



Limericks



What's a limerick?

Limericks are short rhyming poems that follow a specific rhythm or pattern. They often create a funny and absurd tale or description of a topic.

Limericks appeared first in the early 1700s, and some of the earliest examples have been preserved as folk songs. Many of the Mother Goose rhymes are also limericks. Edward Lear, a British author, penned many charming, now famous examples and popularized the style in the 19th century.

Wouldn't it be fun to write a limerick about—or for—friends as a Valentine's Day surprise?

How are limericks structured?

Limericks follow clear guidelines:

They have 5 lines that form this rhyme scheme: AA, BB, A.

Lines 1, 2, and 5 have 7 to 10 syllables each.

Lines 3 and 4 have 5 to 7 syllables.

Each syllable is read in a rhythm (or pattern) called anapest: short, short, long (or da da DUM). For example, I like cheese.





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Here's an example

Let's read and analyze this fun Valentine's Day example. Notice that there are some exceptions to our rules.

The Singing Bird by Kaitlyn Guenther

I once knew a bird who was in love	A	9 syllables	short-long, short-short-long, short-short-short-long
On Valentine's he would sing to a dove	A	10 syllables	short-long, short-short-short-short-long, short-short-long
He would sing until dawn	B	6 syllables	short-short-long, short-short-long
And collapse on the lawn	B	6 syllables	short-short-long, short-short-long
When the dove came and gave him a shove	A	9 syllables	short-short-long, short-short-long, short-short-long

Here's a great example by Edward Lear:

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.

(Notice: repeated rhyming word in lines 1 and 5!)

Here's another example for inspiration:

I once had a friend lived in Ypsi,
Whose pet was a moth she named Gypsy.
They wobbled and pranced,
We three wildly danced,
'Til our world all around felt quite trip-sy.





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Items you will need:

- Paper and pen/pencil
- OR a computer

How do I write my own limerick?

Now follow these steps to write your own funny limerick as a gift for a friend, teacher, or family member. As you think and write, always read your limerick aloud to be sure the rhythm, rhymes, and flow work.

1. Decide on your main character or characters, your story line, and the end result. Scribble ideas down and work on your favorites. Mix and match!
2. Introduce your main character in the first line (also establish a place or context, if needed).
3. Make a list with words that rhyme and experiment with them. If you get stuck, use a rhyming dictionary to find snappy rhyming schemes.
4. Put your character in a funny, strange, or nonsensical position or scene.
5. End your limerick in line 5 with a surprise or joke.
6. Read your limerick out loud as you think and write to be sure the rhythm and rhyming work, as well as flow. Ask yourself if there's anything you want to change or add. To write the best limerick, edit and polish, polish and edit.
7. Gift your limerick to someone in written or spoken form.

For related fun:

- Record your limerick and send it as a video. You can text or email it.
- Write out your limerick and leave it anonymously as a gift for your neighbors or a friend—make their day!
- If you write out your limerick, maybe you'd like to illustrate it as well.

