

Examples of Iambs, Trochees, Spondees, Dactyls, and Anapests

Once we know what stress is, we can note that many words and phrases in English naturally fall into iambs, trochees, spondees, dactyls, or anapests. Such words make it easy to spot the metrical pattern in a poem. Here are some examples:

Iamb or Iambus (iambic): = U /

U /

behold, amuse, arise, awake, return, Noel, depict, destroy, inject, inscribe, insist, employ, "to be," inspire, unwashed, "Of Mice and Men," "the South will rise again."

Trochee (trochaic): = / U

/ U

happy, hammer, Pittsburgh, nugget, double, incest, injure, roses, hippie, bubba, beat it, clever, dental, dinner, shatter, pitcher, Cleveland, chosen, planet, chorus, widow, bladder, cuddle, slacker, doctor, Memphis, "Doctor Wheeler," "Douglas County," market, picket

Spondee (spondaic): = / /

/ /

football, Mayday, D-Day, heartbreak, Key West, shortcake, plop-plop, fizz-fizz, drop-dead, dead man, dumbbell, childhood, goof-off, race-track, bathrobe, black hole, breakdown, love-song

Dactyl (dactylic): = / U U

/ U U

carefully, changeable, merrily, mannequin, tenderly, prominent, buffalo, Bellingham, bitterly, notable, horrible, glycerin, parable, scorpion, Indianapolis, Jefferson, Strawberry (as the word is pronounced in East Tennessee—elsewhere it's two longs and a short)

Anapest (anapestic): = U U /

U U /

understand, interrupt, comprehend, anapest, New Rochelle, contradict, "get a life," Coeur d'Alene, "In the blink of an eye"

Note that some words change their meter depending upon how they are used. For instance, the word *rebel* is pronounced one way when it is a noun, and another way as a verb. The same is true for *detail*. Likewise contrast words with similar pronunciation except for their patterns of stress: *rockets* with *Rockettes*, *glycerin* with *Listerine*, *travel* with *travail*, and so on.