Generative metrics (Halle & Keyser 1972 et seq.)
Defines meter as an abstract rule system which the poet unconsciously follows in constructing verse. The rule system explicitly defines whether a line is metrical or non-metrical in a given meter.

‘We scan particular lines by establishing a correspondence between the syllables of the line and the abstract entities in the abstract pattern ... Lines are judged metrical if such a correspondence can be established without violating the applicable correspondence rule.’

Traditional model:
Lines are composed of feet, defined as groups of syllables which have a specific sequence of stressed or unstressed syllables.

iamb \((\sim /)\) \(\sim =\) unstressed
trochee \((/ \sim)\) \(\sim =\) stressed
dactyl \((/ \sim \sim)\)
anapest \((\sim \sim /)\)
pyrrhic \((\sim \sim)\)
spondee \((/ /)\)

‘Perfect’ iambic pentameter would have five iambs:

The li/on dy/ing thrus/teth forth / his paw \[Shak. R2\]

Shortcoming:
Not all iambic lines are ‘perfect’. All important English poets vary the feet contained in the lines. Traditional model does not say how much or what kind of variation may occur.

O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing

\[Shelley\]

Ode to / the West / Wind by / Percy / B. Shel/ley
Is a / foolish / poem / which kids / all hate,
Espe/cially / after / reading / Camus

\[pseudo-Shelley\]
**Earliest generative model** (Halle & Keyser 1972):
Principal idea: the phonetics (pronunciation) of the line is separated from the abstract pattern of the meter. A line is metrical provided that the stresses in the line can be associated with positions in a metrical *pattern* or *template* in a way that obeys a *correspondence rule*. The positions in the template are chosen from:

- **S** = Strong Position
- **W** = Weak Position
- **x** = extrametrical position (occurs optionally at line end)

**IAMBIC PATTERN**

(W) S W S W S W S W S (x)

(z) means ‘z is optional’

Every syllable of the line (but see *complications*, below) must be associated with a position in the template.
**Abstract properties of the iambic line**

One might ask why meter should be composed of sequences of these three types (S, W, x).

A simpler approach uses the grid representation for the metrical template.

A **grid** is simply an array of marks — we can use $x$ as a simple mark.

The grid has lines, beginning from the bottom, which are numbered line 0, line 1, line 2 etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line 1</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>line 0</td>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>$x$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On line 0 there is one mark for every ‘position’ required by the meter.

Certain marks on line 0 have a mark above them on line 1. These line 0 marks are said to ‘project’ a mark on line 1.

Marks which project to line 1 are **more prominent** than (‘stronger’) than marks which do not.

S = a projecting line 0 mark; W = non-projecting line 0 mark
CORRESPONDENCE RULES
These vary from poet to poet. This is the principal source of variation in metrical ‘style’. Moreover the precise correspondence rule for any given poet is not always clear. Two correspondence rules of interest are given below.

Both correspondence rules depend on the idea that syllables with certain special properties need to be matched with certain positions in the template. These special syllables are called stress maxima.

Correspondence Rule 1 (CR 1):

a. Define a stress maximum as a stressed syllable between stressless syllables, provided that they are in the same phrase.
b. Syllables which are stress maxima occur only in S position.

CR1 was proposed for Chaucer’s verse by Halle & Keyser.

Problem with CR 1.

CR 1 works most of the time, and has the advantage of being conceptually elegant. However, it fails on certain (rare) lines in Shakespeare such as:

(there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio)

W S W S W S W
than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (Hamlet)

Here dreamt is clearly a stress maximum, and it is in a weak position.

We can retreat from this problem by restricting stress maxima to certain polysyllabic words (words containing more than one syllable). These words have a much more constrained distribution than do monosyllabic words.
Correspondence Rule 2 (CR 2):

a. Define a stress maximum as the stressed syllable of a polysyllabic content word, provided the syllable is not phrase-initial (i.e. at the beginning of a phrase).
b. Syllables which are stress maxima occur only in S position

lion, dying, thrusteth, autumn, enchanter

Complications

Not every syllable in the line as normally pronounced counts ‘for the meter’ (i.e. must be associated with a position in the template). The following exceptions occur.

1. Elision. Where a word ending in a vowel sound precedes a word beginning in a vowel sound.

I sigh / the lack / of ma/ny_a thing / I sought  
[Sh.Son.30]

And all / the_unlook’d / for is/sue of / their bodies  
[HVI p.3]

Under conditions appropriate for elision, one syllable may be ignored for the purposes of meter. For convenience we can mark elisions using an undertie . The fact that a syllable is ignored for the meter doesn’t necessarily entail that it was not (or should not) be pronounced. Moreover, sometimes elisions are indicated with spelling (e.g. to’t for to it), but not always.
2. **Syncope.** Syncope allows the meter to ignore a stressless syllable after a stressed syllable in the same word, in *particular circumstances.*

Most cases of syncope occur when there is a sequence $V_1(C)V_2$ with a word, where $V_1$ is stressed vowel in pronunciation, $V_2$ is an unstressed vowel in pronunciation, and $C$ is one of \{r l m n y w v\} in pronunciation or is absent ($Ø$).

Examples:  
- *heaven*  
  \[ C = /v/ \]  
- *ever*  
- *charitable*  
  \[ C = /r/ \]  
- *injurious*  
  \[ C = Ø \]  

$$ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S$$  
*Have heaven / and earth / together demonstrated*

3. **Phrase Boundary Phenomena.** A *phrase* is a group of adjacent words which act together as a structural unit of some kind (in defining intonation patterns or word order and meaning). For our purposes the boundaries between phrases which are important for meter will *usually* be indicated by punctuation (period, comma, question mark, semicolon, colon, etc.).

**Two special things can happen at phrase-boundaries.**

a. **Phrase-initial Exemptions**  
On both CR 1 and CR 2, phrase boundaries are involved in the definition of stress maxima. For illustration I write | to indicate a phrase boundary.

$$ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S $$  
| Bátter my heart, three-person'd God, | for you.  
  
[Donne]

$$ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S \ W \ S $$  
*Appear in person here in Court. | Silence.*  
  
[Shak. WT]

On both CR1 and CR2, stress maxima are defined in such a way that a syllable following a phrase break can never qualify as a stress maximum.

This in *Bátter* and *Silence*, even though the first syllable is stressed, it may nevertheless appear in a W position.
b. **Optional extra syllable at phrase boundary.**
An extra syllable — ‘extrametrical’, i.e. one which does not have to be matched to the template — may occur adjacent to a phrase-boundary. This means at the end of a phrase or the beginning of a phrase in the middle of a line there may be an extra syllable:

\[
\text{W S W S W S W S W W}
\]

That is the madman. | The lover, all as frantic

[Othello]

My ill suspicion. | This is your son-in-law

[Winter’s Tale]

4. **Content words** (‘lexical words’) vs. **Function words**
Content or lexical words include all words which are not ‘function’ words.

Content words usually include all *nouns, adjectives, adverbs* and *verbs* (except, auxiliary verbs such as *have, be (is, are, was, etc.), will, may, shall, could, can, would, might, should*).

Most poets treat *prepositions, articles, conjunctions* and other ‘little structural words’ as function words. This means that on CR 2 they cannot — even when polysyllabic — contain a stress maximum.

Examples:

befoře, áfter, amóng, betweén

\[
\text{W S W S W S W S W S}
\]

For mány lives stand betwéen me and home

[HenVIp.3]
How can one determine *which syllables are stressed*?

**Polysyllabic words**

a. For polysyllabic words, the stressed syllable is usually self-evident to native speakers. In most cases, a dictionary can be consulted when there is doubt.

b. Another method to employ is the *Vocative Chant*.

*Vocative Chant.*  L  H* M  (low - high - mid pitch).

H* means ‘the high pitch is associated with the accented syllable’

* * *  
Oh Sara ...  Oh Veronica ...

* * *  
Oh Danielle ...  Oh Daniel ... Oh Alastair ...

c. *Reduction.* Syllables which are completely stressless in English are frequently pronounced with a *schwa* \(\text{[ə]}\), a ‘reduced’ vowel which sounds like ‘uh’ or near that.

This sound is always stressless. The ‘rr’ sound \(\text{[ɜ]}\) (an ‘r-colored schwa’) can be unstressed, but can also be stressed:

- Abracadabra \(\text{[æbrəkədəbəra]}\)
- Philadelphia \(\text{[fɪlədɛlfɪə]}\)
- Butterfinger \(\text{[bʌtəfɪŋər]}\)

**Monosyllabic words**

The question of which monosyllabic words are stressed and which are not is a complex one which we will take up later. However, it can generally be observed that:

Function words such as *the, a, in, for, but, and* etc. are also usually treated as stressless for the purposes of meter.