



# Syllables and Couplets

- A syllable is the unit of sound that makes up words. To determine the number of syllables in a word, clap out the word. Each clap is a syllable.
- End rhyme is when the last word of one line sounds the same as the last word of another line.
- A couplet is two lines of poetry, right next to each other. They are generally self-contained, and complete units.
- A rhyming couplet is when two successive lines end in words with a matching sound. Both lines have the same meter.

Example of rhyming couplet:

*The Man of Double Deed*  
by Anonymous

*There was a man of double deed,  
Who sowed his garden full of seed;  
When the seed began to grow,  
'Twas like a garden full of snow;  
When the snow began to melt,  
'Twas like a ship without a belt;  
When the ship began to sail,  
'Twas like a bird without a tail;  
When the bird began to fly,  
'Twas like an eagle in the sky;  
When the sky began to roar,  
'Twas like a lion at my door;  
When my door began to crack,  
'Twas like a stick across my back;  
When my back began to smart,  
'Twas like a penknife in my heart;  
And when my heart began to bleed,  
'Twas death, and death, and death indeed.*

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56374/the-man-of-double-deed>

- A metrical foot is a combination of two to three stressed and unstressed syllables, which are repeated to form a line of verse. Modern poetry may not contain meter.

*Double/ double /toil and /trouble/                      4 feet*  
*Shall I/ compare/ thee to/ a sum/mer's day/              5 feet*



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- A heroic couplet is a rhyming couplet that uses a meter called iambic pentameter.  
Iambic means that the meter (poetic foot) is a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable.  
Pentameter means that there are five iambs (poetic feet) in each line.  
Iambic pentameter means that there are five feet, each two syllables long, making a total of ten syllables in each line.

While the most common meter in English language poetry is iambic pentameter, there are other variations of metrical feet.

Example of iambic pentameter:

*Amoretti*  
by Edmund Spenser

*One day I wrote her name upon the strand  
But came the waves and washed it away:  
Again, I wrote it with a second hand,  
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey*

Extract from: <https://www.google.com/search?q=modern+iambic+pentameter>

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds (Sonnet 116)*  
William Shakespeare

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.*

<https://poets.org/poem/let-me-not-marriage-true-minds-sonnet-116>

Notes adapted from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/heroic-couplet-definition-4140168>