Good vs. Well and How You Should You Use Them

Rule of Thumb: **good** is an adjective and **well** is an adverb.

* **Good** modifies a noun (a person, place, or thing); something can be or seem **good**.
* **Well** modifies a verb and it tells how something was done; an action can be done **well**.
* Exception: when you're talking about health, **well** can be used as an adjective.

If you’re having a ***good day***, then your day is ***going well***.

(adjective) (noun) (verb)(adverb)

Incorrect: Did you do **good** on your exams?

Correct: Did you do **well** on your exams?

Incorrect: I can’t believe it! I did **good** on the test.

Correct: I can’t believe it! I did **well** on the test.

In the two examples above, there is a clear action verb: *to do*. **Do** should be modified with **well, not good.**

Incorrect: This is **well** lasagna!

Correct: This is **good** lasagna!

Lasagna is a noun—a thing—that should be modified with **good**. Non-action verbs, like *to be, to look, to seem*, and *to feel* can also take **good**, the adjectival form.

Life is **good**.

**An Exception to the Well/Good Rule: Health and Wellbeing**

When we refer to a person’s health or wellbeing, *well* is customarily used as an adjective.

Incorrect: She asked about David’s illness, and I told her he is **good** now.

Correct: She asked about David’s illness, and I told her he is **well** now.

**Examples:**

I do not feel **well** today.

You do not look **well**.

*A picture containing diagram

Description automatically generated* **More Examples of Good vs. Well:**

* *You did a* **good** *job.* (*Good describes job, which is a noun, so good is an adjective.)*
* *You did the job* **well***.* (*Well is an adverb describing how the job was performed.)*
* *I feel* **well***.* (*Well is an adjective describing I.)*

**Rule:** With the four senses*—look, smell, taste, feel*—figure out if these words are being used actively to decide whether to follow them with *good* or *well*. (*Hear* is always used actively.)

**Examples:**

*You smell* **good** *today.*

*Good describes you, not how you sniff with your nose.*

*You smell* **well** *for someone with a cold.*

You are sniffing actively with your nose here so use the adverb.

*She looks* **good** *for a 75-year-old grandmother.*

She is not looking actively with eyes so use the adjective.

**Rule:** When describing someone’s emotional state, use *good*.

**Example:** *He doesn’t feel* **good** *about having cheated.*

So, how should you answer the question, “How are you?” If you think someone is asking about your physical well-being, answer, “I feel *well,*” or “I don’t feel *well.*” If someone is asking about your emotional state, answer, “I feel *good,*” or “I don’t feel *good.*”

**References**

*Good vs. Well*. (2007, April 6). Grammarbook.Com. <http://data.grammarbook.com/blog/adjectives-adverbs/good-v-well/>.

Grammarly. (2017, April 4). *Good vs. Well–how should I use them?* Grammarly.Com. https://www.grammarly.com/blog/good-well/