

# Basic Rules of Poetry

There are some rules that poets tend to generally follow:

1. Capitalize the first word in each line of poetry, unless free verse.
2. If a line of poetry must continue to the next line, unlike prose, we indent the lines which continue and not the first or initial line. If it is not possible to indent the continued lines, then the poet will not capitalize those lines which should be indented.
3. Lines of poetry are similar to the sentences in prose, so we must use punctuation to help the reader know when one line begins and where it ends.
4. Many collections of poems will use small numbers as line guides to help the reader refer to particular lines.
5. Finally, some poems are known for their specific rules, such as a sonnet or a Haiku. You must follow be careful to follow each specific rule for that particular poem.
6. In free verse, poets may avoid some rules to make a particular point with their piece. The poet, E.E. Cummings was known for his tendency to change the rules with regards to capitalization; however, there was a method to his quirkiness, which made his poetry unique and became his style.