



HOW TO WRITE POETRY

Little Dazzy Donuts

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As a poet, I am often asked how I write my poems and asked by kids how they can also write poetry. There are lots of ways, and it often helps to just start, and to then keep writing. The more you write, the easier it becomes. I have put together this short guide to explain how I start. I hope it helps you.

A podcast episode of Kids' Poetry Club accompanies this guide. It takes just 20 minutes to listen to, and you can find it here: <https://www.kidspoetryclub.com/episode-149>.

Enjoy writing poetry, and perhaps we will feature some of your poems in the Kids' Poetry Club podcast. We have featured hundreds of kids from around the world reading their own poems, and you could be in one of our episodes. You will find all of the details on our website at <https://www.kidspoetryclub.com/competition>.

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Idea #1: Don't worry and have fun

There are no right and wrong ways of writing poetry, and it should be fun. It's really not unusual that someone writing their first poem has difficulty coming up with one. However, once you've written your first, you'll find that your second is a little easier, and soon you'll be writing poems all the time. Just don't give up, and keep writing.

Idea #2: Grab a pen and paper

I carry a notepad around with me, and I keep all of my poem ideas in there. Whenever I think of a possible topic or a rhyme I like or the start of a poem, I jot it down quickly before I forget it. Then, when I have more time to write, I pull out my notebook and look through all of those ideas and pick one to write about.

Idea #3: Coming up with a topic

A good place to start is to decide what your poem is going to be about. It's tough to sit down and just think of a poem out of nowhere. So, what would you like to write about?

It's helpful to listen to or read poetry. Other poems can give you ideas or inspire you to write on a topic or write in a certain way. On the Kids' Poetry Club website at <https://www.kidspoetryclub.com/kids-poems>, there are hundreds of poems for kids and poems written by kids – so reading those can help you if you feel stuck. You can also hear kids reading their own poems in every episode of the Kids' Poetry Club podcast at: <https://www.kidspoetryclub.com/episodes>.

Idea #4: Removing the pressure

What normally works is avoiding paper or a computer, and not trying to write down a poem straight away. Instead, I just think about the topic for a few hours or even a few days. Gradually, ideas come to me about what could be in the poem. Once I have a few ideas, I can then start writing a poem. It can feel quite pressurizing to sit in front of a blank screen or sheet of paper, and so I take off the pressure by thinking about the poem instead.

Idea #5: What goes in your poem

Once you've chosen your topic for the poem, you can start to think about what it is about that topic that interests you or that you find funny. Perhaps there are words or phrases about that topic that you'd like to explore in your poem, or words that sound silly, or words that sound like other words. Perhaps there's a funny story or a joke about the topic that you'd like to tell through a poem instead.

When I'm writing a poem, I often think about phrases associated with the topic and that can help. I wanted to write a poem about bees, and I remembered the phrase "bee's knees" – which means that something or someone is the best. It's such a silly phrase. Well, I started to think about why we picked the bee's knee when there are so many other parts of the bee ... and that's what I wrote about in the poem.

“Bee’s Knees”

You say I’m the bee’s knees.
Oh, please!
How can it possibly be
that the best part of a bee
is the knee?
That makes no sense at all to me
when they fly so fast
and fly so far
to visit two million flowers for one single jar
of their wonderfully yummy, runny honey.
All of which makes it so funny
that it’s the knee that you think of
when you think of me.
Surely I’m as good as a head-to-toe bee!

Idea #6: Start with the last line

Don't worry if you can't think of a first line for the poem. For many of my poems, I don't start off thinking about the first line. Instead, the first thing I do is actually to decide what I want the last line to be, and then I write a poem that leads me up to that line.

I like funny or memorable last lines, especially ones that are a play on words. For example, I wanted to write a short poem about fish and couldn't figure out how to start it. I liked the idea that fish swim together in a school and that kids also go to a school. So, I decided that I wanted to final line to be about kids and fishes in school. The poem I wrote was called "Pods".

"Pods"

Peas and whales both grow up in pods.
It's true, but it seems a strange rule,
when cows and deer both grow up in herds,
and fishes and kids are in school.

Idea #7: Writing a rhyming poem

I find it can help to think of words about the topic that rhyme – if you list those, you can then choose a few of them to go into your poem. For example, I wanted to write a poem about what happens when someone isn't listening. I loved the idea of words going into one ear and straight through someone's head and out the other side. So, I listed a few words about that to see what rhymed – ear rhymes with idea ... and head rhymes with said ... and know rhymes with go ... and before I knew it, I had a poem called "Between My Ears".

"Between My Ears"

Whatever you told me,
it went in one ear
and it shot out the other
so I have no idea
whether it was something important
I really should know,
like where are the keys
or where I should go.
Now this has happened,
the lesson is clear,
that next time you talk
I should block up one ear,
so whatever you're saying
stays in my head,
and I retain every word
that you've ever said!

Idea #8: Writing a non-rhyming poem

A non-rhyming poem can be written in so many different ways. If you listen to the episode of the podcast that accompanies this guide, you can hear two great non-rhyming poems written and read out by kids. You can hear the episode here: <https://www.kidspoetryclub.com/episode-149>.

Idea #9: Keep writing

I hope this guide helps you. Once you've started writing poems, just keep going. Try to keep them all in the same place so you can re-read them, show them to others to see what they think, and capture more ideas for new poems. The more you write, the easier it becomes. Hopefully, I'll see some of your poems entered into the Kids' Poetry Club podcast competitions.

Enjoy writing your poems!

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