

Elegiac Couplets

Elegiac meter is based on dactylic hexameter (see handout 39). Like dactylic hexameter, it consists of dactyls (- ~ ~) and spondees (- -). The same rules apply for determining syllable length, and the same rules apply regarding elision.

- This meter is made up of couplets, i.e. groups of two lines.
- The first line is a normal line of dactylic hexameter:
- The second line consists of two and a half feet of dactylic hexameter followed by another two and a half feet of dactylic hexameter

First Line:

- ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - -
- - | - - | - - | - - | - - | - -

Second Line:

- ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - || - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -
- - | - - | - || - - | - - | -

Try scanning these two poems by Martial (written in elegiac meter):

Nūper erat medicus, nunc est vispillo Diaulus:

quod vispillo facit, fēcerat et medicus. (1.47)

Sit tibi terra levis, mollīque tegāris harēnā

nē tua nōn possint ēruere ossa canēs! (9.29)