

PICK YOUR “-LILY” ADVERBS WITH CARE

JOHN J. HENRICK
Seattle, Washington

When John Henry Newman wrote “Lead, Kindly Light” at sea on June 16 1833, he didn’t mispunctuate, intending “Lead Kindly, Light”. How can one say this with confidence 170 years later? Very simply, because we know that Newman would never had been guilty of such a syntactical faux pas. Instead, he would have had to write “Lead Kindlily, Light”, sacrificing sound to sense.

In their *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, the brothers Fowler had an interesting article about adverbs such as this, which they dubbed “-lily adverbs”.

A great many adverbs are formed from other words by simply appending “-ly”. However, when an adjective ending in “-ly” is to be used in an adverbial sense, the rules of word formation require that the “y” be suppressed and an “-ily” be appended: thus, *kindly* to *kindlily*.

How often does this happen? Not frequently enough to draw a great deal of attention today, it seems, and yet there are abundant opportunities for it to occur. On the Internet, at “Adjectives ending in -ly”, one finds many, including those on the following preferred list:

bodily burly chilly comely costly courtly dastardly deadly deathly disorderly early frilly friendly
ghastly goodly gravelly grisly heavenly hilly holy homely jolly kindly knurly leisurely likely
lively lonely lovely lowly mannerly mealy measly melancholy oily only orderly otherworldly
pearly pebbly pimply scaly shapely sickly silly slatternly slovenly sly spindly sprightly squiggly
stately steely surly treacly ugly ungainly unlikely wily woolly worldly

To these are added derivatives from human nouns

authorly beastly brotherly cowardly fatherly gentlemanly granddaughterly housekeeperly
husbandly kingly landlordly manly marksmanly matronly miserly motherly neighborly queenly
saintly scholarly wifely womanly, etc.

as well as simple derivatives from time or direction words

daily easterly hourly monthly nightly northeasterly northerly northwesterly quarterly rarely
southerly timely weekly westerly wobbly yearly, etc.

and simple derivatives from verbs

bristly bubbly crinkly crumbly crumpley cuddly curly frizzly giggly rumply smelly sparkly
wiggly wrinkly

My favorite “-lily adverb” stems [no pun intended] from the adjective *easterly*, as in “easterly wind”. Convert it to an adverb and what do you get? *Easterlily*, of course!