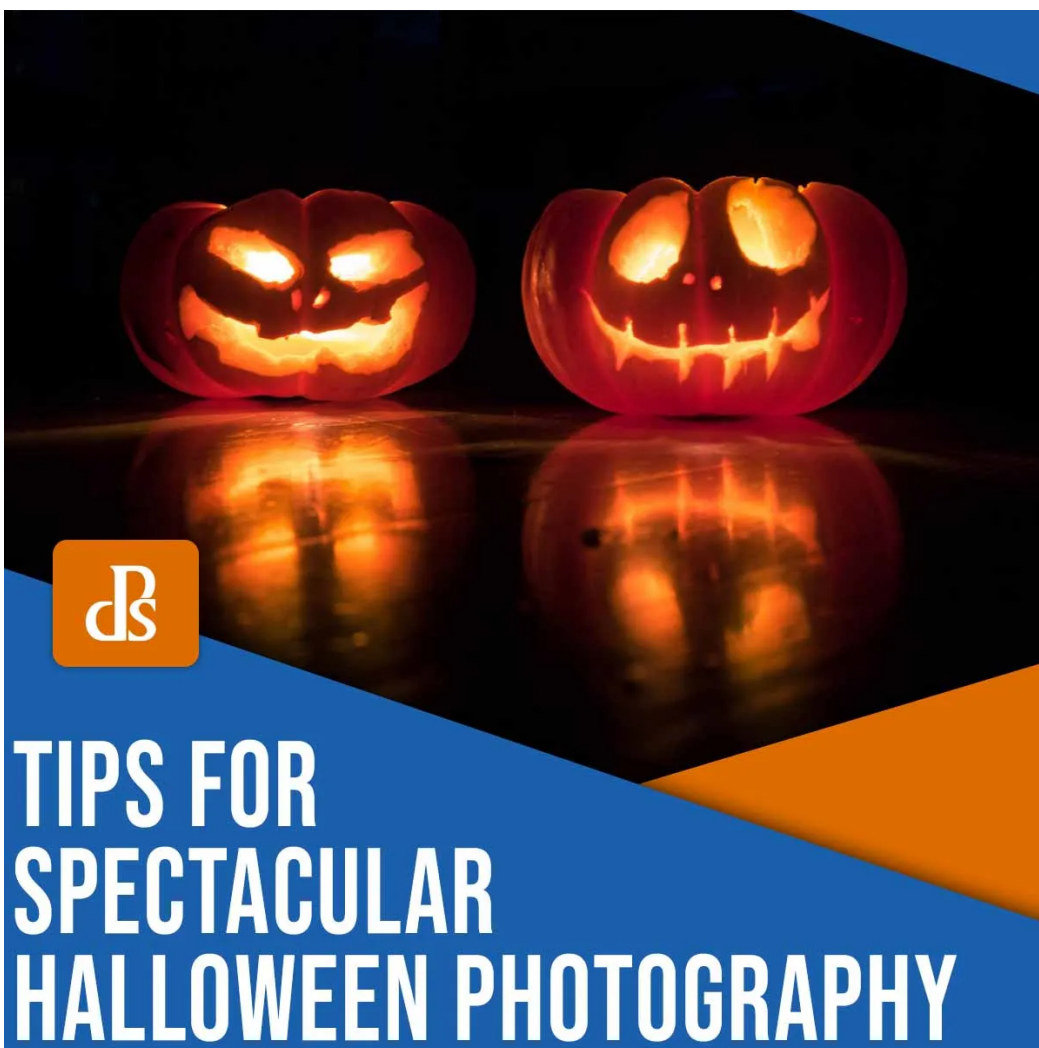




13 Tips for Spectacular (and Spooky!) Halloween Photography

A Post By: [Darren Rowse](#)



Halloween offers some incredible sights, but capturing it all on camera can be tricky. Fortunately, with the right tips and techniques, it's possible to take gorgeous photos that

memorialize the spookiness, the crisp autumn air, and – above all – the fun!

In this article, I'm going to share plenty of advice for beautiful Halloween photography, including:

- Lighting tips for spooky photos
- Great places to take Halloween pictures
- Easy ways to photograph your kids and their adorable costumes
- Fun Halloween photoshoot ideas
- Much more!

So if you're ready to pick up that camera on the scariest day of the year, then let's get started!

1. Include spooky or atmospheric Halloween props

Halloween features plenty of objects, from pumpkins and costumes to skeletons, bats, and ghosts.

So *use* them. If you're doing a Halloween photoshoot, bring in a **prop or two**. Have the kids hold a ghost; have your spouse peek through a skeleton; have your pet wear a pumpkin costume and photograph them up close. You can work with scarier props (e.g., fake blood), you can stick to cuter props (e.g., pumpkins), or you can combine the two for cute *and* scary images.

This photo uses a creepy-looking jack-o'-lantern to add plenty of atmosphere:





Sometimes, as with the image above, the props alone can make great photos. You can capture beautiful shots of Halloween gravestones, houses decked out in bats and ghosts, and more.

Don't just take snapshots, though. Make sure you pay careful attention to **composition** (see the tips below) and lighting (again, see my additional tips), and do what you can to tell an interesting story with your camera.

2. Highlight a relevant point of interest

If you're after great Halloween photography – spooky, cute, or anything in between – you should generally include a focal point, some key “hero” element that the viewer immediately prioritizes.

For instance, if you're photographing your child in their costume, make them the center of attention. Ensure you're

working with a clean background (with no distractions whatsoever!) and a bare foreground. Adjust your camera settings to make your child's face sharp and well-exposed.

Of course, you can always include secondary subjects or items in a photo. But they shouldn't be the priority, and as soon as they begin to distract from the main subject, you should exclude them from your compositions.

Check out this next spooky Halloween photo; the woman is the main subject, and the wine glass acts as a secondary subject:



The background is relatively clean, there are no distractions, and the viewer's eye travels straight to the woman's face, to the cup, and back. The image is also wonderfully Halloween-esque; check out the dark background, orange colors, and wonderfully scary atmosphere!

Bottom line:

Before hitting the shutter, ask yourself, “What is the focal point of this photo?” And do everything in your power to emphasize it.

3. Find the right location



While you can technically do Halloween photography *anywhere*, it often pays to find a location that matches the mood you want to create.

If you want to capture cute Halloween photos, for example, consider shooting:

- Among the leaves in your backyard
- In your kitchen
- At a Halloween party

If you want to capture scary Halloween photos, try shooting:

- In a basement
- In the middle of a forest
- In a neighborhood at night

(Of course, you should always make safety a priority; never put yourself in an uncomfortable situation simply to capture a scary photo.)

When planning a Halloween photoshoot, I encourage you to sit down and consider different location ideas. I'm betting you'll come up with plenty of places to take Halloween pictures nearby – you simply need to do a bit of brainstorming!

4. Fill the frame with Halloween spirit

Halloween is a time of drama. And you can convey this in your images by getting in nice and close so that you fill the frame with your subjects.



If you're photographing your child in a costume, make sure there are no boring, empty edges around the frame. Instead, zoom on in (or get in close) so every little detail is captured by your camera.

No need to go overboard, though. Don't go in so far that your lens can't focus, and don't get so close that the viewer doesn't understand what the photo is about, either. Instead, identify your subject (see the previous tip!), make it the center of attention, and zoom on in.

One more thing: If your main subject doesn't look Halloween-esque enough, consider spicing them up with additional decorations, costumes, trinkets, and the like. More Halloween is usually better!

5. Give subjects space to look into

Here's a quick Halloween portrait photography tip that'll ensure better compositions:

Before you take your images, note the direction of your subject's face and eyes. Then adjust your camera framing until the subject has substantial room in front of their line of sight.

It might seem weird, but it actually helps balance out the composition. It also adds a sense of dynamism, where the viewer is compelled to follow the subject's gaze throughout the shot. (In fact, the approach even has a name: the **rule of space**.)

Here's a nice example:



The two boys are looking downward, and the framing includes plenty of room near the bottom of the scene (note how their eyes have lots of space to look into!).

6. Find unconventional angles and foregrounds to add spookiness

Looking to do some spooky Halloween photography? Pay careful attention to this next tip.

You see, a great way to create that sense of holiday chill is via **perspective**. By getting down low – down in the dirt, in fact! – you’ll make your subject loom large over the viewer. The effect is especially powerful if you shoot with a **wide-angle lens**.

Of course, you’ll also want to include scary props, such as bats, cauldrons, and ghosts. That way, you can create a creepy Halloween image, with your subjects appearing to emerge from the ground and stand high above the viewer.

Another quick tip:

Try backing up to put an interesting foreground element in front of your subject. You don’t want to add anything distracting, of course. But a dark branch or two in front of the subject can do a lot to enhance the atmosphere.

7. Photograph the little details

It’s easy to get distracted by the flashy parts of Halloween. But it’s often when you take a step back, look around, and notice the smaller details that you’ll find the money shots.

Halloween is *filled* with interesting little moments worthy of capture. There are:

- Decorations
- Pumpkin-carving fun
- Actual carved pumpkins
- People getting dressed up in costumes
- Lots of candy at the end of the night
- Sleeping kids at the end of parties and/or trick-or-treating
- Close-ups of food

Don't let these moments pass you by. Instead, keep an eye out – and when you see a memory worth recording, do it. A few years from now, these intimate images will tell the real story of Halloween, and you'll be so glad you captured them.



8. Don't forget the group photos!

Halloween is a time for fun gatherings and parties, which means that you'll have plenty of opportunities for **group photos**.

So break out your wider focal-length lenses, get everyone arranged in a group, and take some images. Consider finding a higher vantage point (if you're indoors, try a stepping stool; if you're outdoors, consider some steps or even a roof).

Of course, make sure everyone grabs a prop or two and puts on their costumes. And ask them all to make their scariest faces! A few fun Halloween photoshoot ideas include:

- Everyone huddled around a cauldron
- People all hiding in the bushes
- Everyone circled around a book, a gravestone, or a giant spider

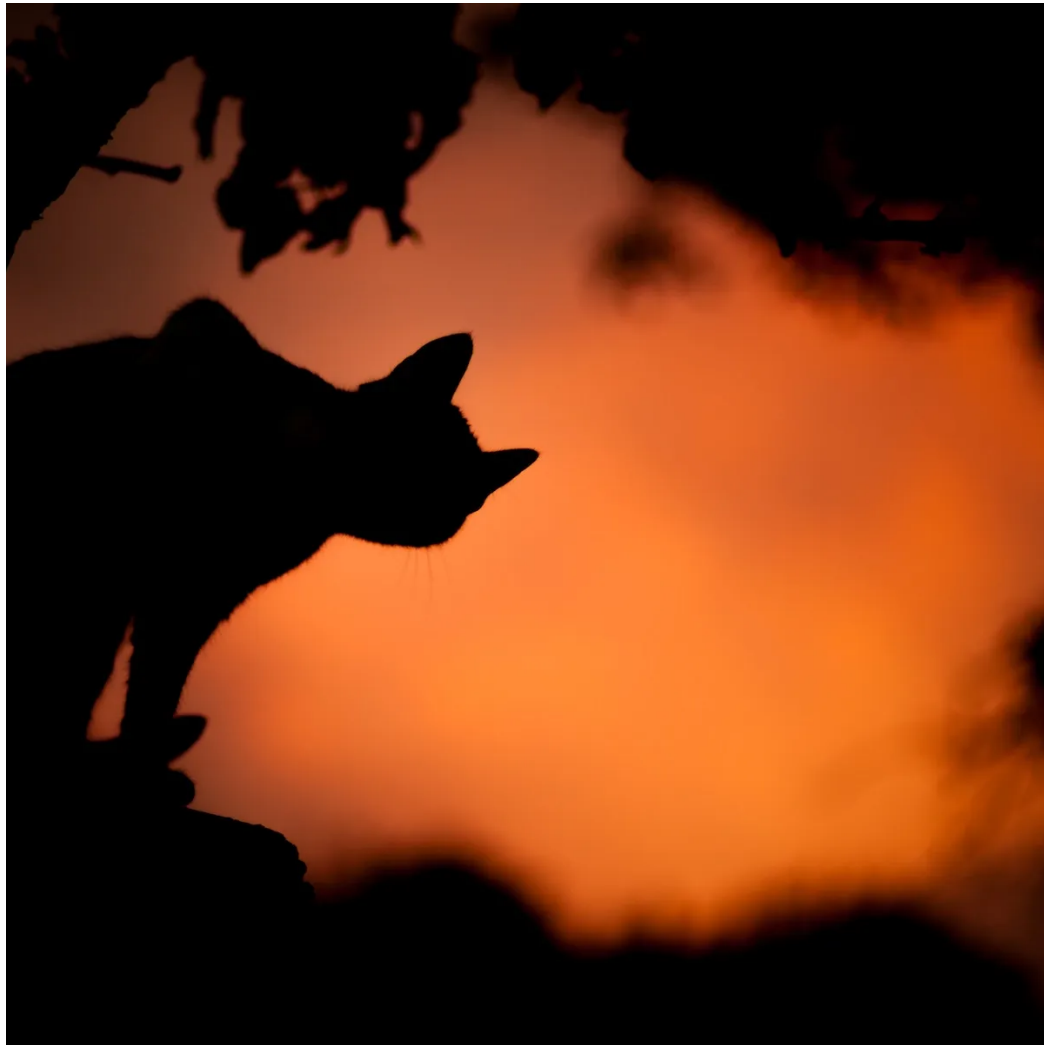


9. Capture low-light silhouettes for a spooky effect

Think of Halloween, and the type of images that come to mind are dark and scary: candles in pumpkins, bats in the night, and mysterious cats walking about in the evening.

So why not try to create a few spooky Halloween photos of your own? It's easier than you might think. You simply need to

use a low-light **silhouette technique**, which will get you images like this:



Here's how it works:

First, find a subject that makes a good silhouette. It should have clearly defined edges and should ideally be recognizable, like the cat in the photo above.

Then wait until the sun has gone down and you have an orange, red, or yellow sky. Position yourself between the subject and the sunset, then crouch low until the subject is framed against the beautiful background.

You'll want to keep your flash deactivated, and I recommend underexposing the image for a darker effect. Here are two ways you can do it:

- Increase your **shutter speed**, taking test shots as you go. You'll probably want to start around 1/100s, depending on the level of darkness, then increase to 1/250s, 1/500s, and beyond. (Remember: Review each image immediately after hitting the shutter button!)
- Narrow your **aperture** (again, take plenty of test shots along the way). This will darken your photo, but it will also increase the **depth of field**, consequently sharpening the background, which can be good or bad, depending on your goals.

Anyway, the idea is to get a relatively dark, moody image, so don't worry about the shot looking too underexposed. Simply aim for a little bit of silhouette detail with a medium-bright background, and the results will look great.

10. Use flash gels for atmospheric Halloween photography

Here's a clever Halloween photography idea that past readers have suggested:

Find some sort of colored cellophane (orange, yellow, and red all work well), then place it over your flash. When you take a shot, the cellophane will act as a **flash gel**, changing the light color for a beautiful effect.

(If you can't find colored cellophane, just draw on clear cellophane with an orange marker!)

If you have a planned Halloween photoshoot, you'll probably want to test this one ahead of time because you need to carefully apply the right density of cellophane (one sheet versus two or three, etc.). But when done right, the effect is absolutely marvelous and makes for some amazing Halloween photos.

By the way, it doesn't matter if you have a camera pop-up flash, a handheld off-camera flash, or a full studio setup. You can use this tip no matter your equipment; you're bound to get gorgeous results!

11. Photograph the jack-o'-lanterns, too!

Jack-o'-lanterns are Halloween classics, and there's nothing quite so satisfying as capturing a beautiful shot of a glowing pumpkin. So make sure to spend a little time with your camera pointed at a jack-o'-lantern or two!



Now, photographing jack-o'-lanterns can be tricky, because you need to capture both the pumpkin exterior and the interior glow, which is a bit of a tightrope walk between overexposure and underexposure. If you can, take a few photos with varying shutter speeds. And consider **bracketing your exposures** and blending using **high dynamic range techniques** in post-processing.

(If you *do* decide to use an HDR technique, I encourage you to mount your camera on a tripod; it'll make the blending process far easier.)

12. Try some levitation photography

A **levitation effect** is pretty easy to pull off, and when you combine it with dark clothing and horror-style props, you'll end up with creepy – even scary! – Halloween photos.



First, find a nice location that adds plenty of atmosphere, like a dark forest.

Make sure your subject is dressed up in sufficiently Halloween-esque clothing (witch and goblin costumes work great for this).

Bring some sort of supporting element, such as a stool, and ask your subject to stand – or lie – on top. Capture a photo with your subject in a spooky pose. Then remove the stool, have your subject stand off to the side, and capture a second (stool-free) image featuring only the background. Make sure to use the exact same settings (including the point of focus) as before.

When you get home, simply bring both files into Photoshop, **mask out** the stool, and you'll have a perfect Halloween levitation photo!

13. Do some Halloween-style editing

While it's always important to do your best while out shooting, you can *majorly* improve your Halloween photos with a bit of post-processing in Lightroom or Photoshop.

First, see if you can add to the spooky atmosphere by boosting the contrast and bringing down the blacks.



Then experiment with different color grading effects. For instance, you can use the [Lightroom Color Grading panel](#) to add greens to the shadows and oranges to the highlights. You can also [adjust the white balance](#) to create an oranger or bluer effect (both can look great, depending on what you want to create).

And if you want to go *really* wild, consider [adding dark, grungy textures in Photoshop](#). That way, you can really sell the “scary” look!

Halloween photography tips: final words

Well, there you have it:

Some Halloween photography tips, Halloween photoshoot ideas, and just general advice to take your images to the next level.

So this Halloween, make sure you remember this advice. You'll finish the night with some outstanding shots!

Now over to you:

Do you have any Halloween photo tips of your own? Do you have any Halloween picture ideas? What do you plan to photograph this Halloween? Share your thoughts in the comments below!



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