

# Haiku Checklist

For haiku inspiration, look closely at everything around you in nature, at home, at school, and at work. Write your haiku first, letting yourself be free and creative. Then ask the following questions about your haiku to help you improve them.

1. **How long is your haiku?** It's usually good to write in three lines of about 10 to 17 syllables. In English, haiku don't have to be in the pattern of 5-7-5 syllables—the following questions are much more important.
2. **Does your haiku name or suggest one of the seasons—*spring, summer, fall, or winter*?** In Japanese, a *kigo* or “season word” tells readers when the poem happens, such as saying “tulips” for spring or “snow” for winter. This is one of the most important things to do in haiku.
3. **Does your poem make a “leap,” by having two parts?** In Japanese, a *kireji* or “cutting word” usually cuts the poem into two parts. Giving your poem two fragmentary parts is also one of the most important things to do in haiku.
4. **Is your haiku about common, everyday events in nature or human life?** To help you do this, describe what you experience through your five senses.
5. **Does your poem give readers a feeling?** It can do this by presenting what *caused* your feeling rather than the feeling itself. So others can feel what you felt, don't explain or judge what you describe.
6. **Is your poem in the present tense?** To make your haiku feel like it's happening right now, use the present tense.
7. **Did you write from your own personal experience?** When you write other kinds of poetry, you can make things up, but try not to do that with haiku. Memories are okay, though.
8. **How did you capitalize or punctuate your poem?** Haiku are usually not sentences (they're usually fragments), so they don't need to start with a capital, or end with a period.
9. **Does your haiku avoid a title and rhyme?** Haiku are not like other poems, which may have these things. Haiku don't have titles and rarely rhyme.
10. **What can you do with your haiku?** Can you illustrate them, collect them in a notebook, or display them? You could write haiku in your journal every day, enter them in a contest, publish them, or share them at a poetry reading.

With practice, you won't need to ask yourself these questions about your haiku. Have fun and enjoy noticing life more closely through your five senses!

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