

Appendix B

The SMOG Readability Formula

To calculate the SMOG reading grade level, begin with the entire written work that is being assessed, and follow these four steps:

1. Count off 10 consecutive sentences near the beginning, in the middle, and near the end of the text.
2. From this sample of 30 sentences, circle all of the words containing three or more syllables (polysyllabic), including repetitions of the same word, and total the number of words circled.
3. Estimate the square root of the total number of polysyllabic words counted. This is done by finding the nearest perfect square, and taking its square root.
4. Finally, add a constant of three to the square root. This number gives the SMOG grade, or the reading grade level that a person must have reached if he or she is to fully understand the text being assessed.

A few additional guidelines will help to clarify these directions:

- A sentence is defined as a string of words punctuated with a period (.), an exclamation point (!) or a question mark (?).
- Hyphenated words are considered as one word.
- Numbers which are written out should also be considered, and if in numeric form in the text, they should be pronounced to determine if they are polysyllabic.
- Proper nouns, if polysyllabic, should be counted, too.
- Abbreviations should be read as unabbreviated to determine if they are polysyllabic.

Not all pamphlets, fact sheets, or other printed materials contain 30 sentences. To test a text that has fewer than 30 sentences:

1. Count all of the polysyllabic words in the text.
2. Count the number of sentences.
3. Find the average number of polysyllabic words per sentence as follows:
$$\text{average} = \frac{\text{Total \# of polysyllabic words}}{\text{Total \# of sentences}}$$
4. Multiply that average by the number of sentences *short of 30*.
5. Add that figure on to the total number of polysyllabic words.
6. Find the square root and add the constant of 3.

Perhaps the quickest way to administer the SMOG grading test is by using the SMOG conversion table. Simply count the number of polysyllabic words in your chain of 30 sentences and look up the approximate grade level on the chart.

An example of how to use the SMOG Readability Formula and the SMOG Conversion Table is provided on the following page.

Example Using the MOG Readability Formula:

In Controlling Cancer— You Make A Difference.

2. The key is ACTION. You can help protect yourself against cancer. Act promptly to:

4. Prevent some cancers through simple changes in lifestyle.

6. Find out about early detection tests in your home.

6. Gain peace of mind through regular medical checkups.

Cancers You Should Know About

7. Lung Cancer is the number one cancer among men, both in the number of new cases each year (79,000) and deaths (70,500). Rapidly increasing rates are due mainly to cigarette smoking. By not smoking, you can largely prevent lung cancer. The risk is reduced by smoking less, and by using lower tar and nicotine brands. But quitting altogether is by far the most effective safeguard. The American Cancer Society offers Quit Smoking Clinics and self-help materials.

Colorectal Cancer is second in cancer deaths (25,100) and third in new cases (49,000). When it is found early, chances of cure are good. A regular general physical usually includes a digital examination of the rectum and a guaiac slide test of a stool specimen to check for invisible blood. Now there are also Do-It-Yourself Guaiac Slides for home use. Ask your doctor about them. After you reach the age of 40, your regular check-up may include a "Procto," in which the rectum and part of the colon are inspected through a hollow, lighted tube.

11. Prostate Cancer is second in the number of new cases each year (57,000) and third in deaths (20,600). It occurs mainly in men over 60. A regular rectal exam of the prostate by your doctor is the best protection.

A Check-Up Pays Off

15. Be sure to have a regular, general physical including an oral exam. It is your best guarantee of good health.

How Cancer Works

16. If we know something about how cancer works, we can act more effectively to protect ourselves against the disease. Here are the basics:

17. 1. Cancer spreads; time counts. Cancer is uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells. It begins small and if unchecked, spreads. If detected in an early, local stage, the chances for cure are best.

18. 2. Risk increases with age. This is not a reason to worry, but a signal to have more regular thorough physical check-ups. Your doctor or clinic can advise you on what tests to get and how often they should be performed.

3. What you can do—Don't smoke and you will sharply reduce your chances of getting lung cancer. Avoid too much sun, a major cause of skin cancer. Learn cancer's Seven Warning Signals, listed on the back of this leaflet, and see your doctor promptly if they persist. Pain usually is a late symptom of cancer; don't wait for it.

Unproven Remedies

Beware of unproven cancer remedies. They may sound appealing, but they are usually worthless. Relying on them can delay good treatment until it is too late. Check with your doctor or the American Cancer Society.

More Information

19. For more information of any kind about cancer—free of cost—contact your local Unit of the American Cancer Society.

Know Cancer's Seven Warning Signals

- 23 1. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
- 24 2. A sore that does not heal.
- 25 3. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
- 26 4. Thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere.
- 27 5. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
- 28 6. Obvious change in wart or mole.
- 29 7. Nagging cough or hoarseness.

30. If you have a warning signal, see your doctor.

* This pamphlet is from the American Cancer Society.

We have calculated the reading grade level for this example. Compare your results to ours, then check both with the SMOG conversion table:

Readability Test Calculations	
Total Number of Polysyllabic Words	= 38
Nearest Perfect Square	= 36
Square Root	= 6
Constant	= 3
SMOG Reading Grade Level	= 9

SMOG Conversion Table*	
Total Polysyllabic Word Counts	Approximate Grade Level (+ 1.5 Grades)
0-2	4
3-6	5
7-12	6
13-20	7
21-30	8
31-42	9
43-56	10
57-72	11
73-90	12
91-110	13
111-132	14
133-156	15
157-182	16
183-210	17
211-240	18

* Developed by: Harold C. McGraw, Office of Educational Research, Baltimore County Schools, Towson, Maryland.

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ing Print Materials er to Read

Clear Writing

riting will generally test at a higher read-
some other subjects because health-
ds characteristically have more syllables.
riter cannot avoid using technical language
cts which these words have on readability
mized by writing short, concise sentences
ning difficult words or terms for the

ng the material
les and subtitles to clearly define the
ization and flow of ideas.

ld face, italics, or underlining to emphasize
tant words and ideas.

the material with an introduction to state
urpose and to orient the reader.

summary paragraph to end a section and to
major points.

appropriate visuals (charts, photos,
ics) next to the related ideas in the text.

paragraph
ie idea per paragraph to emphasize each
tant concept.

ach paragraph with a strong topic
ce.

he length of sentences.

amples to clarify ideas with which the
may not have had experience.

3. Within a sentence

- Keep sentences short (approximately 9 to 10 sentences per 100 words).
- Vary the length of sentences.
- Avoid complex sentence structure and long, fact-laden sentences.
- Use the active rather than the passive voice.

4. Choice of words

- Avoid polysyllabic words when possible.
- Avoid specialized vocabulary and complicated expressions. When specialized vocabulary is essential, a parenthetical definition or a glossary should be included as part of the text.
- Avoid abbreviations except when commonly understood.
- Use shorter words.

Guides for Good Graphics*

Good graphics can help readers to overcome resistance to a text or even help them to understand the material more easily.

1. Use highlighting techniques, but don't overuse them

- Highlighting techniques are a way of emphasizing important aspects of your document by calling attention to them visually.
- Some highlighting techniques include boldface, italics, and white space.**
- Use highlighting techniques to provide visual relief, emphasize important points, set off examples, or set off sections of text.
- Do not overuse highlighting techniques, and try to be consistent throughout the text.

2. Use 8- to 10-point type for text

- For most documents, 8- to 10-point type is the most readable size. If type is too small—readers may skip over material or develop eyestrain. If type is too large—it may take up too much space.

8 point type:

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890

10 point type:

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890

3. Avoid making lines of type too long or too short

- The best line length is thought to be 50-70 characters. This length is less tiring to the eye. Short lines tend to make the eye jump back and forth; long lines may strain the eye as it tries to stay on course.

4. Use white space in margins and between sections

- If you use white space well you can make the document look better and easier to read.
- A text with too little white space can look cramped.
- White space surrounding a title or example can isolate and emphasize its importance.

5. Use "ragged" right margins***

- "Ragged" right margins are less formal than "justified" text and create a more relaxed contemporary look.

Ragged:

Excellence in typography is the result of nothing more than an attitude. Its appeal comes from the understanding used in its planning.

Justified:

Excellence in typography is the result of nothing more than an attitude. Its appeal comes from the understanding used in its planning; the designer

- "Ragged" right margins reduce production (easier to make corrections on unjustified type).
- Some readers find "ragged" right margins make a text easier to read because:

—it is easier for readers to keep their place in the text because the right profile distinguishes one line from another; and

—the eye does not have to adjust to different spacing between letters, as it does with justified type.

6. Avoid using all capital letters

- All capitals interfere with the legibility of the text.
- All capitals make a text harder to read because the shapes of the letters do not vary very much.
- All capitals take up more space and take longer to read.

* Reprinted with permission from Simply Stated 30, October 1982. The monthly newsletter for the Document Design Center, American Institutes for Research, 1055 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007. 202/342-5000.

** "white space"—Any of the blank space on a document such as the margins and the spaces between sections, or the space that sets off an example.

*** "ragged" (unjustified) right margin—When lines of a text end at different points on the right hand margin (whereas "justified" text will have an even right margin).