

1.) You know who your readers are, and why they should care about your problem.

My readers are cognitive science students, those in the cognitive science field, or even just fans of horror fiction. Horror fiction is a form of media that is widely regarded, sought after, and consumed. At one point or another, everyone has seen a horror film. Learning more on what invokes emotional reactions to watching horror films is a concept that can be enjoyed by most people, because most people have lived that experience.

2.) You know the kind of ethos or character you want to project.

Within my research I want to project myself as a well-informed, credible, and enthusiastic university student. I want to articulate myself in such a way that my audience can clearly understand what I have to say in my research. Projecting this kind of ethos will presumably help my readers to trust in the research that I am presenting them with. I want my research to leave a lasting impression on those who entertain it.

3.) You can sketch your question and its answer in two or three sentences.

How and why do horror films produce cognitive and physiological reactions to watching them? Fear and metaemotion are the biggest motivators of reaction. Fear can lead to rapid heart rate, increased paranoia, chills, jumps, rapid eye-movement, among other things. The adrenaline rush and awareness of these emotions when viewing horror films is what keeps movie theatres filled, and audience to come back.

4.) You can sketch the reasons and evidence supporting your claim.

Claim: Fear and metaemotion are the biggest motivators of reaction to watching horror films.

Reason: Those who want to wish to put themselves through negative emotions do so out of a need to *feel*.

- Evidence: It is assumed that individuals with a strong NFA are motivated to approach affect-laden situations, and appreciate the experience of emotions, whereas individuals who are low in NFA tend to avoid and dismiss emotional experiences. Thus, the NFA recommends itself as a predictor of individuals' motivation to engage in emotional media experiences, including those that are negative or ambivalent. (Source 2)
- Evidence: "It has been proposed that arousal itself might be self-rewarding – the act of watching horror provides us with a thrill regardless of the resolution and we like and enjoy the film for this reason ([Tamborini, 1991](#)). The pleasurable experience of arousal motivates us to continue watching in order to sustain that level of arousal, as [Berlyne \(1967\)](#) suggests. (Source 9)

Reason: Horror films provide a "safe" environment to be scared.

- Evidence: "We agree with the adaptive logic proposed by Pinker. In the case of horror media, we argue that the attraction of horror is explicable in terms of an evolved pleasure response to threat simulations. Horror media tend to imaginatively transport consumers into fictional universes that brim with danger, e.g. in the form of simulated monsters or fictional villains. Through such imaginative absorption, people get to experience strong, predominantly negative emotions within a safe context. This experience, which serves as a way of preparing for real-world threat situations, may be biologically adaptive in terms of improving the odds of survival in a potentially hostile world." (Source 11)
- Evidence: "The "enjoyable fear" we experience during horror movies thus results from the interaction of the survival circuits that automatically respond to the threat cues such as sudden noises or predators, and the executive systems and long-term memory that evaluate the contextual information and confirm us constantly that we are safe. We would never go to see movies if we knew the killers would

actually come after us or would never try a bungee jump if we knew the bungee rope would fail.” (Source 6)

5.) You know the questions, alternatives, and objections that your readers are likely to raise, and you can respond to them.

Q: Everyone knows that fear scares you, especially in horror movies. Is this research really necessary?

A: Since horror cinema is such a universal experience, figuring out more of the complex under-workings of not just how horror films scare you but why they do is a hot topic. And to be frank there is not as much research of the complexities of why than a person would think. Being able to go into extensive research only opens the floor to new discoveries and a new appreciation of horror films in general.

Q: Is meta-emotion really a sound idea? I’ve never heard of it before.

A: Yes! Meta-Emotion simply refers to emotions and the cognition of those emotions. Being aware of an emotion and the subsequent reactions or emotions to that emotion are all it is referring to. We deal with meta-emotion every day, whether we know the definition of the word or not.