will they finally get together in the end when all seems lost now?*
- Keep up the action. Is there a new twist on the standard car chase?
- Create ticking time bombs. Come up with many ticking time bombs.
- Abruptly change the point of view.
- Sacrifice a minor character or two, physically or emotionally. Who can you kill off? Make sure you have enough characters, but not too many that the novel becomes unwieldy.
- Make sure if you foreshadow an event you put it in the story. If you mention a sword over the fireplace in the first chapter, make sure it comes up later.
- Vary the sentence length. Use long, languid sentences when action slows. Shorten your sentences when action heightens. Think of it as breathing.
- And finally - watch and learn from soap operas 😊