

## Readability levels of text – how to find them...

1) Readability is an attempt to match the reading level of written material to the "reading with understanding" level of the reader. To locate the readability level of any document in MS Word, click on tools and then on spelling and grammar check. The Flesch Kincaid level will be supplied after the spell check has been completed (unless you have this option turned off in which case click on tools, click on options, click on spelling and grammar and then tick the box that says show readability statistics).

Add 5 to the F-K grade and you have an approx UK readability level. Remember that this is a simplistic method but provides a starting place when evaluating text.

2) When examining the readability of text books for example, sometimes it may be easier to use a formula such as the Simplified Measure Of Gobbledygook (SMOG).

### Calculating the SMOG level of a text:

1. Select a page of a book
2. Count 10 sentences
3. Count the number of words which have three or more syllables
4. Multiply this by 3
5. Circle the number closest to your answer

1	4	9	16	25	36	49	64	81	100	121	144	169
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6. Find the square root of the number you circled

1	4	9	16	25	36	49	64	81	100	121	144	169
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

7. Add 8 = Readability level
8. Information on a range of readability devices can be obtained from:  
<http://www.timetabler.com/download.html>

3) For reading book the easiest and quickest way is to look them up in the Nasen A-Z of Reading Resources by Baker and Peterson, £20.00. Tel: 01264 343 071

4) Also there is downloadable on-line readability software located at:  
[http://www.educational-psychologist.co.uk/fry\\_readability\\_program.htm](http://www.educational-psychologist.co.uk/fry_readability_program.htm)  
This provides an electronic method for calculating readability.

## Reading ease

Reading ease relates to consideration of:

**Vocabulary:** The issue regarding vocabulary centres around familiarity. The important factor here therefore is the structured introduction and planned use of subject specific vocabulary to develop verbal competence before it is included in written text.

**Sentence structure:** This is associated with ensuring that sentences are not unnecessarily long and complex. The aim may be to consider the needs of the reader and respond to that. Some may only be able to use sentences that convey one fact, whilst other may be able to understand two or more.

**Length:** This refers to the length of the piece of text. Readers may lack the ability to hold facts in their short term memory and so producing a summary or a reduced version of the original text can

greatly support recall and comprehension.

**Elaboration:** Elaboration means making information more meaningful and less abstract. It draws on visualisation skills to improve understanding and recall.

**Coherence and unity:** Coherence refers to the way in which the information is supplied - is it in a logical order? Does it build on knowledge given in a sequence? Unity refers to the clarity of the text provided. Is it explicit and narrow, or does it include peripheral material that is distracting?

**Audience appropriateness:** This refers to how relevant the text is to the reader. Can they relate to it and be interested in it? Are there increased ways of presenting the text that will encourage engagement? Are these associated with how the subject is introduced, the legibility of the font and the background paper and illustrations?

## Conclusion

The Flesch Reading Ease Readability Scale, included in Microsoft Word, rates text on a 100 point scale. The higher the score, the easier the text is to understand:

0-29	Very difficult
30-49	Difficult
50-59	Fairly Difficult
60-69	Standard
70-79	Fairly Easy
80-89	Easy
90-100	Very easy

## Further information

'Assessing text difficulty and accessibility', Graves and Graves. Downloadable from:  
[http://www.sewardinc.com/olrr/sre/SRECha\\_9.pdf](http://www.sewardinc.com/olrr/sre/SRECha_9.pdf)

## Texts of known readability levels

Included on the next page are five pieces of text that are at known readability levels. Asking pupils to read these can provide a guide to their readability level. All the pieces have 100 words. If the pupil makes more than 5 errors when they are reading a piece, their comprehension level is likely to be insufficient for text of this level.

The texts are:

- **The boy who cried wolf:** F.K level 2.2 approx readability level 7 years
- **Some snake facts:** F.K level 4.3 approx readability level 9 years
- **A Roman soldier:** F.K level 6.4 approx readability level 11 years
- **Seapup:** F.K level 8.1 approx readability level 13 years
- **The beginnings of the world:** F.K level 11.2 approx readability level 14+

## **The boy who cried wolf**

There was a boy who did not like to get out of his bed and go to school. His Mum and Dad made him go. The boy said that a mad wolf was going to kill the sheep. All the people ran up the hill to kill the wolf. When they got there they saw it was a trick and were very cross. The next day the boy did see a wolf but no one came to help when he told them. The sheep ran away over the hill and the boy had to run all day to find them.

## **Some snake facts**

Many people hate snakes. They can't stand the sight of their wriggling bodies or their flicking tongues. The thought of being crushed to death or poisoned with a bite fills them with dread. Then there are those who love them and find them interesting and beautiful. For them a cat or dog is out and they prefer to keep a snake instead. Perhaps we have become a little over wary of these crawling reptiles. They are certainly not the slimy creatures they're made out to be. Indeed having one at home could have a point or two in its favour.

## **A Roman soldier**

Lem was a soldier for the city of Rome. He wore armour made of polished leather with a bronze shield and a helmet. The Roman soldiers were known throughout the world as excellent fighters. The soldiers' training was difficult, but they all learned to fight bravely and were not afraid of any army anywhere. All the young men in Rome had to join the army for at least two years and Lem was now looking forward to going home. Home was a village on the east coast of Italy, twenty miles from the sea where his father was the mayor.

## **Seapup**

Seapup was born on a misty morning into a rock-encrusted pool beyond Faraway Point. His Mother laughed with delight at her screaming child and his Father sent up an enormous salty splash to the swooping seagulls. Painted clown fish took turns to rock the howling child until the dawn wind extinguished the stars one by one. The white horses thundered in from the depths of the ocean, from near and far, to see the angry arrival. "What a fine baby," they neighed before they reared and pranced away; with their manes flying and their hooves thundering in the crashing surf.

## **The beginnings of the world**

A hundred and fifty years ago, people studying how rocks were formed and how animals and plants looked long ago, came up with different ideas about how the world began. Some men began to think that all the questions of the world could be explained by using science. This idea was supported by those explorers who brought back strange creatures from foreign countries to exhibit in zoos. Links between different animals were discovered and the most famous scientist of his age, Charles Darwin, caused a huge scandal by writing a book that suggested that human beings and apes were related.