



Help Keep This Place Clean

As I've mentioned before, I'm a fan of Found Poetry. Years ago at some generic rest area along some generic stretch of Interstate, I noticed a sign on the generic rest area building that read: *HELP KEEP THIS PLACE CLEAN.*

This struck me as oddly poetic. I've even referred to it in a few other Whither Zithers. I liked the suitably generic feel of "this place," and the unspecific nature of the message. Also, it's a positive tending suggestion, instead of the usual "Do not..." warnings.

I like the friendly use of the word "help"; after all, it could have read: *Keep this place clean.* "Help" implies that we're all in this project together. How do we keep this place clean? Do we need sweep? Shall we dust?

But being a so-called lyricist, interested in meter, what I liked most of all was the use of the five single syllable words. Imagine the committee meetings and the memos that flew in order to arrive at this elegant commandment.

And imagine the suggestions that were not used, even staying within the five-syllable category: *Do not trash this place. Heave not crud on floor. Trash and go to jail. Tidy up or die.* I have seen this phrase as the six-word *Please help keep this place clean*, which is a nice addition of one more word with an "L" in it for continuing a nice consonant theme, but I like best the five word version.

Since having this line stuck in my brain like gum on a bubbler, I've been unusually attracted to five syllable -- and even better, five one-syllable word -- rules, cautions, an instructions of one kind or another. It's not much of a hobby, collecting these, but it's a hobby.

Some day, if my collection grows big enough, and if there are enough rhymes, I'm going to write it into a song. I know, I know, you can't wait. As a holder-offer, here are some tidbits from the list. First, some rhyming five-one-syllable-word rhymed couplets:

No right turn on red.
Low pipes, watch your head.

Serve with fork or spoon.
Check out time is noon.

Do not top off tank.
Pull red knob then crank.

Swim at your own risk.
Do not bend the disc.

Do not use near flame.
Please use your real name.

Do not look at light.
Take with food at night.

Please bus your own tray.
Made in U.S.A.

Love seat comes with couch.
Cut small slit in pouch.

Cut cord length to suit.
Keep hands out of chute.

Take one dose for cough.
Dock first then turn off.

Please use door in back.
Slide flat end in jack.

Check with lost and found.
Put gas can on ground.

Pop tarts may be hot.
Start with tab in slot.

Clip both straps on hood.
Not for use on wood.

Fill in your Zip Code.
All cars will be towed.

Store top down in fridge.
Watch for ice on bridge.

Earn free nights and more.
Hang blue sign on door.

Do not let bag burst.
Plug in wall plug first.

Line up slot with lug.
Turn off then pull plug.

Use in bed with care.
Not for use in hair.

Place brown cone on cup.
To end call hang up.

Do not spray in eyes.
All subs come with fries.

Do not touch hot wire.
Do not use near fire.

Seek and ye shall find.
Flip red switch to grind.

Here are a few more foundlings, unrhymed as yet. These have five syllables, but fewer than five words:

Do not overload.
Do not double stack.
Not dishwasher safe.
Packing slip enclosed.

Caution heavy load.
Brittle do not bend.
Caution contents hot.
Warning: knives are sharp.

Not for weight control.
Fragile: do not drop.
Misuse may cause death.
Closed on Christmas Day.

Always take with food.
May cause dizziness.
Warning pesticides.
Watch for falling rocks.

Thou shalt not covet.
For sale by owner.
Card free with purchase.
No backpacks allowed.

So that's a partial look at my spell-binding collection. Submissions are welcome. Even better if you can find two that rhyme. You too can be part of my next unfinished unrecorded masterpiece! Till next time,

Do not let bulb freeze.
Serve with fish or cheese.
Show this pass to clerk.
Write when you find work.