History

Flesch Reading Ease Tests is considered to be one of the most trusted and accurate readability tests. Rudolph Flesch, an author, writing consultant, and a supporter of the Plain English Movement, developed this test in 1948. Raised in Austria, Rudolph Flesch studied law and earned a Ph.D. in English from Columbia University. The Flesch Reading Ease Test is a simple approach to assess the readability level of written content. It’s also one of the few accurate measures available that we can rely on without too much scrutiny. It has since become a standard readability test used by many US Government Agencies, including the US Department of Defense. However, primarily, we use the test to assess the difficulty of a reading passage written in English.
Scores

Using Flesch Reading Ease Tests will help you avoid readability issues. The following table is helpful to test the readability of a document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Readability</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Very Easy</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Fairly Easy</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>8th &amp; 9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Fairly Difficult</td>
<td>10th to 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-29</td>
<td>Very Confusing</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atebion’s Readability Color Scale

Very Easy  Very Confusing

Sentence Length

Sentences should not contain unnecessary words, as with paragraphs should not have superfluous sentences. This does not mean the writer should only write short sentences, but avoid details which do not add value. However, it is wise to maintain shorter sentences for clarity, enabling the reader to better understand the content.

There is a debate on how long a sentence should be, in relations to quantity of words. Depending on your source, the recommended sentence length varies from 12-17, 25-30 and some say not over 60. It really comes down to who your readers are. What level of education do they have? How busy are they? Are they familiar with your topic? These are factors which should be weighed when determining your sentence length.

A sentence should only convey a single idea. This improves the reader comprehending the content.

However, too many short sentences in series may reduce the conception flow and seem strange to the reader.

Because we realize required sentence lengths should be adjusted for different factors, we allow you to define what a long sentence should be and the highlight color. The default is set for greater than 50 words, but we typically use 20.
Testing Draft Proposals

As a Proposal Writer, the ease with which a contractor can read your proposal is paramount. A document which is difficult to read may contain long or incomplete sentences, or words with excessive syllables. The reader may not gain an understanding of your proposal if they have difficulty understanding the text. Requirements may have been missed or misunderstood, leading to an unacceptable proposal.

If we were to draw a conclusion from the Flesch Reading Ease Tests, then the best text should contain short sentences and words. A score between 60 and 70 is largely considered acceptable.

Document Analyzer – Quality Check

The Flesch Reading Ease Testing is now integrated in Atebion’s Document Analyzer, and can be used to assess your Draft Proposals and other documents.

Tip: Before analyzing your document, we suggest you select the Keyword Groups “Words2AvoidInProposals” and “PassiveWords” to help reduce the instance of poor readability. All of our Keyword Groups are completely customizable, and new Keyword Groups may be added as well.
**Quality Check – Quick Start**

Select or Create a Project
- A Project is like a folder to hold your documents and associated results

Select a Document
- Select a Document you want to analyze for readability, such as a Draft Proposal.

Analyze Document
- Suggest selecting Keyword Groups: PassiveWords and Words2AvoidInProposal
- Run Analysis – Click on the Run button at the bottom of the window

Analysis Results – Quality Check
- Configure Long Sentence the Length (e.g., exceeds 20, 35 or 50 words for a sentence). – Click on the Gear button in the Quality Check area.
- Run Quality Check – Click on the Run button in the Quality Check area.
- Review Readability Results (e.g., Flesch Reading Ease scores and long sentences) and write comments for segments which needs to be rewritten in the Notes area.
- Generate Quality Check Report – Click on the “Generate Report” button
- Email the Report to co-workers – Click on the “Report [Qty]” button, then select the report in list and click the Email button
Focus on the segments with low Flesch Reading Ease scores by selecting a “Harder than ...” in the Show drop-down control. This will filter out easier segments. See screen image below.

After running the quality Check, you will see the ratings as shown above. Next click the “Generate Report” button. See image below for an example report; note that long sentences are shown highlighted in Blue.
Above, example of a Quality Check report.
Another feature in our Document Analyzer that will assist you and your team is the Notes. After analyzing your document and running the Quality Check, you can add Notes to difficult readability segments. These notes can be used to create writing assignments and otherwise communicate information within your team. Your Segment Notes will be included in the Quality Check report and then simply share the report with your co-workers, as shown in the image below.
Atebion’s Document Analyzer is easy to use and inexpensive. Most users realize a Return on Investment (ROI) the first time they use it. Integrating Quality Check with the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Testing adds significant value. It will highlight ambiguous content in your documents, and ultimately lead you to write better proposals.

Visit www.AtebionLLC.com, and download a free trial of our Document Analyzer.