

Internal Rhyme



DEFINITION

What is internal rhyme? Here's a quick and simple definition:

Internal rhyme is rhyme that occurs *in the middle* of lines of poetry, instead of at the ends of lines. A single line of poetry can contain internal rhyme (with multiple words in the same line rhyming), or the rhyming words can occur across multiple lines. An example of internal rhyme would be "I **drove** myself to the lake / and **dove** into the water."

Some additional key details about internal rhyme:

- Internal rhymes are defined by the position of the rhyme within the line of poetry. The placement of rhymes in the middle of lines is what distinguishes internal rhymes from [end rhymes](#), in which rhyming words occur at the ends of lines.
- Internal rhyme is also sometimes referred to as "middle rhyme."
- Internal rhymes can appear in any type of poetry, regardless of whether the poem has a strict [rhyme scheme](#) or meter.

Internal Rhyme Within a Single Line vs. Multiple Lines

Internal rhyme can occur within a single line of poetry, or it can be spread across multiple lines. In the following example, for instance, the internal rhyme could be configured in two different ways. As a single line:

I **drove** myself to the lake and **dove** into the water.

Or as two separate lines:

I **drove** myself to the lake
and **dove** into the water.

Both of these are examples of internal rhyme—the only difference is that a line break has been inserted in the middle of the second example.

Internal Rhyme and Line Breaks

Since internal rhyme is defined by the position the rhymes occupy within the line of verse, whether a line contains internal rhyme depends in large part upon where [line breaks](#) are placed. For instance, the lines

I **drove** myself to the lake
and **dove** into the water

are an example of internal rhyme because the rhyming words are not followed by line breaks. However, the lines can be easily turned into

examples of [end rhyme](#) by changing the placement of the line breaks, so that the lines reads:

Late Sunday afternoon. I **drove**
myself to the lake and **dove**
into the water.

While the placement of line breaks here is somewhat awkward, it illustrates how the difference between internal rhyme and end rhyme is really just a matter of where the line breaks are placed. But that doesn't mean the line breaks are unimportant. Even in poems without a consistent [meter](#), line breaks help to set the rhythm of the poem. Note in these two examples how the line breaks put more emphasis on the final words of each line, making the rhyme itself clearer and more obvious. Poets make decisions about where to place line breaks for all sorts of reasons; how it emphasizes, or doesn't emphasize, any rhymes is one of those reasons.

Internal Rhyme vs. End Rhyme

Internal rhyme is often described as being subtler than end rhyme. This subtlety occurs for two related reasons:

- **The last word of every line of poem is naturally emphasized:** As noted just above in the discussion of internal rhyme and line breaks, end rhymes receive an automatic emphasis simply by virtue of appearing at the end of lines. Internal rhymes are less emphasized, and might not even be explicitly noticed even as they add to the musicality of a line.
- **In poetry with a meter, end rhymes are consistent while internal rhymes are not:** When a poem has a meter, every line contains syllables according to a set pattern. That means that end rhymes appear at consistent places within that pattern. As a result, end rhymes offer a strong rhythmic feeling to the poem. Because internal rhymes can occur anywhere within a line (other than at the end), they often don't appear as part of a consistent pattern. As a result, once again, even as they add musicality and rhythm to a line, they do so in a way that is harder to explicitly notice.

The subtlety of internal rhymes makes them a useful poetic tool for increasing the musicality of the language without being overtly "rhyme-y." Some modern poets don't use end rhymes at all, but will intersperse internal rhyme throughout a poem because it feels more nuanced and less obvious. Other poets use internal rhyme *in addition* to end rhyme—that is, they intersperse internal rhymes throughout a poem with an otherwise consistent use of end rhymes.

Types of Rhymes Used to Make Internal Rhymes

Most people, when they think about what constitutes a rhyme, are actually thinking about just one type of rhyme in particular: perfect

rhyme. Perfect rhymes refer only to words with identical sounds like "game" and "tame," or "table" and "fable." But there are actually many different types of rhymes, and all of them can be used to create internal rhymes.

- **An example of internal pararhyme** would be an internal rhyme in which all the consonants in two or more words are the same, as in "As the **leaves** fall I think of past **loves**."
- **An example of internal semirhyme** would be an internal rhyme in which two words share an identical sound but one of the words has an extra syllable at the end, as in "I spent a long **time** with her, / an avid **climber** of trees."

To find out more about the many different types of rhymes that can be used to create internal rhymes, take a look at the LitCharts entry on rhyme.



EXAMPLES

In the following examples, internal rhymes are highlighted to help you identify them more clearly.

Internal Rhyme in Poetry

Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven"

Poe's famous poem "[The Raven](#)" uses internal rhyme *in addition to* end rhyme. The examples of end rhyme (e.g., *lore, door, more*) are not highlighted.

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 some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
 "Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
 Only this and nothing more."

Notice how internal rhyme occurs *within* the first line, as well as *across* the third, fourth, and fifth lines.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

The song of the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's [Macbeth](#) is a classic and memorable example of internal rhyme.

Double, double toil and trouble;
 Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
 Scale of dragon; tooth of wolf;
 Witches' mummy; maw and gulf...

Socks by Margaret Ross

This is an excerpt from a [free verse](#) poem by Margaret Ross that uses a barely discernible internal rhyme in the final line. The rhyme is not perfect—it's an example of [slant rhyme](#).

Wherever you go, this buffering.
 A dull hour. All that time
 I could have touched you and didn't
 or did absentminded, getting in
 or out of bed or trying to reach
 something behind you.
 I didn't need anything
 I could buy. I bought the socks
 and a slatted spoon I haven't used.

Though it may be hard to hear at first, pay attention to the way in which the words "slatted spoon" and "haven't used" contain all the same vowel sounds in the same order ("aah-ih-oo"), and also how the stress pattern of the syllables in the words is the same (i.e., **slatted spoon, haven't used**). All together, these characteristics make the words an example of internal slant rhyme.

Internal Rhyme in Music

Internal rhyme is common in music, where not all the rhymes are always perfect. The use of internal rhyme in addition to end rhymes makes songs easier to remember so they get stuck in your head.

The Beatles' "Hey Jude"

This famous song often rhymes a word at the end of one line with a word in the middle of the next line. This excerpt contains the first two stanzas of the song.

Hey Jude, don't make it bad
 Take a sad song and make it better
 Remember to let her into your heart
 Then you can start to make it better

Hey Jude, don't be afraid
 You were made to go out and get her
 The minute you let her under your skin
 Then you begin to make it better

A Tribe Called Quest's "Luck of Lucien"

Internal rhyme is especially common in rap. In the following example, not all the rhymes are perfect (for example, "close" and "boast" is technically a forced rhyme) but they're all still internal rhymes. Here's an excerpt:

Brother, brother, brother, Lucien, you're like no other
 Listen very close 'cause I don't like to boast
 Instead, I'll tell the tale of a French who prevailed
 Through the Mr. Crazy Rabbits who were always on his tail

We ain't on **sale**, your rumor starts to **wail**
Get caught with stolen goods and you will go to **jail**
If you go to **jail**, then who will pay the **bail**?
Deport you back to France on a ship with a **sail**



WHY WRITERS USE IT

Poets use internal rhyme for many of the same reasons they use rhyme in general: because it makes language sound more beautiful and thoughtfully-composed, like music. Internal rhymes can also help to increase the sense of rhythm of poetry, thus making it not only more pleasant to listen to but easier to both understand and memorize.

The use of rhyme in general has fallen out of favor with many poets writing today. However, despite this trend the use of internal rhyme maintains some popularity, because it's a more subtle form of rhyme that can increase the aesthetic quality of a poetic composition without making it sound overtly "rhyme-y." Internal rhyme is particularly common in song lyrics, where it is usually used in conjunction with end rhyme to increase the number of rhymes that can be delivered in a single line, which has the effect of making songs easier to remember.



OTHER RESOURCES

- [The Wikipedia Page on Internal Rhyme](#): A somewhat technical explanation, including various helpful examples.
- [The dictionary definition of Internal Rhyme](#): A basic definition.
- [A Short video](#) that defines internal rhymes and gives some examples from literature.

HOW TO CITE

MLA

Bergman, Bennet. "Internal Rhyme." LitCharts. LitCharts LLC, 5 May 2017. Web. 31 Aug 2017.

Chicago Manual

Bergman, Bennet. "Internal Rhyme." LitCharts LLC, May 5, 2017. Retrieved August 31, 2017. <http://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/internal-rhyme>.