**Couplets Poems**

Couplets are two-line poems that often contain the same meter and rhyme. They tend to appear within other forms of poetry, like the sonnet and the epic poem.

**Introduction**

You are probably more familiar with the couplet than you think. Two-line poems with similar meter and rhyme, couplets have appeared throughout the history of poetry: in famous works like Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, at the end of nearly ever one of William Shakespeare's sonnets, in the heroic couplets of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, and in the poetry of Robert Browning and John Donne.

Couplets can be used to make up a number of other types of poems, like the ghazal and sonnet. Many narrative and epic poems are comprised of heroic couplets, which are written in iambic pentameter.

Whether you're writing a couplet as part of a homework assignment, or you're simply looking to expand your poetic horizons, the following guide will walk you through the writing process.

**Step 1: Open Couplets**

Open couplets are also referred to Chaucerian couplets because the famous medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer introduced them in many of his works, including The Canterbury Tales. Here are the rules for the open couplet:

* It consists of two lines.
* It must rhyme.
* It contains lines that are enjambed.
* Enjambment is when a complete thought in poetry, such as a sentence, is carried over from one line into the next without pause.

Couplets are often strung together to create long, narrative passages.

Below is an excerpt from Sir Edmund Spenser's "Mother Hubbard's Tale".

This brief excerpt is made up of six couplets, each with their own end-rhymes.

Notice how Spenser used the form narratively, connecting the couplets themselves with enjambment.

Even as new occasion appears? (A)

Or shall we tie ourselves for certain years (A)

To any service, Or to any place? (B)

For it behooves ere that into the race (B)

We enter, to resolve first hereupon. (C)

Now surely brother (said the Fox anon) (C)

—courtesy of Poetry Magnum Opus

Note how line two carries its thought over to be finished in line three.

Line four also follows this pattern.

**Step 2: Closed Couplets**

The closed couplet could often be found opening or closing Shakespearean sonnets during the Renaissance. The rules for a closed couplet are simple:

* A closed couplet consists of two lines.
* The lines must rhyme.
* The lines must be end-stopped
* End-stopping is the opposite of enjambment. The lines are complete in and of themselves, and do not extend beyond.

Below is an excerpt from Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Criticism" Part II.

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, (A)

As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance. (A)

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence, (B)

The sound must seem an echo to the sense. (B)

—courtesy of Representative Poetry Online

Pope's lines are complete and do not carry over mid-thought into the next line.

Each of those lines physically pauses on account of the punctuation.

**Step 3: Heroic Couplets**

The heroic couplet has long been used in epic and narrative poetry, which both tell a story. There are a couple of extra rules for the heroic couplet:

* Lines are coupled into pairs.
* Paired lines must rhyme.
* The rhymes must end on a masculine note.
* Masculine rhymes are when the final syllable of the end-word is stressed.
* Each line is written in iambic pentameter.

Iambic pentameter is when the meter of the poem is measured out to equal ten syllables per line with the stress on every second beat: daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM.

Lines are almost always "closed" or end-stopped, like the closed couplet.

In the following excerpt from Jack Denham's "Cooper's Hill", look at how each of Denham's end-rhyme finishes on a masculine note.

Count out the iambic pentameter, which has been indicated in bold capitalization.

Sure THERE are POets WHICH did NEver DREAM (A)

UpON ParNASsus, NOR did TASTE the STREAM (A)

Of HELiCON, we THEREfore MAY supPOSE (B)

Those MADE not POets, BUT the POets THOSE . (B)

—courtesy of Rutgers—Newark

You will also note that each line is a complete thought in and of itself.

**Step 4: Tips and Tricks for the Couplet Writer**

When you take a look at some of the rules for couplet writing, the process can seem a little intimidating. There are a couple of things you can do to make the writing process a little simpler and more fun.

Read a lot of different types of couplets, both classical and new, to get a feel for how they are written.

Decide how you're going to use your couplet. Will it be part of a longer piece or format, or stand on its own?

Think about the tone you want to set before you choose your rhymes. The rhyme pattern can set the entire mood of a poem, and if you're trying to be serious, the last thing you want is a childish rhyme pattern.

Don't be afraid to use a rhyming dictionary to help you find the perfect words!

Read your finished product out loud a few times, and listen to how it sounds. You'll know if you've captured the right mood.

If you're working on a heroic couplet, don't be afraid to count out the rhythm on your fingers, or by drumming on your desktop.

**Conclusion**

Writing couplets, even in their stricter forms, can be a lot of fun. The rhyme pattern often has a tendency to seem forced, but children's poet Shel Silverstein often used this to his advantage to make great poetry kids could relate to. The brevity, rhythm, and meter of couplets also makes them a great introduction to poetry in the classroom.

Whether you're entertaining or teaching children, writing an epic poem, completing your sonnet, or just having some fun with words, the couplet is a great way to exercise your poetic muscles. As always, don't forget to share your poetry. Poetry readings and writer's groups are a fantastic place to get feedback and learn.

http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-write-a-couplet

**If - Poem by Rudyard Kipling**

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too:  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;  
  
If you can dream---and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think---and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same:.  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;  
  
If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,  
And never breathe a word about your loss:  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"  
  
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings---nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much:  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And---which is more---you'll be a Man, my son!

**Hope - Poem by Emily Jane Brontë**

Hope was but a timid friend;

She sat without the grated den,

Watching how my fate would tend,

Even as selfish-hearted men.

She was cruel in her fear;

Through the bars, one dreary day,

I looked out to see her there,

And she turned her face away!

Like a false guard, false watch keeping,

Still, in strife, she whispered peace;

She would sing while I was weeping;

If I listened, she would cease.

False she was, and unrelenting;

When my last joys strewed the ground,

Even Sorrow saw, repenting,

Those sad relics scattered round;

Hope, whose whisper would have given

Balm to all my frenzied pain,

Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,

Went, and ne'er returned again!

**A Little Boy's Dream - Poem by Katherine Mansfield**

To and fro, to and fro

In my little boat I go

Sailing far across the sea

All alone, just little me.

And the sea is big and strong

And the journey very long.

To and fro, to and fro

In my little boat I go.

Sea and sky, sea and sky,

Quietly on the deck I lie,

Having just a little rest.

I have really done my best

In an awful pirate fight,

But we cdaptured them all right.

Sea and sky, sea and sky,

Quietly on the deck I lie--

Far away, far away

From my home and from my play,

On a journey without end

Only with the sea for friend

And the fishes in the sea.

But they swim away from me

Far away, far away

From my home and from my play.

Then he cried "O Mother dear."

And he woke and sat upright,

They were in the rocking chair,

Mother's arms around him--tight.

**Sonnet 02: Time Does Not Bring Relief; You All Have Lied - Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay**

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied

Who told me time would ease me of my pain!

I miss him in the weeping of the rain;

I want him at the shrinking of the tide;

The old snows melt from every mountain-side,

And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;

But last year's bitter loving must remain

Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide

There are a hundred places where I fear

To go,—so with his memory they brim

And entering with relief some quiet place

Where never fell his foot or shone his face

I say, "There is no memory of him here!"

And so stand stricken, so remembering him!

**Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep**Do not stand at my grave and weep,  
I am not there; I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the diamond glints on snow,  
I am the sun on ripened grain,  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning’s hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circling flight.  
I am the soft star-shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry,  
I am not there; I did not die.