

Can you write like Shakespeare?

Shakespeare's plays are famous for the type of rhythm his characters speak in. This rhythm is called iambic Pentameter.

Iambic what?

An iamb sounds like one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable. Pentameter roughly means five in the line. So iambic Pentameter is five iambs added together to make a line with ten beats.... Five stressed, five not stressed.

How does that sound?

When read aloud it creates a rhythm. Try saying this, putting the stress only on the words in bold.

• da-**dum** da-**dum** da-**dum** da-**dum** da-**dum**

People use iambic Pentameter without even knowing. Look at these normal sentences:

- Can **you** please **buy** a **bag** of **sweets** to-**day**
- I **saw** an **old** man **with** a **walk**-ing **stick**

Try saying them stressing the bold syllables.

Now try a few lines written by Shakespeare. Again the stress goes on the bits in bold.

- He **is** no **less** than **what** we **say** he **is**. (From *Taming of the Shrew*)
- Lord **Titus**, **by** your **leave**, this **maid** is **mine**. (From *Titus Andronicus*)
- Rough **winds** do **shake** the **darling** **buds** of **May** (From Sonnet 18)

Get Writing

Now you know how iambic Pentameter works, why not try making some. Fill in the drawing below if that helps. The dots will be the stressed syllables and the dashes will not be stressed. There should be ten beats in total.



Now you can make your own iambic Pentameter, write a short poem and send it to us at playground@shakespearesglobe.com The Beasts might even put it in the share gallery.