

Yard Haunt Setup Countdown

Eight weeks out to the November 1 teardown. Tags source the step; where a guide gives no date, the week is our suggestion.

ALL OCTOBER

- ☐ Check the forecast every few days. Go by gusts, not the average: 19 to 31 mph, anchor inflatables properly; 32 to 38, deflate them and bring in flat props; 39 and up, take the display down. **WP**
- ☐ After any wind, walk the yard and reseat anything that has lifted. **GY**
- ☐ Wind Advisory from your NWS office: bring light props in and lay the giants down. **WP SK**
- ☐ Lights and sound on a timer: on at dusk, off at a fixed shutoff hour that suits the street. **LH NB**

8+ WEEKS Plan and Ask

- ☐ In an HOA? Read the CC&Rs, rules and architectural guidelines for "holiday," "seasonal," "decoration," "lighting" and "nuisance." **NB**
- ☐ Unclear rule, or a big, tall or loud display? Ask the board in writing, with dates, hours and a sketch. Keep the reply. **NB**
- ☐ Public walkthrough? Ask your fire marshal about a permit (Portland wants 21 days) and your insurer, both in writing. **HH**
- ☐ Year one: one S-curve path of 60 to 80 feet and two scare zones is plenty. **YB**
- ☐ Map the path, scare zones, stone clusters and power runs in the Yard Planner. **YB GY**
- ☐ Pick your graveyard's century before you cut any foam. **GY**
- ☐ Look up your area's typical October wind gusts before you buy anything tall. **WP**
- ☐ Check whether your town sets official trick-or-treat hours. **OD**

6 WEEKS Test and Buy

- ☐ Map your circuits at the breaker panel. A 15-amp circuit handles 1,800 W: plan on no more than 12 amps (1,440 W) for an all-evening load. **YB WP**
- ☐ Add up the watts (a fog machine alone is 400 to 1,200) and add 20 percent headroom. **YB**
- ☐ Every outdoor outlet needs GFCI protection (Test and Reset buttons). If one lacks it, use a portable GFCI adapter. **WP LH**
- ☐ Outdoor cord only (SJTW on the jacket), 12-gauge for 50-foot runs. No daisy chains. **WP YB**
- ☐ Fog test run: fresh fluid, heat fully, a few bursts outdoors. Sputtering or weak? Repair or replace now. **FM**
- ☐ Read the fog machine's manual. Many, like Chauvet's Hurricane 1200, are indoor-only. **GY**
- ☐ Read each skeleton's box: an indoor-rated one goes on a covered porch, not the lawn. **SK**
- ☐ Read each animatronic's manual before it meets an extension cord. The Dead Water Pirate Ship's forbids one. **YB AN**
- ☐ Check every light strand for cracked sockets and frayed or bare wires. Discard damaged sets. **ST**
- ☐ Swap the thin stakes that ship with inflatables for real ground stakes. **WP**
- ☐ Stock fog fluid: about a quart per machine per 2 hours of moderate use. **FM**

4 WEEKS Carve and Set the Bones

- ☐ Buy XPS board (pink, blue or gray), not white EPS beadboard, and no faced or foil boards. **GY**
- ☐ Hot-knife outdoors or in an open garage with a fan, at the lowest heat that works. Never hot-wire polyurethane or polyiso. **GY**
- ☐ Laminate thick stones with solvent-free foam glue, the PVC post set in before the glue-up. Give it a few days to cure. **GY**
- ☐ Drylok base coat, tested on an offcut first (the maker says bare masonry only): above 50°F, two coats 2 to 3 hours apart, 24 hours before latex. **GY**
- ☐ Latex or acrylic on every face. No solvent spray paint or clear coat on bare foam. **GY**
- ☐ Weather it: dark wash, wipe off, drips from the lettering, greens and yellows low. **GY**
- ☐ Early October: put up the permanent layer, the stakes, cord runs, lighting and hard props. **WP**
- ☐ A note to the houses on each side and across the street: dates, hours, walkthrough night, your phone number. **NB OD**
- ☐ Starting late? Carve in a day, paint in a garage, skip the lamination. **GY**

2 WEEKS Place It

- ☐ Set PVC sleeves in dug or augered holes, tops flush with the grass. Call 811 before digging deep. **GY**
- ☐ Stones in family clusters of 3 to 5, footstones a body's length behind, a few leaning, lettering to the sidewalk. **GY**
- ☐ Build the PVC fence and paint it with latex or a paint that lists PVC. **GY**
- ☐ Light the stones low and in front. Path lights at ground level, every 3 to 4 feet. **GY LH**
- ☐ Cords behind the stones, never across the path or the sidewalk. Connections off the ground, with a drip loop and a cover. **GY WP NB**
- ☐ Mid October: add the weather-sensitive layer (fabric, webbing, cornstalks). Expect to refresh it once. **WP**
- ☐ Skeletons: zip ties at the elbows and shoulders, a landscape staple over the pelvis. **GY**
- ☐ Path 4 feet wide. Leave 4 feet clear on the public sidewalk too. **YB NB**
- ☐ Aim spotlights at your own facade, trees or ground. Look back from the neighbors' windows after dark. **NB**



1 WEEK The Delicate Things

- ☐ Put out the projectors, animatronics and anything with a motor. Check the forecast daily. [WP](#)
- ☐ Projectors and controllers under shelter, with the vents clear. [WP](#)
- ☐ Animatronics: nothing covering the sensor, no costume in the moving parts, the waterproof cap on an unused try-me jack. [AN](#)
- ☐ Walk the path at night, in the dark, three times before opening night. Fix or light every root, divot and cord. [YB](#)
- ☐ Measure the sound at the property line at your shutoff hour. NIOSH's Sound Level Meter app is free on iOS. [NB](#)
- ☐ Sound-activated props on a timer that cuts power at your quiet hour. [NB](#)
- ☐ Buy the candy this week, when the household snacking window shrinks to almost nothing. [CD](#)

3 DAYS Ice and Crew

- ☐ Freeze water in aluminum baking pans for the chiller. Blocks outlast bagged ice. [FG](#)
- ☐ Plan the ice: 15 lb runs a chiller for 1.5 to 2 hours. Keep a backup bag in a cooler. [FG](#)
- ☐ Check the forecast wind direction, then place the fog so it drifts through the scene, away from the street. [FM](#) [NB](#)
- ☐ Brief the actors: no touching, no chasing past 2 to 3 steps, a safe word, 15 minutes on and 5 off. [YB](#)
- ☐ Every point on the path within 20 feet of a lit exit, marked with green glow sticks at ground level. [YB](#)

DAY OF Halloween Morning

- ☐ Walk the display: re-stake, re-tension the guy lines, confirm every GFCI holds, replace wrecked webbing. [WP](#)
- ☐ Clear obstacles from the lawn, steps and porch. [NB](#)
- ☐ A fire extinguisher within 25 feet of any electrical or fog equipment. [YB](#)
- ☐ Fog machine on concrete or a paver under a roof, on GFCI power, 20 inches of clearance, foam and leaves off the nozzle. [GY](#)
- ☐ No candles in the yard. Battery or LED light only. [GY](#)

NIGHT OF Showtime

- ☐ Never leave the fog machine unattended. Switch it off when nobody is watching it. [GY](#)
- ☐ Timed fog bursts: about 15 seconds every 2 to 3 minutes. [FM](#)
- ☐ Fog rolling into the street? Shut it off. [NB](#)
- ☐ Jump scares and loud cues during trick-or-treat hours, ambient only after. [NB](#)
- ☐ Count the trick-or-treaters, so next year's candy starts from a real number. [CD](#)
- ☐ Lights off at the shutoff hour you set on the timer, and in any case before bed. [NB](#) [LH](#)

NOV 1 Teardown

- ☐ Plug in every animatronic and fire every trigger before it comes apart. SVI's free-parts window is 90 days from purchase, with exclusions: write faults down and call now. [ST](#)
- ☐ Per the 12-foot Skelly manual, lay giants down for disassembly, with three adults. [ST](#)
- ☐ Pull the sleeves the same day you pull the stones. [GY](#)
- ☐ Cut zip ties with flush cutters, not a knife held against the plastic. [SK](#)
- ☐ Dry everything fully before it goes in a box or tote. [ST](#)
- ☐ Batteries out of every prop and remote. [ST](#)
- ☐ Fog machine: cleaner, then distilled water, then store it empty. [ST](#)
- ☐ Damaged light strands don't go back in the bin. [ST](#)
- ☐ Foam stones flat or on edge in the garage or basement, not the attic. XPS is rated to 165°F. [GY](#)
- ☐ Props back in their original boxes, away from heat and moisture. [ST](#)
- ☐ Per Chauvet, test-run the fog machine monthly through the off-season, then run the cleaner and water flush again. [ST](#)

Notes

WHERE EACH LINE COMES FROM hallowmix.com/

YB Yard haunt basics
[decor/halloween-yard-haunt-basics/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/halloween-yard-haunt-basics/)

OD Outdoor decorating
[decor/outdoor-halloween-decorating-guide/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/outdoor-halloween-decorating-guide/)

AN Animatronic repair
[decor/animatronic-repair-and-hacks/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/animatronic-repair-and-hacks/)

LH Lighting Your Haunt 4
[learn/lighting-your-haunt/](https://hallowmix.com/learn/lighting-your-haunt/)

HH Running a home haunt
[decor/running-a-home-haunt-permits-police-insurance/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/running-a-home-haunt-permits-police-insurance/)

GY Front-yard graveyard
[decor/front-yard-graveyard-guide/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/front-yard-graveyard-guide/)

NB Neighbors and HOAs
[decor/halloween-decorations-neighbors-hoa/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/halloween-decorations-neighbors-hoa/)

FG Fog machine basics
[decor/fog-machine-beginners-guide/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/fog-machine-beginners-guide/)

ST Storing decorations
[decor/how-to-store-halloween-decorations/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/how-to-store-halloween-decorations/)

WP Weatherproof decorations
[decor/weatherproof-halloween-decorations/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/weatherproof-halloween-decorations/)

SK Posing skeletons
[decor/posing-life-size-skeletons/](https://hallowmix.com/decor/posing-life-size-skeletons/)

FM Fog Mastery 3 to 5
[learn/fog-mastery/](https://hallowmix.com/learn/fog-mastery/)

CD How much candy
[party-planning/how-much-halloween-candy/](https://hallowmix.com/party-planning/how-much-halloween-candy/)