

Dactyl

Definition:

- A three-syllable foot consisting of a stressed syllable and two unstressed syllables (/xx).
- Words that naturally have dactyls are: strawberry, carefully, merrily, buffalo, notable, scorpion, and horrible, Canada, and holiday.
- The name comes from the Greek word “finger.” You can remember the pattern by thinking of the three joints of a finger- long, short, short.

Example:

“The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Tennyson

Half a league, **half** a league,
Half a league **on**ward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!
“Charge for the guns!” he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Explanation:

Half (/) a (x) league (x) (**hard**, soft, soft.)
on (/) ward (x) all (x) (**hard**, soft, soft.)

The first two lines in, “Evangeline” by Longfellow

This is the forest **prime**val.
The **murm**uring pines and the hemlocks.

Explanation:

Pri (/) me (x) val (x) (**hard**, soft, soft.)
Murm (/) ur (x) ing (x) (**hard**, soft, soft.)

Helpful Link:

https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_D.html