

Word for Word

Today's update on “under way” vs “underway” is
now under way! Read on!



We've all seen journal articles in which clinical trials are described as being *under way*. Or is it *underway*? Both spellings are commonly used, but which is correct?

Under way is an adverb that refers to something that is in motion or in progress. (It's derived from the Dutch *onterweg*, “on the way”).¹

Examples:

After weeks of planning, the students' cross-country road trip is finally *under way*.

Various trials are *under way* to determine the effectiveness of neoadjuvant treatment in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma.

Underway has historically been considered an adjective, although it is rarely used in this way.¹

Example:

Underway refueling was commonly used by the US Navy during World War II.

The use of *underway* as an adverb has become more common, and both it and *under way* are now considered acceptable as adverbs in writing. It is important, however, to use one spelling consistently.

References

1. Underway", Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/underway>. Accessed March 28, 2022.

--Ann Sutton

Image Credit: [© Can Stock Photo / Pichunter](#)