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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 Kindly, 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
- disorderly
- early
- frilly
- friendly
- ghastly
- goodly
- gravelly
- grizzly
- heavenly
- hilly
- holy
- homely
- jolly
- kindly
- knurly
- leisurely
- likely
- lively
- lonely
- lovely
- lowly
- mannerly
- meally
- 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
- crumply
- cuddly
- curlly
- frizzly
- giggly
- rumply
- smelly
- sparkly
- wriggly
- 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? Easterly, of course!