

How To Write A Funny Poem

by Jack Prelutsky

Your teacher just read you some funny poems and there's an ENORMOUS blank piece of paper in front of you and you have to write one yourself... or maybe it's a rainy afternoon and your mom just yelled at you that you're driving her crazy and you must stop running around like a howler monkey. You think that if you write her a funny poem, maybe she'll stop yelling at you and will let you have that last piece of chocolate cake.

**How do you write a funny poem?
Here are three ways to get you started:**

1 Exaggerate.

This is one of the easiest techniques. You can make almost anything funny if you stretch your imagination and embellish your idea with silly and wild descriptions.

I wrote all sorts of exaggerations in my poem "Euphonica Jarre," from **THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK**. Euphonica is the world's worst singer and when she sings, strange things occur—windowpanes shatter, ships go aground, rocks start avalanches, fish wish they could drown, and so on.

Suppose your sister likes to dance, but when she does, it's so funny her dancing looks like she's doing weird stuff—it appears as if she's an octopus doing gymnastics, or she looks like a dog and cat having a fight, or she looks like a house falling down.

Here are a couple of lines about a dancing sister...see what bizarre descriptions you can create:

*My sister is a dancer and she loves to dance all day,
But when she dances it's the strangest thing to watch,
She looks like*

2 Make The Ordinary Special.

One easy way to this is to combine silly ideas with ordinary things you see around you every day. I wrote a poem called “Rat for Lunch,” that’s in **A PIZZA THE SIZE OF THE SUN**. In this poem I play with a funny thought—that eating a rat for lunch is the tastiest thing in the world. I also suggest other, equally gross things to eat, like slugs in salty slime and buttered bat... but rat is the best of all.

Open up your mind and see if you can concoct some funny dishes to eat. Pretend you have a wacky grandma who loves to make very “special” meals”

*My grandma cooked for us today
We had so much to eat
She started with...*

3 Absurd Conclusion.

This technique may be a little bit harder, but if you use your imagination, you’ll come up with some good ideas. In this poem you want an idea to keep escalating until it goes off the deep end. This is what I mean: Something happens, then it happens again, only BIGGER (louder, funnier, etc.), then it happens again and again until only some silly conclusion remains.

I did something like this with my poem “My Mother Made a Meat Loaf,” from the book **SOMETHING BIG HAS BEEN HERE**. In this poem the meat loaf is so hard that nothing in the world can cut it. Knives, hammers, drills, bows and arrows, and even a power saw couldn’t make a dent in it. At the end of the poem you learn that the meat loaf is so tough, it’s now used to build houses.

Maybe one day your baby brother spills a glass of chocolate milk on a rug and the stain won’t come out. That gives you an idea for a poem ...

Your dad first uses a paper towel to wipe it up, but the spot won’t go away. Next your dad uses the mop, but the spot still won’t disappear. Then he rubs it with chicken grease, but no luck. He puts it under a waterfall—but the stubborn stain remains. He dumps sand all over the rug and grinds it in with a steam roller. Finally, the spot is gone, but now the rug is completely destroyed!

Give it a try yourself. I've started a poem for you. Let's see if you can think of things to to to this rug that are crazier and crazier:

*My baby brother dropped a glass of chocolate milk on mama's new white rug.
When my father tried to clean it up nothing seemed to work.
First he used a paper towel, then he scrubbed it with a mop.
Then he...*

My Final Writing Advice:

Your ideas are more important than trying to make a rhyming poem. If possible, your poem should have a sense of rhythm. It should sound like a song and have a repeating beat like a soft drum tap. **BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THE LINES RHYME!!!** That takes LOTS of practice and right now, when you're just beginning to write poetry, it's more important to learn how to play with and arrange your ideas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The New Kid on the Block — Greenwillow Books, 1984

Something Big Has Been Here — Greenwillow Books, 1990

A Pizza the Size of the Sun — Greenwillow Books, 1996

SOME WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT:

www.harperchildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Kids/AuthorsAndIllustrators

www.randomhouse.com/kids/

-- scroll down to "Complete Author List"

-- select Jack Prelutsky

www.teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/jack_home.htm

www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/6200