

Limericks

A limerick is a humorous form of poetry that first appeared in England in the early 1700s and was made popular by Edward Lear, a famous author who wrote *A Book of Nonsense* in 1864. These silly, rhyming and catchy poems are fun to write.

When writing a limerick, follow these rules:

- Write only five lines of text.
- Write a “AABBA” rhyme scheme.
- Write to a specific “beat.”
- The last line is typically a silly twist that makes it funny or nonsensical.

LIMERICK RHYME SCHEME

AABBA

A: Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme

B: Lines 3 and 4 rhyme

Examples:

1 There once was a martian named Dw**ight**
2 Whose spacecraft flew faster than **light**.
3 He set out one **day**
4 in a relative **way**
5 and returned on the previous **night**.

.....

The limerick packs laughs anatom**ical**
Into space that is quite econom**ical**.
But the good ones I've **seen**
Hardly ever are **clean**
And the clean ones so seldom are com**ical**.

.....

There once was a farmer from **Leeds**,
Who swallowed a packet of **seeds**.
It soon came to **pass**,
He was covered with **grass**,
But has all the tomatoes he **needs**.

LIMERICK BEAT

The rhythm of a limerick is **anapestic**, which means two unstressed syllables are followed by a third stressed syllable.

Think of the text as having beats.

A: Lines 1, 2, and 5 have three “beats.”

B: Lines 3 and 4 have two “beats.”

Example:

1 da **DUM** da da **DUM** da da **DUM**
2 da **DUM** da da **DUM** da da **DUM**
3 da **DUM** da da **DUM**
4 da **DUM** da da **DUM**
5 da **DUM** da da **DUM** da da **DUM**

HELPFUL TRICKS

The last word in the first line of the limerick is frequently a name or a person or place.

Make the fifth line a funny twist or pun.

Pick words for the AABBA that have a lot of words that rhyme.

Here are some common words families:

- ack** (back, black, snack); -**ad** (glad, made, sad);
- ain** (brain, chain, rain); -**ake** (awake, bake, lake);
- all** (ball, tall, wall); -**am** (clam, jam, wham);
- an** (nan, clan, van); -**ay** (away, decay, play);
- ill** (drill, hill, still); -**ip** (chip, flip, trip);
- ore** (more, score, store); -**ot** (apricot, dot, spot);
- ow** (flow, glow, snow).