

Reading Problems

- Slow rate or difficulty modifying rate based on material
- Uneven comprehension and retention of material
- Difficulty identifying important points or themes
- Incomplete mastery of phonics, confusion of similar words and difficulty integrating new vocabulary
- Frequent skipping of lines of printed material
- Difficulty reading for long periods of time

These problems generally can be divided into two categories:

Visual/motor skills

Comprehension

Text Readability

There are approximately eight widely-used formulas to assess text readability. These include the Flesch Grade Level Formula, the SMOG formula and the Fry Graph. These tools look at vocabulary level, word syllables, sentence length, and text length.

It is also notable that readability level does not necessarily correspond to course level. (For example, we tested a 300-level Psych book that was no less readable than a 100-level text.)

Example Assessment:

SOC 204 (excerpt from “Disengaging from Movements”)

Movement commitment does not last by itself. It must be maintained via interactions with the movements and any measure that makes that interaction gratifying helps maintain commitment. Downton and Wehr discuss mechanisms of social bonding which movements apply to maintain commitments. Leadership, ideology, organizations, rituals and social relations which make up a friendship network each contribute to a sustaining commitment and the most effective is, of course, a combination of all five. These authors refer to the common devotion that results from shared leadership; to group pressure as the primary means of maintain a social movements’ ideology; to taking on a role within the organization itself as a way of increasing people’s investment in the organization; to rituals as patterns of behavior that are repeated over time to strengthen core beliefs of the movements; and to circles of friends that strengthen and maintain individual commitment by putting an individual’s beliefs and behavior under greater scrutiny and social control.

Flesch Reading Ease: 20
FOG 21.8
Fry Graph: (off the chart)

Flesch Grade Level: 18.3
SMOG 17.9
Difficult words (FOG) 36

Illustration of Trouble Spots (in bold)

Movement commitment does not last by itself. It must be maintained via **interactions** with the movements and any measure that makes that **interaction gratifying** helps maintain **commitment**. Downton and Wehr discuss **mechanisms** of social bonding which movements apply to maintain **commitments**. Leadership, **ideology**, organizations, rituals and social **relations** which make up a friendship network each contribute to a **sustaining commitment** and the most effective is, of course, a combination of all five. These authors refer to the common devotion that results from shared leadership; to group pressure as the **primary** means of maintain a social **movements’ ideology**; to taking on a role within the organization itself as a way of increasing people’s investment in the organization; to rituals as patterns of behavior that are repeated over time to strengthen core beliefs of the **movements**; and to circles of friends that strengthen and **maintain** individual **commitment** by putting an individual’s beliefs and behavior under greater **scrutiny** and social control.

Syntax and Rate

Syntax

Beyond formal readability criteria, the text below contains many syntactic arrangements that students are unaccustomed to, due to lack of reading experience. Thus, even if the students understand the particular words, the arrangement or connection may be confusing.

Here is an example, using an English 121 text (excerpted from *Ethics in the 21st Century*). Difficult syntax is bolded.

Honesty and ethical behavior are not just **goods relevant to** Sunday morning and the hereafter; they are **critical to** our economic well-being. We have **often heard it said that** the vast majority of people in business are decent folk who try to act fairly and honestly. This is **as true** of lawyers and accountants **as it is of** businesspeople. Yet, what does it mean to act fairly and honestly? This should be an easy question to answer. Don't lie, cheat, or steal, but for instance, what does it mean to lie? This **seemingly simple** question has become **all but impossible** for many of those in business and the professions to answer, **just as it has** for leading public servants. This **is the heart of** our ethical dilemma.

Rate

Student rate has an enormous effect on comprehension and the ability to complete assignments in the time allotted.

The average DE student reads at around 180 words per minute. This is much like the rate one reads aloud. You, for instance, probably read at around 700-800 WPM. Therefore, you must imagine some of your students taking almost five times as long as you do to read a given section.

An example:

Based on an English instructor's typical assignments from the above text, a common homework reading would take at least 90 minutes but more probably two hours to complete. Couple that with low comprehension and the result is troubling.

Representative Vocabulary: upper Reading 115

abrasive

inadvertent

atrophy

liability

circumvent

magnanimous

clandestine

nebulous

demeanor

oblivious

deride

perfunctory

depreciate

prolific

embellish

recourse

esoteric

resilient

espouse

scoff

fabricate

standardize

facilitate

tenacious

grievous

transgress

hierarchy

unprecedented

imminent

validate