

Determining readability of your web page

A key component of writing for the web is having the appropriate reading level. People on the web like to scan content, and will click away if they don't quickly find what they want.

The average American reading level is 8th grade **or LESS**, so you should aim for that level.

Two online services that will calculate readability:

- http://www.wordcount.info/wc/jsp/clear/analyze_readability.jsp
- <http://www.addedbytes.com/code/readability-score/>

These both use several different readability measures:

- **SMOG**, or Simple Measure of Gobbledygook, is a formula that tells you the years of education needed to completely understand a piece of writing. So, you would want a SMOG score around 8.
- **Flesch Reading Ease**: You want a score *above* 65 for optimal reading ease
- **Flesch-Kinkaid Grade**: This estimates the grade level that a student would need to understand a piece of writing. You want 8th grade or less.

You may find that your writing scores fine on one of these indexes, and not so well on another one. This is normal, since they calculate readability slightly differently.

The SMOG measure is a good indicator that you may be using jargon.

If you want to see some examples of how different paragraph arrangements can change reading speed and comprehension:

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>