

Prosody Definition

The word '*prosody*' comes from ancient Greek, where it was used for a "*song sung with instrumental music*". In later times the word was used for the "*science of versification*" and the "laws of metre", governing the modulation of the human voice in reading poetry aloud. In modern phonetics, the word 'prosody' and its adjectival form 'prosodic' are most often used to refer to those properties of speech that cannot be derived from the segmental sequence of phonemes underlying human utterances. Without any hesitation we may justify prosody as "*the grammar of verse*" (Nesfield).

It is the study of the rhythm, stress, and intonation. **Prosody** has two branches-

Ortheopy (dealing with the quantity and accent of syllables, emphasis, pauses and tones).

Versification (dealing with the laws of metre).

Prosody, therefore, is concerned with the external framework of verse not with its internal thoughts. Like music, poetry is attached with the modulation of speech. It is based on two elements- time and tone. While time is expressed by quantity, tone is presented through accent.

What is Syllable?

The unit of pronunciation is called **syllable**. A syllable is a sound or a combination of sounds which can be pronounced at a time with single force. It may consist of a full word or a part of a word. A syllable depends upon a vowel sound no matter how many vowels are there. The number of syllables in a word is equivalent to that of vowel sounds.

Number of vowel sounds in a word = Number of syllables

Such as, the word 'soul' is a monosyllabic in spite of having double vowels, but only one vowel sound. Apparently the very word 'beautiful' is a tri-syllabic (beau-ti-ful), although there are five vowels.

What is Stress?

Stress is 'a strong or special exertion of the voice on one word, or one part of the word, so as to distinguish from another.' It is a generic name comprising both emphasis and accent, which are in fact, special type of stress.

What is Intonation?

The way in which our voice rises and falls while speaking is called intonation. It is the music of the language.

What is Accent?

Accent is the stress or loudness of voice thrown upon a single syllable in pronouncing a word. It helps the particular syllable to stand out from the other syllable.

Example: for-GIVE, LOVE-ing (Accent are given on the capital part of the words)

What is Emphasis?

Emphasis is the stress or loudness of voice deliberately thrown upon an entire word to distinguish it from another.

Example: *Him* I like, *her* I hate. *Silver and gold* I have none. (The italic words are emphasized)

What is Rhythm?

Rhythm is the flow of sound resulting from the stress variations of the spoken language. The very word 'rhythm' originates from Greek 'ruthmos' which means 'measured motion' or 'flow'. It may be defined as 'a recurrence of similar phenomena at the regular intervals of time'.

A word has fallen rhythm when the stress falls at the beginning of it, e.g. beau – ty. Another way, in the word, in-ter-rúpt, and stress falls at the end to present rising rhythm.

What is Foot?

Each accented syllable makes one metrical division of a line of verse. This metrical division is called a foot. "A Foot consists of one accented syllable and one unaccented syllable". The number of syllable to a foot is generally two: it may, however, be three, but it cannot be less than two or more than three.

I am sharing with you an example: The DAYS / are COLD / the NIGHT/ are LONG Here, each foot consists of two syllables, first one unaccented and the later one accented. Hence we may say that it is di-syllabic foot.

iamb ˘ ˊ an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable (or, in quantitative verse, a short vowel followed by a long vowel). Verse composed of iambs is **iambic**.

"about" is an example of a natural iamb.

trochee ˊ ˘ a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Verse in troches is **trochaic**.

"pattern" is a natural trochee.

anapest ˘ ˘ ˊ two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable. Verse in anapests is **anapestic**.

"understand" is a natural anapest.

dactyl ˊ ˘ ˘ a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. (A trick for remembering this is that "dactyl" comes from the Greek word for finger, and your finger has a long joint followed by two shorter joints.) Verse in dactyls is **dactylic**.

"credible" is a natural dactyl.

spondee ˘ ˘ two stressed syllables. Verse in spondees is **spondaic**.

"no way!" is a natural spondee.

pyrrhic ˘ ˘ two unstressed syllables. Verse in pyrrhics is **pyrrhic**

"mm-hm" is a natural pyrrhic.

What is Metre?

The term 'metre' comes from Greek 'metron' meaning 'measure'. The arrangement of sounds in poetry into patterns of strong and weak beats is known as meter. In other words, Meter is the rhythmic, recurring pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. It can be used in prose and plays, though it is most commonly found in poetry. A piece of writing may contain several different types of meters, but there is usually a dominant pattern that follows throughout.

The metre is actually denominated on the basis of the nature of feet and the number in feet in a verse.

Nature of feet + Number of feet = Metre

In the same line- The DAYS / are COLD / the NIGHT/ are LONG

So we may say that the line is written in iambic tetra (four) metre.

What is Rhyme?

Rime or rhyme means the recurrence of the similar sound at the closing syllable of different lines in poetry. It is actually the correspondence of the same sound at the terminating syllable or syllables.

What is Syllable?

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation. It is a sound or combination of sounds produced at a single impulse of the voice. Its utterance is of course done by the vocal organs with a single push of air pressure from the lungs.

Syllables are divided by the hyphen (-) sign.

Syllable may consist of the following:

- **A vowel alone:** a-round, e-ther, e-ver, i-con
- **A vowel with one consonant:** on, to, do
- **A vowel with more than one consonant:** list, germ, balm
- **A semi-vowel with a combination of vowels and consonants:** yield, wet
- **A combination of consonants with a diphthong:** foul, toil, mean
- **A consonant with a combination of vowels:** too, pie
- **A combination of vowels and consonants:** thought, love,

Types of Syllabification

- 1) **Monosyllabic Words:** first, teach
- 2) **Disyllabic Words:** beau-ty, harm-ful
- 3) **Trisyllabic Words:** re-mem-ber, rhythm-mi-cal
- 4) **Tetrasyllabic Words:** a-rith-me-tic, in-tel-li-gent
- 5) **Pentasyllabic Words:** e-lec-tri-ci-ty, nym-pho-ma-ni-a
- 6) **Hexasyllabic Words:** res-pon-si-bi-li-ty, ex-pe-ri-men-ta-tion
- 7) **Heptasyllabic Words:** en-thu-si-as-ti-cal-ly, un-pre-me-di-tat-ed-ly

Fundamental Rules of Syllabification

1. **Syllabification should be governed not by etymology but by pronunciation:**
Thus we should divide *'pe-ruse'*, not *'per-use'*
2. **To find the number of syllables:**

—count the vowels in the word,

—**subtract any silent vowels**, (like the silent “e” at the end of a word or the second vowel when two vowels are together in a syllable)

—**subtract one vowel from every diphthong**, (diphthongs only count as one vowel sound.)

—**the number of vowel sounds left is the same as the number of syllables.**

The number of syllables that you hear when you pronounce a word is the same as the number of vowel sounds heard.

For example:

The word “**came**” has 2 vowels, but the “e” is silent, leaving one vowel sound and **one syllable**.

The word “**outside**” has 4 vowels, but the “e” is silent and the “ou” is a diphthong which counts as only one sound, so this word has only two vowel sounds and therefore, **two syllables**.

3. **In words ending in double consonants, the consonant should not be separated in syllabifying their derivatives—**
fall, fall-en; miss, miss-ing; pass, pass-ive.

4. **Dissyllabic terminations that are sounded as one syllable should be so divided:**
Such as fam-il-iar, po-ten-tial, re-gion, o-cean etc.

5. **Divide between two middle consonants.**

Split up words that have two middle consonants. For example:

hap/pen, bas/ket, let/ter, sup/per, din/ner, and Den/nis. The only exceptions are the consonant digraphs. Never split up consonant digraphs as they really represent only one sound. The exceptions are “th”, “sh”, “ph”, “th”, “ch”, and “wh”.

6. Usually divide before a single middle consonant.

When there is only one syllable, you usually divide in front of it, as in:

“o/pen”, “i/tem”, “e/vil”, and “re/port”. The only exceptions are those times when the first syllable has an obvious short sound, as in “cab/in”.

7. Divide before the consonant before an “-le” syllable.

When you have a word that has the old-style spelling in which the “-le” sounds like “-el”, divide before the consonant before the “-le”. For example: “a/ble”, “fum/ble”, “rub/ble” “mum/ble” and “this/tle”. The only exception to this are “ckle” words like “tick/le”.

8. Divide off any compound words, prefixes, suffixes and roots which have vowel sounds.

Split off the parts of compound words like “sports-car” and “house-boat”. Divide off prefixes such as “un-happy”, “pre-paid”, or “re-write”. Also divide off suffixes as in the words “farm-er”, “teach-er”, “hope-less” and “care-ful”. In the word “stop-ping”, the suffix is actually “-ping” because this word follows the rule that when you add “-ing” to a word with one syllable, you double the last consonant and add the “-ing”.

Exceptional Case

Some debate still exists in respect of syllabification. *‘On the question of how syllables should be divided’*, says Nesfield, *‘authorities are not agreed.’*

For example ‘even’ is syllabified as either ‘e-ven’ or ‘ev-en’. In the same way ‘anklet’ is divided as either ‘ank-let’ or ‘an-klet’. My suggestion would go surely for an Authentic Dictionary to get rid of this trouble.

Important Points to Remember:

Syllable stress is often determined by the prefixes and suffixes that have been added to the basic form of the word. These are added at the beginning and end of words and they change the meaning of the original word.

Common prefixes are a, un, be, in, pro, ex, ob, & dis. Prefixes are usually not stressed. Instead, the first syllable of the base form of the word is stressed.

For example:

- undo
- restate
- inside

Suffixes are like prefixes, but they are added to the ends of words. They often change the grammar of the word. Common suffixes are s, ed, ing, ish, ly, ee, & ic.

Some suffixes do not change the stress pattern of the word they were added to.

For example:

- -less (effort → effortless)
- -ing (open → opening)
- -er (develop → developer)

Other suffixes actually take the stress, leaving the other syllables receiving either light or no stress.

For example:

- -eer (engine → engineer)
- -ique (tech → technique)
- -aire (question → questionnaire)

Suffixes can also cause the placement of stress to move to the syllable immediately before the suffix.

For example:

- -eous (advantage → advantageous)
- -ion (situate → situation)
- -graphy (photograph → photography)

You don't have to memorize all of these rules; however, it's a good idea to practice these words so that they start to sound natural to you. If you practice them enough, you'll be able to apply these patterns to new words that you learn.

EXAMPLES OF SCANSION

Once upon a midNight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

From what highth fal'n, so much the stronger provd
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage...

Once upon a midNight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.