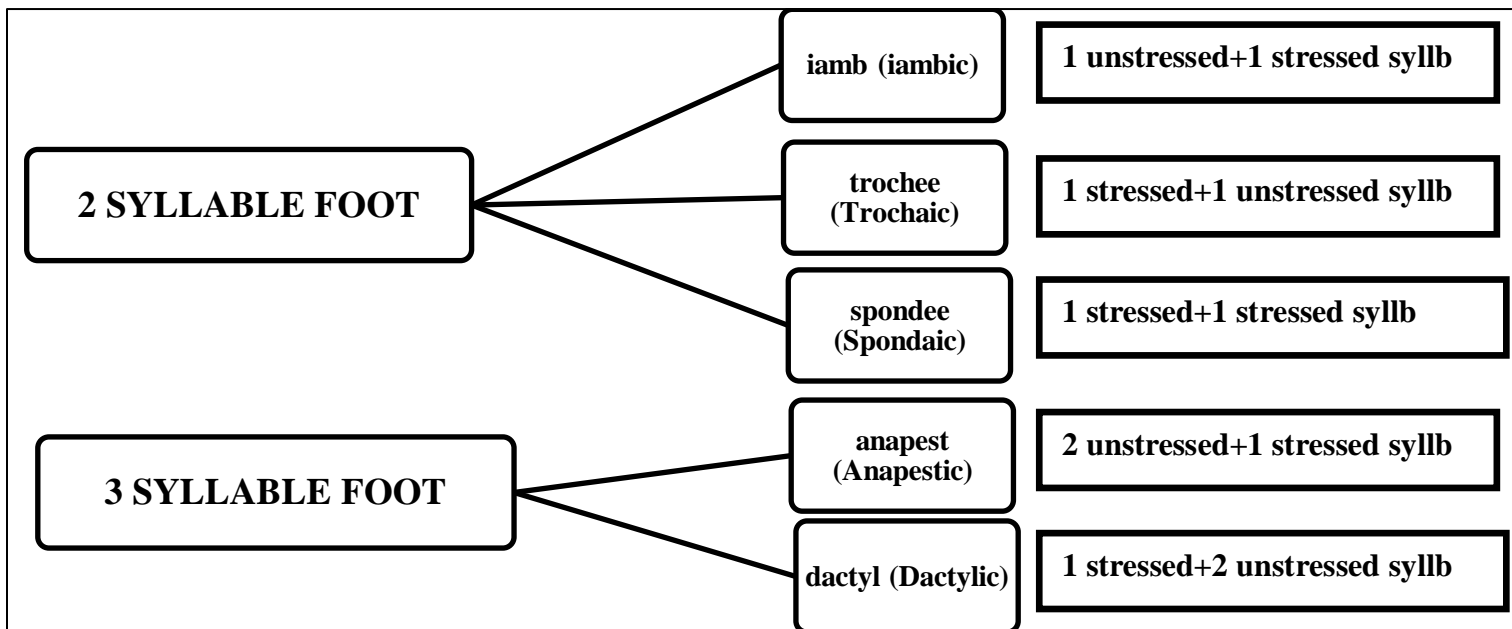


# PROSODY, RHYME & RHYTHM

Poetry has many features that help in its analysis. Prosody and scansion are key elements to comprehend and study any piece of poetry.

**-Prosody** refers to the study of versification. It is another word for studying the rhythm, stress, foot, meter and intonation of poem. It is also the systematic study of metrical structure.

-In verse, **Foot** is the smallest metrical unit of measurement. The prevailing kind and number of feet, revealed by scansion, determines the name of the meter of a poem. The foot is a unit of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Foot is basically divided into a certain number of syllables; that number identifies the name of the foot as follows:



**-Meter** refers to the number of feet used in each line. The name of meter depends on how many feet are found in the line. Meter is the rhythmic pattern of a poetic line. The meter can be:

**\*Monometer**, a rare form of verse in which each line consists of a single metrical unit (a foot or dipody). The best-known example of an entire poem in monometer is Robert Herrick's "Upon His Departure Hence"

Thus I  
 Passe by,  
 And die:  
 As One,  
 Unknown,  
 And gon:  
 I'm made  
 A shade,  
 And laid  
 I'th grave,  
 There have  
 My Cave.  
 Where tell  
 I dwell,  
 Farewell.

\***Dimeter** refers to the line that consists of two feet, **Trimeter** (line of three feet), **Tetrameter** (line of four feet), **Pentameter** (line of five feet), **Hexameter** (line of six feet), **Heptameter** (line of seven feet), **Octameter** (line of eight feet)

-**Prosody Scansion** refers to metrical scanning of verse relying on the division of lines into syllables, feet and repeated patterns.

## Examples of Scansion

1-Iambic Meter: a poem by Dryden

With ravished ears  
 da DUM | da DUM

The Monarch hears  
 Assumes the God  
 Affects to nod

And seems to shake the spheres  
 da DUM | da DUM | da DUM

2-Iambic Pentameter (2syll×5 feet):

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

3- Trachaic Tetrameter (2syll×4 feet):

Tell me not in mournful numbers.  
 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

4- Anapestic Trimeter: (3syll×3 feet):

And the sound of a voice that is still.  
 1 | 2 | 3

5- Dactylic Hexameter: (3syll×6 feet):

This is the forest primeval the murmuring pines and the hemlocks.  
 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

## -Rhyme & Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme consists generally of identity of sounds at the end of lines of verse. For example:

Faith is not built on disquisitions *vain*;  
The things we must believe are few or *plain*

The words 'vain' and 'plain' rhyme together, both are stressed monosyllabic words. Such a rhyme is called **masculine rhyme**

When the stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable, the rhyme is called **feminine rhyme**.

Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good-morrow.

The words 'sorrow' and 'morrow' are **bisyllabic** words and the stress falls on the first syllables; there is also what is known as the **doubled rhyme** (the last two syllables rhyme together). In English poetry, **triple rhyme** is also a rhyming type that is used for comic or satiric purposes.

Sometimes syllables within the same line may rhyme as in the last stanza of Browning's 'Confessions':

Alas,  
We loved, sir – used to meet;  
How **sad** and **bad** and **mad** it was –  
But then how it was sweet!

The words 'sad', 'bad' and 'mad' in the passage above rhyme though within the same line. This is an example of **internal rhyme**.

When rhymes are only rhymes in appearance and not in sound as in the case of 'alone' and 'done' or 'remove' and 'love' we have **eye rhyme**.

**-The rhyme scheme refers to** the pattern of sounds that repeats at the end of a line or stanza. Rhyme schemes can change line by line, stanza by stanza, or can continue throughout a poem. Poems with rhyme schemes are generally written in formal verse, which has a strict meter: a repeating pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Rhyme scheme patterns are formed in different ways using letters of the alphabet. Lines designated with the same letter rhyme with each other. For example, the rhyme scheme ABAB means the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> lines of a stanza, or the "A"s, rhyme with each other, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> line rhymes with the 4<sup>th</sup> line, or the "B"s rhyme together.

## -Rhythm in poetry

Rhythm is to borrow Plato's words, 'an order of movement' in time. Rhythm is usually maintained in connection with poetry or music. However, readers must have heard people talking of the rhythms of nature of even biological rhythm. Perhaps periodic repetition of a certain pattern is the *sine qua non* of rhythm. All the arts painting, sculpture, and architecture – have their rhythm. Additionally, metre, rhyme, and alliteration contribute to the rhythm of a poem.

Prosody which takes into account the historical period to which poem belongs, the poetic genre and the specificities of a poet's style goes closer to the rhythmic aspect of a poem.

For instance, quantity (or vowel length) is a rhythmic but not a metrical feature of English poetry. This is because English does not impose any strict regularity in quantity as it does with respect to stress. For example in 'sweet rose' the vowel sounds can be lengthened or shortened at will. However, the lengthening and shortening of the vowel sound does affect the rhythm of the poem. Similarly, the rise and fall in the human voice, especially in reading poetry which is called **cadence** is a rhythmic not a metrical feature. Many other factors contribute to the rhythm of a piece of verse or prose.

**Activity:** Scan the famous lines to William Shakespeare (Hamlet):

*To be, or not to be,*

*That is the question.*