


GIPPSLAND HEALTH LITERACY
SHORT COURSE
GIPPSLAND PRIMARY CARE
PARTNERSHIPS
**Module 3: Tools for
Readability**

Universal Communication Principles

- **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.
- <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/test-your-document-s-readability-HP010148506.aspx>



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/>
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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 READABILITY 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.
- Ridpath JR, Greene SM, Wiese CJ; PRISM Readability Toolkit. 3rd ed. Seattle: Group Health Research Institute; 2007.



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

