

Poetry Forms & Poetic Devices

Compiled by Joyce Uglow

This list is not by any stretch of the imagination exhaustive. Want more info? Check out [Writer's Digest](#), the [Poetry Foundation](#), [BBC Maestro](#), the [Poetry Lab](#), [We Are Teachers](#), [Pattern Based Writing](#) Definitely listen in on [Irene Latham's Two Minute Writing Tip](#) !

Ideas Are Everywhere!

Acrostic: This type of poetry spells out a name, word, phrase or message with the first letter of each line of the poem. It can rhyme or not, and typically the word spelt out, lays down the theme of the poem. Why not try it with the silliest word you can think of – it can be fun!

Ballad: A form of poetry that is suitable for singing. It tells a story in stanzas of two or four lines and often has a refrain.

Cinquain: a simple five-line poetic form. The subject matter is usually nature, in keeping with her inspiration, and the mood is energetic. The first line and the last line mirror one another in sound, and the number of syllables increases by two with each line before abruptly decreasing: 2-4-6-8-2.

Clerihew: They are four lines long. The first- and second-lines rhyme with each other, and the third- and fourth-lines rhyme with each other. The first line names a person, and the second line ends with something that rhymes with the name of the person. A clerihew should be funny.

Concrete: Poems in which the design and meaning play a role in creating the shape of an object composed of words, letters, colors, and typefaces. AKA Shape Poem

Couplet: A couplet refers to a pair of successive lines in verse. Couplets can rhyme, or not; they can stand alone or appear as a single stanza in a larger whole.

Etheree: is a ten-line unrhymed poem that begins with a one-syllable line, and lines that grow by one syllable in each one line after.

Ekphrastic: is a poem that offers a new perspective on a photograph or image.

Free verse: Free verse can rhyme or not, it can have as many lines or stanzas as the poet wants, and it can be about anything you like! So, while free verse may sound simple enough, the lack of rules makes this form of poetry tricky to master!

Golden Shovel: a poetic form where the last word of each line in a new poem is borrowed from a line of an existing poem. It is often seen as a way to pay homage to the original work; this form was created by poet Terrance Hayes, with many of his "golden shovel" poems referencing lines from Gwendolyn Brooks' "We Real Cool."

Haiku: A haiku is a Japanese three-line poem composed of simple, striking language in a 5-7-5 structure

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Limerick: A favorite of troublemakers everywhere, limericks are known for their wit and sly humor. Composed of five lines, three long and two short, with the rhyme scheme AABBA, the form owes its popularity to the creative, mischievous mind of the nineteenth-century artist and writer Edward Lear. Rudeness and a naturally sing-songy rhythm is the lifeblood of a good limerick.

List: is a poem that contains a list of things, people, places, etc.

Mask: (also called persona) is a poem written from the point of view of an object or animal.

Math: Incorporate numbers, equations, or math symbols with words to create meanings or express ideas.

Ode: The ode is one of the oldest forms of poetry and believed to have come from ancient Greece. The word 'ode' is derived from the Greek word 'aeidein' which means 'to sing or chant', and these poems were originally performed with a musical instrument. An ode is typically written to praise a person, event or thing (you could write an ode to your pet or favorite food!) and they are usually quite short in length.

Reverso: A reverso is a poem with two halves. In a reverso, the second half reverses the lines from the first half, with changes only in punctuation and capitalization.

Sijo: is a Korean traditional poem known that contains three lines of 14 to 16 syllables.

Tanka: is a 5-line traditional Japanese poem containing five or seven syllables, with 31 syllables total. Tanka poems often give a complete picture of a mood or of a historical event.

Villanelle: The villanelle is another very old form of poetry that came from France and has lots of rules. It is made up of 19 lines; five stanzas of three lines (tercet) each and a final stanza of four lines (quatrain). As you can see from the rhyme scheme; ABA ABA ABA ABA ABA ABAA, this type of poem only has two rhyming sounds. Plus, there is a lot of repetition throughout the villanelle. Line one will be repeated in lines six, 12 and 18; and line three will be repeated in lines nine, 15 and 19. So although this takes out the extra work of having to write 19 individual lines, the real challenge is to make meaning out of those repeated lines!

Poetic Devices The word poet comes from the Greek word *poiein*, meaning to make. Open your poetry toolbox and pull out the sensory toolbox. Imagine, visualize, experience, make...play!

Alliteration: occurrence of initial consonant sounds (such as mire | mysterious)

Assonance: repetition of vowel sounds (such as stuck | muck)

Cacophony: rough or sharp sounds, often created by having a lot of consonants
My stick fingers click with a snicker And, chuckling, they knuckle the keys; Light-footed, my steel feelers flicker And pluck from these keys melodies. "Player Piano," John Updike

Consonance: recurrence of similar consonant sounds (such as snort | sweet)

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End stop: marks the end of a sentence, phrase, or thought and gives the reader constancy and balance

Enjambéd: interrupts the thought and forces reader NOT to pause but to read the words on the next line. Enjambement is a powerful tool that brings a subtle tension – even mystery...

Euphony: soft, pleasant sounds, often created by having a lot of vowels

- *Consonants with muted or muffled sounds, like L, M, N, R, and W.*
- *Consonants with buzzing sounds, like V, Z, and hard Th sounds (as in "The").*
- *Consonants with hissing sounds, like F, H, S, and Sh.*

Hyperbole: is an over-exaggeration that can create emphasis or humor but is meant figuratively—not to be taken as true in the literal sense.

Internal rhyme: Internal rhyme, rhyme between a word within a line and another word either at the end of the same line or within another line.

Line breaks: act as pauses and breaths, creating rhythmic patterns. Do the lines of my poem feel and sound best when they're long or short?

Metaphor: is a figure of speech that describes a thing by calling it something else that it couldn't possibly be in real life.

Onomatopoeia: words that sound like what they mean (such as bang | buzz)

Repetition: use patterns and/or repeated words, phrases, a line, or a group of lines, repeat a single line over and over or possibly on every other line.

Simile: is a type of figure of speech that directly compares two things (using words such as like or as)

Stanzas: shape the poem's flow, allowing for moments of reflection

Word Play: words used in a clever way Word Play examples:

- **Pun:** A humorous use of a word with multiple meanings or a funny use of a word as a substitute for a similar sounding word. Pun example: The art competition ended in a draw.
- **Tom Swifty:** A fun use of words that follows a quote, usually said by a fictional character, using a punny adverb. Tom Swifty example: "I have frostbite," Tom said coldly.
- **Spoonerism:** A spoonerism is a, usually accidental, swapping of initial sounds of two words. The term spoonerism is named for Oxford lecturer William Archibald Spooner, a notoriously nervous speaker who often swapped the beginnings of words when he spoke publicly. Spoonerism example: It is tinner dime. ("dinner time")
- **Kenning:** A kenning is a metaphorical or poetic phrase that is conventionally used in place of another term. Kenning example: tree-hugger = an environmentalist

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