Actually, well and in fact

The words actually, well and in fact have very similar meanings. However, there are slight differences in use.

Actually / in fact

Both actually and in fact can be used correct mistakes or misunderstandings.

‘Hi, Mary. What a pleasant surprise!’ ‘Actually my name is Alice.’
Actually is often used with well.

‘You are a doctor, right?’ ‘Well, actually, I’m a teacher.’
She might come across as unfriendly, but in fact she is very kind and nice.
‘Actually’ and ‘in fact’ can be used to make things clearer or more precise, or to introduce unexpected information.

I have got a new job. Actually, they have just appointed me as their area sales manager.
The lecture was so boring that I actually fell asleep before the speaker had finished.
The expression as a matter of fact can be used instead of actually.

The lecture was so boring that as a matter of fact I fell asleep before the speaker had finished.
Actually is sometimes used to introduce unwelcome news. When actually goes at the end of the clause it can suggest that the listener’s expectations were wrong.

‘I don’t think you have sent the money, have you?’ ‘I have, actually.’
‘You didn’t enjoy the holiday, did you?’ ‘Very much, actually.’
Well

Well is essentially a disclose marker. It is mainly used to suggest that we are going to say something. Sometimes people use it when they want more time to think.

‘How much are you selling it for?’ ‘Well, let me see...’