

Wordly Wise Rap Quick Reference Guide

- Raps, like poems, can be about anything. Serious, silly, whatever you want! As long as it's school appropriate.
- Usually one line of lyrics is one count, and there are 4 counts in a bar. A bar is like a stanza in a play. There are 16 bars in a verse in most rap songs. It doesn't matter how many bars you have in your rap. Whatever you need to make some sick rhymes and fresh lyrics! See the example excerpt below from Young M.C.'s, *Bust a Move*:

...Your best friend Harry has a brother Larry (a)
In five days from now he's gonna marry (a)
He's hopin' you can make it there if you can (b)
Cause in the ceremony you'll be the best man... (b)

- Raps use a variety of rhyme schemes, like the one above. See below some of the schemes you can use.

Rhyming Schemes for Your Wordly Wise Rap

ABAB

ABAB is a classic, often-used rhyme scheme with interlocking rhymes. It's sometimes called *alternate rhyme*.

To write in the ABAB rhyme scheme:

- Rhyme line 1 with line 3
- Rhyme line 2 with line 4

Here's an example of ABAB in action, as written by William Shakespeare:

A O, if I say, you look upon this verse,
B When I, perhaps, compounded am with clay,
A Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
B But let your love even with my life decay...

AABB

This scheme divides a section of four lines into two rhymed couplets, each of which sounds kind of complete in itself.

ABBA

A rhyming pair sandwiched inside of another rhyming pair. This scheme's also known as *enclosed rhyme*.

XAXA

This scheme's a little unpredictable, because it has *two* lines that don't rhyme with anything. This allows the writer (that's you!) a little more creative freedom. The two non-rhymed lines allow you to focus on what you **really mean to say in your lyric**.

To write in the XAXA rhyme scheme:

- Rhyme line 2 with line 4
- Make sure that lines 1 and 3 *don't* rhyme with each other or with any other line

AXAA, or AAXA

One of the lines in each of these schemes is left hanging. This allows the writer a bit of freedom to use those words that are difficult or impossible to rhyme, and freedom to use words selected entirely for their meaning and their connotations instead of just their rhyming properties. Each of these schemes contains a bit of tension; try them out and see.

AXXA

Like **XAXA** above, **AXXA** allows the writer some extra creative freedom. The two middle lines are unpredictable; they don't rhyme with each other or any other line in the stanza.

This one's a personal favorite of mine; I like the way those two middle lines keep the audience in suspense until the last line finally releases the tension.