



## Ms. Particular Presents: Discreet vs. Discrete

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These brief “lessons” are designed to address common mistakes in English usage and to administer instruction in small doses.

**“Discreet” means circumspect,  
judicious, showing wise self-restraint**

**“Discrete” means separate,  
unconnected, distinct**

**While discretion (the act of being discreet) is a  
virtue in science, if you’ve written “discreet”  
it’s probably wrong**

**Mnemonic: remember that the t separates  
the two e’s in the “discrete” that means  
“separate and distinct”**

The following examples from *Physical Review Letters* all use “discreet” incorrectly; substitute “discrete” for every instance:

“The appearance of such pronounced, discreet quantum electronic states at room temperature is...” PRL **106**, 137602 (2011).

“In the DCF senario a single discreet state (dark mode) is coupled to two sets of...” PRL **106**, 107403 (2011).

“...rather than just an excitation of discreet atomic levels.” PRL **105m** 201801 (2010).

“...quantization, and quantum jumps between discreet energy eigenstates.” PRL **103**, 011402 (2009).

“...2DES density of states, create discreet Landau levels, and bring in delocalized states...” PRL **102**, 216801 (2009).