



Making Friends with Poetry

How to Write a Limerick

Age group:



9-12 year olds YELLOW

Upper Elementary

PREMISE:

Reading limericks offers a world of delight in listening, training our ears to hear both rhythm and rhyme. Limericks are usually nonsensical poems which makes them even more fun, which children will love. Limericks have a set pattern: They are always 5 lines with an easy rhythm—

The 1st, 2nd and 5th line have the same end rhyme

The 3rd and 4th do as well, making this an easy poem pattern to mimic

Edward Lear was the master of this style and often published them with his own (outlandish) illustrations. Here are two of his more well-known limericks:

There was an Old Man with a beard

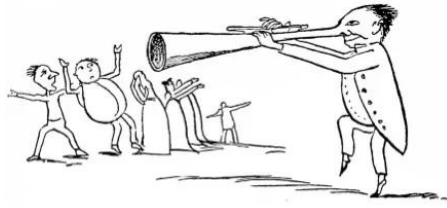
*Who said, 'It is just as I feared!
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!'*

There Was An Old Man in a Garden

*Who always begg'd every-one's pardon;
When they asked him, 'What for?'
He replied, 'You're a bore!
And I trust you'll go out of my garden.'*

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There was an old man of West Dumpet,
Who possessed a large nose like a trumpet;
When he blew it aloud, it astonished the crowd,
And was heard through the whole of West Dumpet.

You can find a great collection of Lear poems online at [nonsenselit.org/Edward Lear](http://nonsenselit.org/EdwardLear)

PRACTICE-How to Write a Limerick

Use the template below as a pattern, (or start with your own first line).

Remember the limerick pattern above: The **first, second and fifth lines** will have the same end rhyme.

The **third and fourth** lines will have the same rhyme as well.

Of course, you don't have to write a rhyme about a grouchy old man;
what if you wrote about -

a young boy or girl
an old bird
a nice man,
a cool kid....and so on?

And substituted different places and expressions for where your character was and what they were saying? You can be as silly or serious as you want.

Like this:

*There was a young girl in a rowboat
Who was paddling while fighting a sore throat.
She said, "Oh dear me, how I'd like some warm tea."
What she needed was a muffler and topcoat.*

-J L Collins

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Limerick Template: Copy the first sentence on another paper (or start with your own sentence).

There was a(n) _____ in a _____

Young girl

House? School? Tree?

Cool kid

School bus? Highchair?

Nice man

New mom

Old dog

Whatever the **last word** is in your **first sentence** will drive your rhyme scheme.

Brainstorm some words that rhyme with *house, school, tree, school bus, highchair* or whatever you pick and go from there.

Here's a few blank lines to get you started. Have fun!

