Everyone benefits from clear information.

Many patients are at risk of misunderstanding, but it is hard to identify them.

Testing general reading levels does not ensure patient understanding in the clinical setting.

Adapted from: Reducing the Risk by Designing a Safer, Shame-Free Health Care Environment. AMA, 2007
ASSESSING PRINTED MATERIALS: SMOG

SMOG – Simple Measure of Gobbledygook assesses reading grade level, estimates the years of education a person needs to understand a piece of writing, score based on sentence length and vocabulary, predicts comprehension.

Activity: Using the SMOG resource, apply the SMOG to a section of information prepared by your organisation.

FLESCH-KINCAID READING LEVEL

- An index that gives the years of education required to comprehend a document.
- The Flesch Grade Level readability formula takes into consideration the total number of words, the number of syllables, and the total number of sentences in a piece of writing.

- **Flesch Reading Ease:** Indicates on a scale of 0 to 100 the difficulty of comprehending a document. It is calculated using sentence length and the number of syllables in a word.

**ONLINE READABILITY TESTS**

**Document Readability Calculator**
- http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp

**Text Readability Scores**
- http://www.addedbytes.com/lab/readability-score/

- The Readability Test Tool
- http://www.read-able.com/

**MOVING BEYOND READABILITY**

**SAM – Suitability Assessment of Materials**
Systematically measures the suitability of health information materials using 6 factors affecting readability. Print material is ranked against 21 criteria using a 3 point likert scale.

The 6 factors are:
- Content
- Literacy demand
- Graphics
- Layout and typography
- Learning stimulation and motivation
- Cultural appropriateness

Using Resource – SAM – score a paragraph from one of your resources.
PRISM READING TOOLKIT

The PRISM recommendations for editing are four-fold:

- Replacing jargon and other complex terms with familiar vocabulary
- Creating single-topic paragraphs and concise sentences
- Using reader-friendly formatting
- Checking the reading level—achieving a target of 8th grade or below in most cases.


PRISM CONT’D

PRISM also provide a checklist called a Quick Reference Guide for Improving Readability. This checklist identifies 10 items to check materials against:

- Reading level
- Use of:
  - Common everyday words
  - Active voice
  - First person
  - Short and to the point sentences
  - Paragraphs with one main idea
  - Clear and descriptive headings
  - Context, style and amount of information
  - Clear organisation and format
  - Adequate white space and margins
ACTIVITY

- In small groups, review the Resource:

  Helen Osborne, Readability

- Report back on what you learnt from her advice

SUMMARY

- Crucial that health communication is easy to understand
- Plain language does not mean ‘dumbing down’
- Most people prefer easy to read and understand information
- Remember your communication purpose