

Advice for a successful performance

1. Read the poem many times beforehand, so the children can get to its heart and understand what the poem means to them. Performances should enhance the meaning of the poem for the listener. The accompanying teaching sequences for the collections provide a wealth of helpful advice and strategies for reading, understanding and performing poetry.
2. Decide whether the poem works best performed by an individual, a pair, a small group or a larger group. For example, conversation poems work well in pairs and narrative poems in first person are best performed individually.
3. Not many poems work well as large group choral performance. If performing as a large group, look at where parts can be split into single voices, pairs or smaller groups.
4. Perform the poem many times to find its flow and rhythm. Practice beating, clicking or tapping this out with rhythm sticks if your poem does have a steady pulse, and work out how the words fit into this.
5. Use varied tones - a monotone performance won't appeal to the listener.
6. Think carefully about how to use your voice. Poems don't need to be shouted so make conscious decisions about pitch and dynamics to enhance the meaning.
7. Think about how to pace the poem. Look at where the line breaks are and where lines need to run into one another in spite of a break. Think about where to pause and give the listener time to reflect.
8. When you are happy with how to perform the poem vocally, think about your staging. How will you stand in the performance space?
9. If you're going to use actions or props, make sure these add to the performance and the meaning of the poem. Less is sometimes more.

[Hear more advice on performing poetry from published poets.](#)