FRY Readability Formula: An Overview

What is the Fry Readability Formula?

- The Fry Readability Formula assigns an approximate grade reading level to a passage of text. Applying the formula will help you decide how to edit your document so that it is more readable.
- The formula depends on the vocabulary and sentence structure of the text, not the organization or content.
- The grade reading level is found by plotting the average number of sentences and syllables on the Fry Readability Graph (see graph below).
- The graph measures reading levels from 1st grade to college years.

> **What grade reading level will make my document effective for most adults?**
>
> The 6th grade reading level is appropriate for most health care related materials.[1]
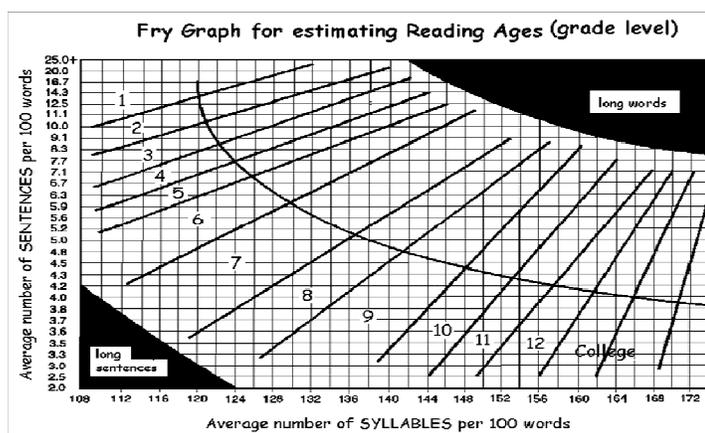>
> 75 out of 100 American adults will be able to read at the 6th grade reading level without difficulty.[2]

Why should I use the Fry Readability Formula?

- Knowing the grade reading level of your document will help you consider if it is understandable to a wide population.
- The formula reveals the types of words and sentences that are more difficult for readers to understand.
- The formula is easy to use and takes 15 to 20 minutes to obtain results.

How do I use the Fry Readability Formula?

- Directions for use:

  1. Randomly select three 100-word segments of your text.
  2. Count the number of syllables in each 100-word segment and calculate the average.
  3. Count the number of sentences in each 100-word segment and calculate the average.
  4. Plot the average number of sentences and the average number of syllables on the graph.
  5. The area in which the average number of sentences and syllables cross is the grade reading level of the text.

Fry Graph for estimating Reading Ages (grade level)

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- What the reading level score means:

→ 4th-6th grade – Readable by most adults
→ 7th-8th grade – Readable by half or more adults
→ High school and above – readable by few adults

Where can I find more information?

- Visit www.readabilityformulas.com to learn more about the Fry Readability Formula and other readability tests.

- For information about computer software to accurately calculate readability, visit www.micropowerandlight.com.

1 "Assessing Suitability of Written Materials." Columbia University School of Nursing.
http://www.nursing.columbia.edu/informatics/HealthLitRes/assessWrittenMat.html
2 Ibid.