

HOW TO WRITE A LIMERICK.

What Is a Limerick?

[A limerick is a short, five-line poem with just one stanza.](#) Limericks have an AABBA rhyme scheme and a bouncy rhythm. The subject matter of a limerick is often whimsical and funny. From folk songs to nursery rhymes, limericks have been entertaining audiences for almost two centuries.

While the word “limerick” refers to the city or County of Limerick, Ireland, historians believe limerick poems originated in England in the early eighteenth century. The rhyme and rhythm structure of limericks are thought to have originated from a parlour game that always included the refrain, “Won’t you come to Limerick?”

6 Defining Characteristics of a Limerick

Limericks all follow the same structure and pattern which sets them apart from other poetic forms and makes them easily identifiable.

1. A limerick consists of five lines arranged in one stanza.
2. [The first line](#), second line, and fifth lines end in rhyming words.
3. [The third and fourth lines must rhyme.](#)
4. [The rhythm of a limerick is anapestic](#), which means two unstressed syllables are followed by a third stressed syllable.
5. The first, second, and final line each have three anapests—da dum da da dum da da dum.
6. The third and fourth lines have two anapests—da dum da da dum.

Example of a Limerick

Though they’ve been around for less time than the Shakespearean [sonnet](#), limericks are a popular form of poetry for different audiences. Though not the first to write or recite them, English poet Edward Lear was famous for popularizing limericks in the nineteenth century. In 1846, he published a volume of his original limericks entitled *A Book of Nonsense*.

*There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, 'It is just as I feared!
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!'*

6 Tips for Writing Limericks

If you're feeling creative and have a fun idea brewing in your head, try writing your own limerick. Aside from their steadfast structure, there's a lot of leeway when it comes to limerick topics. Follow these six [writing tips](#) for writing a funny limerick:

1. **Tell a story.** When you read other limericks, you'll notice that they have a narrative arc, complete with a main character, plot, and resolution. When you write a limerick, approach it like a very short story.
2. **Start with your subject.** Your first line should introduce your main character and establish a setting if you're including one. For a practice run, start with your own name, jot down words that rhyme with it, and see what amusing limericks you can come up with.
3. **Make it absurd.** Limericks are meant to be nonsensical and silly. After you've introduced your main character, put them in an absurd scenario to ramp up the humour.
4. **End with a twist.** The last line of a limerick is like the punch line of a joke. End your limericks with a plot twist.
5. **Don't stray from the structure.** The sky's the limit when it comes to the subject matter of limericks, but you need to follow the AABBA rhyme scheme and the anapestic rhythm pattern. If you need help finding words that rhyme, reference a rhyming dictionary to help you with ideas.
6. **Read your limerick out loud.** Limericks are fun to write and just as fun to read out loud. Reading them aloud as you write helps you make sure you have the right rhythm. Then, when you're done, read it in front of people to get a good laugh.