

## What is a Rhyming Couplet?

A **Rhyming Couplet** is two lines of the same length that **rhyme** and complete one thought. There is no limit to the length of the lines. **Rhyming** words are words that sound the same when spoken, they don't necessarily have to be spelled the same.

## Examples of Rhyming Couplets

The wind blew very strong - As we scurried along

Plastic snake - Very fake

In the morning the sun shone bright - Clearing the thoughts of the dark night

*Rhyming Couplets are common in Shakespearean sonnets.*

O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!

There lives more life in one of your fair eyes,  
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

Rhyming Couplets are used in poetry to help the poem become interesting. It is used to produce a form of rhyme throughout the whole poem either just on two lines or all the way through.

<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/terms-rhyming-couplets>

**For our contest, please keep poem to no more than 20 lines**

# What is a Sonnet?

A **Sonnet** (pronounced son-it) is a fourteen line poem with a fixed rhyme scheme. Often, sonnets use iambic pentameter: five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables for a ten-syllable line. Sonnets were invented by the Italian poet Giacomo da Lentini during the 1200s. The word sonnet is derived from the Old Occitan phrase *sonet* meaning “little song.”

## Examples and Types of Sonnets

Over time, the sonnet form has evolved. Here are the two most common types of sonnets written today:

### a. Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet

The Italian sonnet is based on the original sonnet invented by da Lentini. The Petrarchan sonnet consists of an octave (group of eight lines) followed by a sestet (group of six lines). The typical rhyme scheme is as follows: a b b a a b b a for the octave and c d d c d d, c d d e c e, or c d d c c d for the sestet. The octave introduces a problem or conflict, and then the sestet addresses or solves the problem.

Here is an example of an Italian sonnet written by William Wordsworth:

*Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour: (a)*

*England hath need of thee: she is a fen (b)*

*Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen, (b)*

*Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower, (a)*

*Have forfeited their ancient English dower (a)*

*Of inward happiness. We are selfish men; (b)*

*Oh! raise us up, return to us again; (b)*

*And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power. (a)*

*Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart; (c)*

*Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: (d)*

*Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, (d)*

*So didst thou travel on life's common way, (e)*

*In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart (c)*

*The lowliest duties on herself did lay. (e)*

“London, 1802” has the rhyme scheme of an Italian sonnet: a b b a a b b a and c d d e c e. In the octave, we learn of a problem: Milton has died and England is in moral decline. In the sestet, we learn of the solution: unlike England, Milton was filled with glory and morality which England must adopt in order to recover.

## **b. English (Shakespearean) Sonnet**

The Shakespearean sonnet is named after Shakespeare not because he invented it but because he is the most famous writer of this type of sonnet. Typically, the English sonnet explores romantic love. Its rhyme scheme is as follows: a b a b c d c d followed by e f e f g g.

Here is an example of an English sonnet by William Shakespeare:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (a)*

*Thou art more lovely and more temperate: (b)*

*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, (a)*

*And summer's lease hath all too short a date: (b)*

*Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, (c)*

*And often is his gold complexion dimm'd; (d)*

*And every fair from fair sometime declines, (c)*

*By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd; (d)*

*But thy eternal summer shall not fade (e)*

*Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest; (f)*

*Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade, (e)*

*When in eternal lines to time thou growest: (f)*

*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, (g)*

*So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. (g)*

“Sonnet 18” is one of the most famous examples of the Shakespearean sonnet, using the exact rhyme scheme and exploring romantic love for a woman.

Taken from <https://literaryterms.net/sonnet/>

**For our contest, please keep poem to no more than 14 lines**

## What is Free Verse?

Free Verse is poetry written with rhymed or unrhymed verse that has no set **meter** to it.

### Example of a Free Verse poem

In Flight

Wake up to a bright sapphire morning  
Cloudless skies  
This can only mean one thing  
It's a go!

At the launch site  
Teeth chit-chattering  
And not just from the c-cold  
What if a bird confuses my head for a perch?  
Will my glasses be fogged up by the clouds?  
If I fall out of the basket  
And land in a field of cows  
Up we go!  
Far below  
Idyllic fields of patchwork green  
Glittering lakes - a treasure trove beneath the surface  
*Click!*  
I can't believe I'm so high  
Feeling like a queen  
I stretch my arms out to the sides  
Now I'm a bird  
So high  
I close my eyes and take flight  
I feel the wind in my wings  
Up with the clouds  
My hair, now feathers, sweeps behind me  
I am as elegant as a swan  
Soaring higher than the Earth  
Oh  
I'm not a bird  
I'm not as elegant as a swan

I'm about as elegant as a rhino on roller skates  
I'm just a schoolgirl  
On a balloon flight  
And we just crash-landed  
In a field  
With cows.

[https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/index.php?page\\_id=types-free-verse](https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/index.php?page_id=types-free-verse)

**For our contest, please keep poem to no more than 32 lines**