

Written by KATIE KRETSCHMER



# no kids allowed

Throw a grownup scare affair and have a wicked good time

Halloween falls on a Saturday night this year, which means grownups can take advantage of the weekend and have a party of their own. It's easy to find the goods to throw a haunted house gathering that pulls out all the stops. The challenge is knowing

how to put together a spooky soiree that's sophisticated but still embraces the spirit of the holiday.

"The secret to keeping it elegant is to use what you have and supplement it with a few key creepy trimmings," says Libby Langdon, interior



Interior designer Libby Langdon is an expert commentator on HGTV's hit show *Small Space, Big Style* and previously hosted Fox's *Design Invasion*.

PHOTOGRAPHS: PORTRAIT, KEITH O'HEA; SPIDER TEALIGHTS, LEN LAGRUA

designer and lifestyle expert. "The best Halloween party I ever threw was so simple: I used nothing but candles to light the space, and I covered everything with white sheets," says Langdon. "Flickering candlelight creates all kinds of shadows and goes a long way to set the stage for any party, especially Halloween." Langdon suggests searching your home for items that can appear sinister in a candlelit environment, like antique birdcages. "And don't forget to consider other holiday decorations," Langdon says. Strings of tiny white lights you usually haul out for Christmas keep the light low, and are a safe alternative to candles placed around curtains.

Poke around your attic, garage and basement and use your imagination: Even old hardcover books can add a touch of eerie ambience when stacked in piles and draped with some wisps of cobweb. "If you're going to buy one Halloween-y prop, fake cobwebs are the best," says Langdon. "Those and old white sheets or dropcloths draped over furniture are all you need to set the mood." Langdon also uses natural items for decorations to keep things stylishly spooky. While orange pumpkins are the classic emblem of the day, white ones are ghostly and unusual. Make a centerpiece of small white pumpkins and votive candles on an old silver tray, or set assorted sizes of white pumpkins

and pillar candles on a mantel. A glass vase filled with spindly bare branches also adds a forlorn look.

Outside, use jack-o'-lanterns or luminarias to light the way to your door. Up the eek factor by lining the walk with faux tombstones. Langdon cuts tombstone shapes from leftover Styrofoam or recycled cardboard boxes, spray-paints them gray and uses a marker to write guests' names on them. "That really gets people in the mood as they arrive," she says. Langdon adds that Halloween is great because there are so many ways to celebrate. "You can keep it playful, go with just a touch of the macabre or take it to full-on hair-raising!"



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editor's fave!



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- 1 | **Cover Up**  
Ghostess Apron. \$25; 800-896-7266; [twoscompany.com](http://twoscompany.com)
- 2 | **Dark Side**  
Rococo Noir porcelain tea service. \$30 to \$45; [rosannainc.com](http://rosannainc.com)
- 3 | **Light-Footed**  
Spider tealights. Set of two, \$16; [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com)
- 4 | **Skeleton Crew**  
Beaded Skull Coaster. \$20 for four; [zgallerie.com](http://zgallerie.com)
- 5 | **Home Brew**  
Martha Stewart Crafts Halloween Wine Bottle Labels. \$6 for six; [Marthastewartcrafts.com](http://Marthastewartcrafts.com)
- 6 | **Spills & Chills**  
Skull motif or Poison beverage napkins. \$6 for 36; [partycity.com](http://partycity.com)
- 7 | **Fowl Play**  
Open-Winged Crow. \$15; [halloweenmart.com](http://halloweenmart.com) ■