

# Scene-Level Stakes



*The overarching story stakes aren't the only ones that matter. By ramping up stakes in every scene, you can create the sort of pulse-pounding tension that keeps readers hooked. Remember, it doesn't have to be an earth-shattering consequence. If we care about the characters and relationships, even small stakes feel important.*

## 1. Identify the main conflict in this scene.

*What's keeping your character from achieving their goal?*

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## 2. Brainstorm additional obstacles and conflicts for this scene.

*Circle the ones that feel like they might be plausible at this moment in time in your story.*

### External Obstacles

### External Conflicts

### Internal Conflicts


## 3. Explore external stakes.

### How might the character...

- Be in physical danger?
- Risk losing or harming a relationship?
- Lose their livelihood?
- Face political or social consequences?
- Risk damaging their reputation or career?
- Face legal consequences for their actions?

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## 4. Explore internal stakes.

### How might the character...

- Risk losing their self-confidence?
- Risk embarrassment or shame?
- Risk their place in their family or peer group?
- Risk losing the chance to become a better person?
- Face sacrificing a core belief to achieve a goal?
- Be betrayed by someone close to them?

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