



Ms. Particular Presents: Hyphenating “Well” Words

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“Well” is another one of those four-letter words that get science writers into trouble with Ms P.

Hyphenating *well* words is tricky

***well* is an adverb that answers the question “how?” or “to what degree”**

adverbs can modify adjectives, verbs or other adverbs; they cannot modify nouns directly

sometimes *well* is connected to another word to form a phrasal adjective that modifies a noun; in that case, the compound *well* word is hyphenated, e.g., “the *well-written* paper”

Don't hyphenate adverbs attached to verbs

when the *well* is used as an adverb to modify a verb (to what degree is the verb acting?), don't hyphenate it, e.g., "the paper was *well* written"

while we're on the subject, never use hyphens to attach *-ly* adverbs to the words they modify, regardless of what part of speech the modified word is, e.g., "*highly* charged particles" and "the particles were *highly* charged" are both correct