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NerdPoetry

Poetry after language. Presence as form.

NerdPoetry is a post-digital constraint practice for the 2030s. When text becomes infinite and presence becomes optional, the work relocates poetry into the body: breath, weight, duration, repetition, and location. One body, in one place, reaching safe fatigue. The 52-week protocol is documented here as one practitioner's experiment (2026), but the practice itself is open: anyone can begin, adapt, or share their own versions.

Why NerdPoetry Matters

In a world flooded with infinite language and AI-generated text, NerdPoetry explores the last non-replicable poetic resource: human presence. By shifting constraint from words to body, time, and space—testing whether the formal mechanism that makes a sonnet work can generate comparable structures in physical action—it extends historical experimental poetry into a post-digital, embodied practice. Safe, replicable, and globally legible, it demonstrates that poetry can still surprise, provoke, and matter—even when everything else can be everywhere.

Explore

- **[Manifesto]** — principles, boundaries, and the logic of the practice
- **[Protocol]** — the 52-week structure, exercises, and safety rules
- **[Why Here, Why Now]** — relevance, contemporary contribution, and cultural context

Start Practicing

Begin with the first exercise.

End when the body signals stop.

No harm. No endurance heroics. One location, one body, one moment.

NerdPoetry builds on global and Italian traditions of experimental, performative, and constraint-based poetry—from Oulipo to contemporary embodied practices—while extending them into a post-digital, body-focused, presence-driven exploration.

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Manifesto

1. Ground Condition

Digital language is free, infinite, and diluted. Space is not. You cannot occupy two locations at once. Presence is the last non-fungible resource.

2. Principle

In an age without limits, poetry becomes the art of reduction. When anything can be said, say less. When language proliferates, return to breath. When presence is optional, make it required.

A sonnet constrains language artificially—14 lines, fixed rhyme—making words behave unnaturally, which reveals meanings ordinary speech cannot. This practice applies the same logic to the body: breath patterns, held weight, repetition to fatigue. The hypothesis: if constraint functions as a formal mechanism rather than being intrinsic to language, then bodily constraints should generate comparable structural discoveries.

3. Method

- **Spatial Constraint:** One body in one location. Co-location when possible.
- **Fatigue, Not Injury:** End when muscles tire, voice rasps, or attention drifts. Pain ends the practice.
- **Safe Boundaries:** No injury risk, deprivation, breath restriction, or harmful environments.
- **Iterative Reduction:** Remove words until nothing remains but gesture, breath, presence.
- **Execution Over Text:** A score only exists when enacted. Silence is the natural endpoint.

4. Taxonomy

- **BREATH** – respiratory effort, vocal endurance
- **WEIGHT** – gravitational resistance, muscular fatigue
- **REPETITION** – iterative action until dissolution
- **DURATION** – time-based attention
- **SPATIAL** – co-location, place-specific practice
- **SOLO / COLLABORATIVE** – one body or multiple bodies sharing space

5. What This Is

A safe, provisional, open-source poetics of embodied constraint. A reduction of language toward presence. A practice defined by what can be safely done in one location, with one body, for one duration.

6. What This Isn't

Not mysticism. Not extreme endurance. Not anti-technology. Not harm, deprivation, or pain. Discomfort instructs; pain warns; injury ends the work.

Protocol

52-WEEK EXERCISE LIST

Each exercise should be performed 3-5 times during its assigned week (e.g., daily or every other day) and documented via written logs and fatigue records. Multiple instances per exercise allow pattern detection rather than single-event documentation. The archive will be publicly accessible as the practice unfolds.

Weeks 1–13: Foundations (Single Constraints)

1. **One Breath Phrase** — Speak one phrase repeatedly until voice tires.
2. **Quiet Counting** — Whisper numbers until the whisper dissolves.
3. **One Exhale Gesture** — Repeat a simple gesture on each out-breath.
4. **Hands at Horizon** — Hold arms parallel to ground until muscular fatigue.
5. **Object at Heart Level** — Hold a light object chest-high until tiring.
6. **Still Standing** — Stand in one spot until attention drifts.
7. **Timed Sitting** — Sit still for a set duration, ending at mental fatigue.
8. **Slow Lift** — Lift a light object slowly, repeatedly, without strain.
9. **Soft Repetition** — Repeat a single word until it loses meaning.
10. **One-Minute Breath Cycles** — Maintain a steady breathing rhythm until focus breaks.
11. **Palm Weight Shift** — Transfer weight between hands until shoulders tire.

12. Return to Neutral — Alternate between one gesture and rest until form dissolves.

13. Minimal Description — Describe the room until language naturally thins.

Weeks 14–26: Combinations (Dual Constraints)

14. Breath + Weight — Lift a light object on each exhale until fatigue.

15. Breath + Duration — Speak on every out-breath for a set duration.

16. Weight + Duration — Hold an object for timed intervals.

17. Repetition + Breath — Repeat a phrase only on inhales or exhales.

18. Repetition + Weight — Gesture repetitively until muscles tire.

19. Spatial + Duration — Stand in a chosen location for a fixed time.

20. Spatial + Breath — Pace a short path synchronized with breath.

21. Spatial + Repetition — Repeat one gesture while fixed in place.

22. Collaborative Breathing — Sit with another person, syncing rhythms loosely.

23. Collaborative Weight — Pass a light object back and forth.

24. Collaborative Duration — Share silence until one person naturally shifts.

25. Collaborative Repetition — Echo each other's words or gestures.

26. Spatial Triangle — Three points in room walked in slow rotation (solo or duo).

Weeks 27–39: Variations (Revisions of Earlier Exercises)

27. Silent Version — Perform Week 1 without voice.

- 28. Weighted Version** — Add small weight to any Week 2 or 3 exercise safely.
- 29. Duration Extension** — Add time to any earlier practice without strain.
- 30. Soft Reduction** — Remove half the language from an earlier exercise.
- 31. Gesture Replacement** — Substitute gestures in any repetition practice.
- 32. Solo-for-Collaborative** — Translate a duo practice into self-mirroring.
- 33. Collaborative-for-Solo** — Add a partner to any solo gesture or repetition.
- 34. Minimal Protocol** — Reduce instructions to one sentence.
- 35. Environmental Variation** — Repeat an exercise in a new safe location.
- 36. Mirror Compression** — Perform an earlier practice facing a mirror or reflection.
- 37. Temporal Shift** — Repeat at a different time of day to test attention.
- 38. Reduced Duration** — Explore how brief an action can be and still “count.”
- 39. Reduced Weight** — Gradually decrease load until only gesture remains.

Weeks 40–52: Boundaries (Safe Edges)

- 40. Longest Comfortable Stand** — Stand still until discomfort begins.
- 41. Longest Soft Repetition** — Repeat a phrase gently for maximum safe duration.
- 42. Longest Light Hold** — Hold a very light object for as long as comfortable.
- 43. Most Minimal Instruction** — One-word score (e.g., “Hold.” or “Listen.”).
- 44. Ultra-Slow Gesture** — Slow a movement until it nearly stops.

- 45. Micro-Breath Score** — A breath-based action lasting under 10 seconds.
- 46. Boundary of Attention** — Maintain focus on one object until attention slips.
- 47. Boundary of Stillness** — Stay motionless until the first involuntary shift.
- 48. Near-Silence** — Vocalize at the edge of audibility until voice tires.
- 49. Softest Weight** — Use the lightest possible object (paper, thread).
- 50. Shared Moment** — Stand with another person in silence until one naturally ends.
- 51. Spatial Limit** — Move only within a one-meter square for a duration.
- 52. Final Reduction** — Choose any earlier exercise and remove everything nonessential.

What Makes This Poetry: Theory of Embodied Constraint

Poetry uses formal constraints—meter, rhyme schemes, fixed forms—to make language behave unnaturally, which reveals things ordinary speech cannot. A sonnet’s 14-line structure forces compression that generates meaning beyond what the same words would produce in prose. NerdPoetry applies this same logic to physical action. The hypothesis: if constraint operates as a formal mechanism rather than being intrinsic to language itself, then applying comparable constraints to embodied action should generate emergent structures similar to how linguistic constraints generate poetic effects. The constraints are: breath patterns, held weight, repetition cycles, fixed duration, spatial limits, and the boundary where safe fatigue begins. These rules make the body move unnaturally, which should—if the practice works—reveal aspects of embodiment that ordinary movement conceals.

For this to function as poetry rather than just exercise-with-rules, the constraints must do at least one of these things:

1. Generate unexpected structure – The rules create formal relationships you didn't design. Example: if you discover that holding an object for Fibonacci-sequence durations (1 min, 1 min, 2 min, 3 min, 5 min) produces a rhythm in your fatigue pattern, that's emergent structure. If it's just "my arms got tired," that's data.
2. Reframe perception – The constraint forces you to notice something about your body that's normally invisible. Breath becomes architectural. Fatigue reveals asymmetry. The point where you must stop becomes meaningful rather than arbitrary.
3. Work across different bodies – An 18-year-old and an 81-year-old will fatigue at different times doing the same exercise. But if the constraint is working poetically, both should encounter similar perceptual shifts at proportionally equivalent moments in their own practice. Like how a haiku's structure works for any practitioner regardless of skill level.

Physiological Patterns as Emergent Structure – If the practice works, some patterns may align with physiological constants you didn't design for: bilateral asymmetry ratios (one arm fatiguing 10-15% faster than the other), work-to-rest ratios settling near 1:2 or 1:3, spontaneous synchronization between collaborators occurring within 2-3 minutes, or attention spans clustering around 10-20 minute thresholds. These aren't mystical—they're biomechanical and neurological realities. What makes them poetically relevant is discovering them through constraint rather than measuring them clinically. If your fatigue logs reveal that held weight decays along predictable curves you didn't program, or that collaborative breathing locks into phase within consistent timeframes, that's evidence the constraints are revealing compositional structure inherent to embodied action. The numbers themselves don't matter—what matters is whether

they emerge reliably, unexpectedly, and legibly across different practitioners.

The Core Question: Structure or Just Deviation? – This practice rests on a specific wager: that arbitrary constraints forcing unnatural bodily behavior will reveal compositional structure, not just produce documented discomfort.

Two possible outcomes:

1. Formal discovery: Patterns emerge that are unexpected, repeatable, and relational—revealing connections between breath, weight, attention, and time that unmarked movement conceals. Example: discovering that your right arm consistently drops 3 seconds before your left when holding arms horizontal, and this ratio remains constant whether you last 30 seconds or 90 seconds—revealing bodily asymmetry invisible in normal movement.

2. Meaningless deviation: The constraints just make you tired in different ways. The logs show variation without pattern, discomfort without structural insight—just “I followed the rule and documented what happened.”

The 52-week protocol exists to determine which outcome actually occurs. The theoretical framework predicts outcome #1. Physical reality may deliver outcome #2. This uncertainty is not a weakness—it’s what makes this research rather than performance.

The Semantic Gap: When Does Structure Become Poetry?

Discovering that your right arm fatigues 12% before your left is physiological data. Discovering that a sonnet’s volta shifts meaning in line 9 is poetic structure. The difference: poetry generates interpretive relationships, not just formal ones.

This practice’s unresolved challenge: even if embodied constraints reliably produce emergent patterns—bilateral asymmetries, synchronization windows, predictable fatigue curves—what makes those patterns mean something beyond their physiological fact?

Three possible outcomes after 52 weeks:

1. Pure physiology: The logs show patterns, but they're just biomechanical realities documented through constraint.

Interesting data, not poetry.

2. Relational emergence: The constraints generate structures that create interpretive relationships—how two bodies negotiate shared duration differently, how fatigue ratios reveal something about attention, how the contrast between exercises produces formal resonance. This would be poetry.

3. Phenomenological insight: The practice shifts how you experience embodiment in ways that matter subjectively but resist formal analysis. This might be valuable art practice without being poetry specifically.

The 52-week protocol can't predetermine which outcome occurs. The documentation may reveal that embodied constraint functions differently from linguistic constraint—that bodies don't generate semantic layers the way language does. That would be a negative result, but a legitimate one. The experiment tests whether poetry can extend into embodied practice, not whether this particular implementation succeeds. The framework is designed to allow failure.

The Unresolved Wager

This practice rests on an open question: Can bodies generate interpretive structure, or only physiological pattern?

A sonnet's volta doesn't just compress language—it creates semantic tension where multiple meanings coexist. The form enables ambiguity, resonance, relationships that demand interpretation.

Discovering bilateral asymmetry is data. Discovering that this asymmetry creates a formally coherent rhythm across different constraints—one that reveals something compositional about embodiment—would be structure. But does that structure mean anything beyond its physiological fact?

The 52-week protocol can't predetermine the answer. It may demonstrate that constraint applied to bodies reveals

compositional architecture comparable to linguistic form. It may prove that bodies simply follow predictable patterns—circadian cycles, muscular fatigue curves, autonomic synchronization—without generating the interpretive layers that make language poetic.

Either outcome is legitimate. The practice proceeds without certainty.

Documentation Protocol: Minimal Sufficient Record – To test whether patterns emerge, you need consistent records without drowning in documentation. Three lines per exercise: Exercise: Week [N] – [Name] ... Data: [Duration] / [Heart rate or effort level] / [Why you stopped] ... Insight: [One sentence: what did you notice?]

Example:

- Exercise: Week 4 – Hands at Horizon
- Data: 47 seconds / medium effort / shoulders burning
- Insight: Right arm dropped 3 seconds before left—I didn't know I was asymmetric.

Repetition for Pattern Detection – Each exercise should be performed multiple times within its assigned week to distinguish reliable patterns from daily variation. Minimum: 3-5 instances per exercise. This generates 9-15 data points per exercise instead of 3, making it possible to identify stable ratios (right arm always fatigues 12-14% before left), daily variation ranges (hold time varies 40-55 seconds), and trend lines (capacity increases across the week). Log format remains the same, just dated:

- Week 4, Day 1 – Hands at Horizon: 47 sec / medium / shoulders burning / right dropped first
- Week 4, Day 3 – Hands at Horizon: 52 sec / medium / shoulders burning / right dropped first
- Week 4, Day 5 – Hands at Horizon: 49 sec / medium / shoulders burning / same asymmetry

- Without repetition, you're documenting anecdotes. With repetition, you're generating data that can reveal structure.

Every 3-4 weeks, review your logs for patterns:

- Which sensations or thresholds repeat across different exercises?
- Where does your capacity increase, plateau, or drop?
- Do certain words recur in your one-sentence insights?
- How does the system fail? Failure points often carry formal information.

If the practice is working, patterns should be: (1) unexpected —not predictable from the rules alone, (2) proportional—discoverable across different body types, (3) formally coherent —structured, not random. Three lines per instance, 3-5 instances per week, 52 weeks = approximately 468-780 lines total (or ~9-15 data points per exercise). Enough to find patterns. Light enough to sustain. The archive exists to make invisible structures visible, not to prove you did the work.

How this differs from existing practices:

- Unlike Fluxus/instruction scores (Cage, Ono): Those embrace open-ended indeterminacy. This uses repeatable constraint structures with explicit safety limits.
- Unlike endurance art (Abramović, Hsieh): This rejects harm and heroics, using fatigue only as a perceptual threshold.
- Unlike Oulipo: Those constraints act on language. This applies comparable rigor to embodied action in a post-digital context where language is no longer scarce.
- Unlike somatic practices: Those focus on awareness or healing. This frames bodily constraints as formal poetic units designed to generate compositional insight.

Why Here, Why Now

NerdPoetry exists because the conditions of the 2030s demand a different kind of poetic practice.

Language is infinite. Presence is not. When machines generate text faster than humans can read, the site of meaning shifts from words to bodies, from expression to location, from message to moment.

What this practice offers is simple: a return to the last scarce resources—attention, co-presence, and the safe limits of one body in one place.

1. Post-Digital Poetics

When language becomes cheap, poetry must find another economy.

NerdPoetry relocates poetic meaning from text to embodied constraint—breath, weight, duration, repetition, and spatial exclusivity.

Here, the poem is not written. It is enacted.

Not consumed. Performed.

2. Scarcity Through Presence

Digital space is infinite; physical co-location is finite.

You cannot be in two places at once.

This simple fact becomes the medium.

NerdPoetry uses the non-replicable event of “being here, not elsewhere” as its basic poetic unit.

3. Safe Embodied Constraint

Performance and endurance art have long tested physical limits.

This practice refuses harm and rejects heroics.

Discomfort instructs. Pain warns. Injury ends the work.

The 52-week protocol demonstrates that meaningful artistic tension can arise from safe fatigue, minimal instruction, and attention held just long enough to waver.

4. A Universal Poetic Language

These practices require:

- no shared mother tongue
- no literary training
- no specialized equipment

A breath, a gesture, a held weight—these are globally legible. The work becomes accessible without becoming simplistic.

5. A Research Contribution

The year-long experiment produces:

- documented fatigue points
- constraint variations
- replicable scores
- an archive of embodied responses

This positions NerdPoetry within contemporary arts research as a test of whether constraint-based practices can function as a new mode of poetic form.

This 52-week protocol produces a documented dataset regardless of outcome. Whether it validates the hypothesis or refutes it, the archive contributes empirical material for understanding embodied constraint practices.

6. A Practice for the Present Moment

In an age when everything can be simulated, this practice offers what cannot be copied:

one body, in one location, reaching its safe limit, now.

That is the value.

That is the scarcity.

That is the work.

LINEAGES & REFERENCES

This practice builds on: constraint poetics (Oulipo), instructional scores (Cage, Ono, Fluxus), durational performance (Abramović, Hsieh), and post-digital theory (Cramer, Berry).