**A Guide to Iambic Pentameter**

* A foot is a measure of meter in a poem, consisting of a combination of stressed and unstressed syllables.
* In poetry, there are three major divisions: the foot, the line, and the stanza.
* An iamb is a foot with one unstressed and one stressed syllable. When a line of poetry uses a pattern of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables, it is called “iambic.”

**Iamb** = unstressed stress Example: pa **rade**

* A **trochee** is a foot with one stressed and one unstressed syllable, the opposite of the iamb. Example: **fi** nal
* A **spondee** is a foot with two or more stressed syllables: Example: **Jack Black**
* **Triple meters:**

**Anapest:** (unstressed, unstressed, stressed) Example: Annema**rie**

**Dactyl:** (stressed, unstressed, unstressed) Examples: **Dor**othy

* We can measure the number of “feet” in a line of poetry.

If there are **2** feet, the line is **dimeter**. If the feet are iambic, it is **iambic dimeter.**  If the feet are trochaic, it is **trochaic dimeter**.

If there are **3** feet, the line is **trimeter**. If the feet are iambic, that would make \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Let’s assume that the feet are iambic for all of the rest of these examples. If there are **4** feet, the line is in **iambic** **tetrameter.**

**If there are 5 iambs, 5 feet, the line is in iambic pentameter. If there are 5 trochees, 5 feet, the line is in iambic pentameter.**

6= iambic hexameter 6= trochaic hexameter

7=iambic heptameter 7=throchaic heptameter

8=iambic octameter 8= throchaic octameter

* Practice on this example from Act 1, Scene 1 when Theseus talks to Egeus and Hermia:

But, **be**ing **o**ver-**full** of **self**-af**fairs**,

My **mind** did **lose** it. **But**, De**met**rius, **come**;

And **come**, E**ge**us; **you** shall **go** with **me**,

I **have** some **pri**vate **school**ing **for** you **both**.

For **you**, fair **Her**mia, **look** you [**arm**](http://quarles.unbc.ca/midsummer/db.cgi?search=100050) your**self**

To **fit** your [fancies](http://quarles.unbc.ca/midsummer/db.cgi?search=100051) to your father's will;

Or else the law of Athens yields you up--

Which by no means we may extenuate--

To death, or to a vow of **sin**gle **life**.

* Now, look at your own speech. Try saying it in exaggerated iambic meter. Then, try saying it in exaggerated trochaic meter. Which sounds right?
* Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in your speech to find the prevailing meter. Note and variations, such as insertion of extra syllables or of another foot such as a trochee or spondee. You may even find a three-syllable foot such as an anapest or a dactyl.
* Mnemonic Device: The Four Women of Poetry
  + I**rene** (iamb)
  + **Trac**y (trochee)
  + Annemar**ie (**anapest)
  + **Dor**othy (dactylic)
  + **Sponge Bob** (spondee)