

# How to Determine Readability of Education Materials

For WIC audiences, we recommend that you design or select materials for **5<sup>th</sup> grade** reading level or below.

There are many readability formulas that estimate the grade level at which materials are written. The **Fry Readability Formula** is one formula that is easy to use. To use it, follow these steps and fill out the chart below.

1. Select **three 100-word passages** from the educational material. If the material is very short, you may have only one 100-word passage.
  - Skip headings or titles.
  - Start with the first word of a sentence.
  - Count out exactly 100 words.
  - Count hyphenated words, number words (such as “12” and “2005”), and acronyms or abbreviations (such as “FGD” and “WIC”) as one word.
  - Count bulleted lists only when they are complete sentences.
2. Count the **number of sentences and fraction of sentences** in each 100-word passage. If the 100<sup>th</sup> word does not end the sentence, estimate how much of the sentence you counted to the nearest tenth, for example, 0.5 if you counted half the sentence.
3. Count the **number of syllables** in each 100-word passage.
  - Count one syllable for each letter of an abbreviation. For example, count “CWA” as three syllables. **Exception: Count “WIC” as one syllable.**
  - Count one syllable for each digit within a number. For example, count “2001” as four syllables.
4. **Average** the number of sentences for the three 100-word passages.
5. **Average** the number of syllables for the three 100-word passages.
6. On the **Fry graph** (link at [www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/clear/20.htm](http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/clear/20.htm)) find the average number of sentences (side of graph) and the average number of syllables (top of graph). **Mark the spot where the two lines intersect.** This is the approximate grade level of the passage.

Passage	Number of Sentences	Number of Syllables
1		
2		
3		
Total		
Average		

← Plot these on the graph

Readability formulas, whether computerized or manual, do not replace clear writing. Many other factors affect readability. These include size and style of font, amount of white space, length of lines, length of paragraphs, organization of content, and layout.