

# Tips for the Amateur Scare Actor

## 1. Know your part

You have a specific role to play in the attraction. Be sure you understand what it is and put some thought into how you should behave in that role. Are you a zombie? Don't talk (well, any more than to maybe groan "Brrraaiinns!!!") and master the shuffle of the undead. Are you a mad scientist? Learn to laugh insanely. Are you a witch? Work on that voice that creaks like a rusted gate hinge and learn the names of all the disgusting things that go into any self-respecting cauldron of brew: eye of newt, fat of a newborn, etc...

Your haunt may or may not have a script, and your director may or may not need you to stick closely to it. There is usually room for ad-lib, in fact it's almost always necessary to deviate a little from the written lines as you react to guests who may talk back to you or move slower or faster than you expect through your area. Spend some time thinking about your character, and contemplating how you need to act to be convincing in that role.

## 2. Stay in character

You have an important job to do. Your job is to scare people. Your job is to make grown men cry and teach little kids that haunted houses are not for bed wetters. Nothing ruins a good scare faster than having an actor "drop character" and suddenly be a smiling, good natured, oh-sorry-I-startled-you guy in a rubber mask. Remember, these people came here to be scared, and if you don't scare them you aren't doing your job and they aren't getting what they paid for.

Obviously, you don't have to be cruel about it. If someone is really freaking out and just trying to find the shortest way to the exit, back off and let them go. However, unless you are facing a true emergency situation like someone throwing up or passing out or something catching fire (we'll get back to that later) you should remain in character at all times, even if you see your middle school guidance counselor coming through in his underwear and Mickey Mouse ears.

## 3. Timing is everything

If you need to pop out of a corner and yell to give people a scare, it's not going to work if they're still coming in the door at the other end of the room or if they've already moved on to the next. Understand what you need to do and be sure to do it at the right time to get the biggest scare.

## **4. Stay in your scare zone**

Do not follow the guests into another area of the haunt unless it is part of your scare. If you get a break in visitors do not roam through the haunt. Always be ready. Do not go more than one zone back or forward. If you have an actor's hallway in the haunt then that is where you should be. Listen for the rooms that have guests. You should be in place and ready when the guests are three rooms before yours. If you need a break, restroom, etc. contact one of the house managers. Do not leave your spot until they OK it first. There will be specified breaks during the night when you can stretch out, talk amongst yourselves, get a drink, etc. There may not be time to for a bathroom break, so make sure you go before the evening starts.

## **5. Don't touch the guests**

You don't know the people who are coming through your haunt and they don't know you. Even if they do, they will be high on adrenaline and (if you are doing your job) more than a little freaked out. An unexpected grab or touch can result in a fight-or-flight reaction that can endanger yours and the guest's safety. Also, if you grab or touch someone the wrong way, there can be legal implications of assault. Your attraction should have signs posted advising the guests not to touch the actors, and the actors should all understand not to touch the guests.

## **6. It needs to look violent, not be violent**

Unlike guests, you may be cast in a role where you are to touch other cast members. More than likely, given the nature of the attraction, the way you touch them is expected to look violent, dangerous or otherwise unpleasant. This does not mean you should hurt your fellow cast members! That will bring a sudden end to the fun. Remember assault is assault, even if you're playing an assigned part.

The good news is that with a pumped-up audience, darkness, strobe lights, and other distractions, you can make it look violent without actually hurting anyone. If you have to swing an axe or other weapon, give yourself plenty of room to ensure you miss. If you have to grab someone, move slowly (the lighting will help it look more dramatic than it is) grab them gently and practice! Think of it as dancing.

## **7. Leave your toys at home!**

No cell phones, video games, etc. while you are working. An actor texting on a cell or messing around with a video game can totally blow a scare. BRB. GOTTA SCARE. Yeah, right! The light from the phone alone will kill the effect. Leave the iPhone in your pocket or, better yet, outside the haunt!

## **8. Be careful!**

You are going to be running around in a dark, noisy place with things hanging from the ceiling and all over the walls and floor. Don't turn an imaginary house of horrors into a real one by breaking your real leg instead of the foam rubber ones! Keep your head and consider that no matter how good things are going, you are not immune to the hazards of everyday life. You could have a guest (or cast member!) with a medical emergency or a fire or other unpleasantness interrupt the fun. Be ready for anything. Know where the light switches are and how to get yourself, your co-workers and the guests out of the haunt if anything goes wrong.

## **9. Have fun!**

Scaring people is fun, and though it's a lot of hard, exhausting work, you should enjoy yourself. If you find you aren't having any fun, perhaps you should consider driving the hay-ride tractor next year.

## **10. Bring refreshments**

You can bring a cooler with water or soda and snacks for yourself, but keep it out of sight. Any wrappers, paper, bottles or cans need go in the garbage when you're through. Don't leave a mess in your area, especially one that will attract ants. You don't want to deal with ants in your scare zone

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## Quick Tips

**Stretch your muscles**, this will help prevent you from getting sore at the end of the night.

**Loosen your vocal chords**, this can be done by stretching your jaw and humming. This helps prevent you from losing your voice.

**Go for the middle of the group.** They get frightened more easily. Most groups will send the bravest souls in first.

**Reload!** You can't get everyone that comes through especially if they are in a group and in a line get every 4-5 person. Bang, reload, Bang, reload (I'm sure you get the idea)

**Listen for names**, especially girls sometimes someone in the group will say it accidentally and sometimes the BF will give it to you. **Use it!**

Have the mentality that you are not just an actor in a role; think that **you ARE the character you become**. This makes it easier for you to act, and more believable to guests. Create a character, Create a name for your character and put together a story line and put it together with your scene.

Scaring directly from the front or sides won't work; try to use different angles to get the reaction you want. Know your scene, **study your scare zone** and figure out how to use the resources you have (Shadows, Props, Lights, and other hiding places) and try some variety. Find out what works and doesn't work.

**Break the personal space of the guest.** This makes you more intimidating. However, people react in different ways to you being too close, including physical aggression. If you get into someone's personal space intentionally, be prepared to get out of that space after the scare.

After you deliver a scare, **don't stick around** unless you are planning to do something else. If you just stand by the group, they will expect you to do more; if you don't deliver, they will be disappointed.

If you use a startle scare, **use a reasonable time frame**. If you go too fast, the guests won't see what you did.

**Never EVER say "get out"** or any other variant. It sounds extremely unprofessional. If they aren't moving, they likely aren't scared. If needed, use another method to suggest that they continue through.

**Don't ask the patron** if they want to do something, tell them explicitly what's going to happen. Why not go all out? "I get to keep the skin when they're done with you! I'm going to make a dollie!" is far more interesting than "wanna play".

**Watch horror movies and visit other haunts for ideas.**