

Rhyme Scheme

Most rhyme schemes in songs depend on end rhyme.

End rhyme is when the last word of the line rhymes with the last word of another line.

Common arrangements of rhymes are couplets and quatrains.

Couplets are when one line rhymes with the next line. Example:

*The air was cold and the lights were bright
I dreamed of a warmer summer night*

Quatrains are when lines rhyme with every other line (usually in groups of four.)

*The air was cold and the lights were bright
I heard the train across the **town**
I dreamed of a warmer night
While I watched the evening sun go **down***

Often, in songs, the first and third line will not rhyme, but the second and fourth line will.

*The air was cold and the lights were bright
I Heard the train across the **town**
It's whistle blew a lonesome call
While I watched the evening sun go **down***

These are not hard and fast rules for establishing a rhyme scheme, but they are common constructions throughout many kinds of lyrical music. There are more complex rhyme schemes.

Some songs have internal rhymes that happen within the line, but then the line is anchored with an end rhyme.

*Behind the **plow** the thinks **about** The early days of his life
The youthful **trance** of a sweet **romance** in the starry southern night*

Some songs have more complex rhythmic elements to the rhyme.

*Let me tell you 'bout America
Hard **scrabble** driving **cattle** riding tall in the **saddle**
America*

Writers may establish any rhyme scheme they like, but every verse should follow the same rhyme scheme as the first. Once established, the audience will expect to hear similar patterns in the following sections. Deviating from the pattern will jar the listener, which can either be off-putting or can draw attention to a change in the story. It can be a tool, or a disruption depending on how it is used.

Types of Rhyme

Perfect Rhyme – refers to words that rhyme exactly. For instance, day-pay, home-gnome, nation-sensation.

Near Rhyme – refers to words that have similar vowel sounds, but might not have exactly the same consonants at the end of the word. For instance: Home-alone; pay-made; said-met.

Near rhyme opens up a lot more options to find a line that represents your ideas. Often words can be molded through dialect or forced pronunciation to bend into a near rhyme. Rappers play with word pronunciation to make surprise rhymes.

Half Rhyme – refers to words that have different vowel sounds and consonant sounds, but still work in a rhyme scheme. Sometimes the rhyme lands on the first syllable of the word and the emphasis can play down the fact that the words don't rhyme exactly. For instance: Sister-Misty; Castor-Masted; Hammer-Llama

There are certainly no hard and fast rules for what rhymes you must use. There are writers who think that perfect rhyme is the only way to write. That finding perfect rhymes shows a mastery of the craft, and with work ideas can always be worked into lines that rhyme perfectly. There are writers who intentionally avoid rhyming words to achieve a more disjointed lyrical style.

In general, these are all tools that can be used to represent characters, atmosphere, setting, aesthetic, etc. A character with a rigid moral code might speak in rhyme as a representation of their personality. A song about a chaotic childhood might benefit from a more scatter-shot rhyme scheme and use of half rhymes. Children's songs, or songs with silly themes often benefit from simple rhymes that make them more "sing-songy".

It is up to the writer to determine what they like or do not like. To determine what suits the song and the narrator's voice and what does not. The important thing is that the writer has control of what they are writing. To avoid rhyming words because it is hard to find a good rhyme doesn't represent the writer's best effort. In other words, a writer should not choose a "non-rhyme scheme" because they cannot figure one out, but because they made the decision not to use one. Ideally they should be able to write the same song using rhyme as well.