



## What is a Limerick?

Limericks are one of the most fun and well-known poetic forms. No one knows for sure where the name “limerick” comes from, but most people assume it is related to the county of Limerick, in Ireland.

The reason limericks are so much fun is because they are short, rhyming, funny, and have a bouncy rhythm that makes them easy to memorize.

## The Rules of Limericks

Limericks, like all poetic forms, have a set of rules that you need to follow. The rules for a limerick are fairly simple:

- They are five lines long.
- Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme with one another.
- Lines 3 and 4 rhyme with each other.
- They have a distinctive rhythm (which I’ll explain shortly)
- They are usually funny.

## Rhyming a Limerick

The [rhyme scheme](#) of a limerick is known as “AABBA.” This is because the last words in lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme. Those are the “A’s” in the rhyme scheme. The “B’s” are the last words of lines 3 and 4. Let me give you an example:

There was a young fellow named Hall  
Who fell in the spring in the fall.  
‘Twould have been a sad thing

Had he died in the spring,  
But he didn't—he died in the fall.

Notice that the words, “fall,” “fall,” and “fall” all rhyme. Those are the “A” words in the “AABBA” rhyme scheme. Also notice that “thing” and “spring” rhyme. Those are the “B” words in the rhyme scheme. Limerick Rhythm

Now let's take a look at the rhythm of the limerick. It goes by the complicated name “anapaestic,” but you don't need to worry about that. What I want you to notice when you read or recite a limerick is that the first two lines and the last line have three “beats” in them, while the third and fourth lines have two “beats.” In other words, the rhythm of a limerick looks like this:

da DUM da da DUM da da DUM  
da DUM da da DUM da da DUM  
da DUM da da DUM  
da DUM da da DUM  
da DUM da da DUM da da DUM

The rhythm doesn't have to *exactly* match this, but it needs to be close enough that it sounds the same when you read it.

### **Number of syllables**

The first, second and fifth lines should have eight or nine syllables, while the third and fourth lines should have five or six.

### **Your Turn: write**

Now it's your turn to see if you can write a limerick of your own and original with topic **IES Padre Luis Coloma**. Remember to follow these steps:

1. Choose the name of a person or place and write the first line.
2. Look in a rhyming dictionary for words that rhyme with your person or place name.
3. Write line 2 and 5 to rhyme with the first line.
4. Now write lines 3 and 4 with a different rhyme.

When you are done writing, read your limerick out loud to see if it has the right rhythm; three “beats” on lines 1, 2, and 5, and two “beats” on lines 3 and 4, as shown above. If not, see if you can rewrite some words to get the rhythm right. Remember that most limericks are funny and trivial in nature. The last line of the limerick is special as it contains the joke or punch line.