



**FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES & ALLIED INDUSTRIES**

## READAB

## ILITY

Among many essential characteristics of farm literature, readability is one of the most important characteristics as the readability is antecedent to many of them. SAUs and extension agencies heavily rely upon the farm publications for dissemination of knowledge of modern agricultural technology in spite of rich network of electronic media like radio and television. The reason that it has been realized that electronic media cannot replace the print media for their many advantages of which two important advantages are:

- 1) The print media can be adjusted to the pace of comprehension of the reader and
- 2) They can be preserved and repeatedly referred whenever required.

Therefore, the farm literature has its own place and is produced by SAUs and used by farmers on large scale. However, the farm literature to be effective must have certain qualities and one important of them is the **readability**.

When you produce farm publications as agricultural scientists and extension experts, you need to keep in mind your readers (farmers) who are a peculiar section of Indian population. Particularly, take into account their level of literacy, education, language, socio-economic status, experience and level of knowledge of agricultural technology. Do not overrate their reading habits and skills and also do not underrate them as human beings. Correct perception of your readers ensures your success in writing. Your readers are farmers. So you have to tailor your writing to meet their requirements and you are not expected to exhibit your competence and mastery over verbosity and language.

### Concepts defined

Let us first get clarity of the concepts involved in measurement of readability. Rudolf Flesch has defined the terms as below.

**Readability** : Readable means easy or interesting to read.

**Reading ease**: It is an estimate of ease with which a reader is going to read and understand.

**Human interest**: It is an estimate of the human interest that the presentation will have for the reader.

**Personal words** : Personal words are about persons or addressed to persons.

### **Personal words are**

(i) All first, second and third person pronouns except the neuter pronouns like it, its, itself and pronouns like they, them, theirs, themselves if referring to thing rather than people. But words like he him, his, and she, her always will count for personal words even where these refer to animals or inanimate objects.

(ii) All words that have masculine or feminine natural gender but not common gender like teacher, doctor etc.

(iii) The group words like people and folks.

### **Personal sentences :**

Personal sentences are

(i) Spoken sentences marked by quotation marks or otherwise, often including speech tags like 'he said' set off by colons or commas

(ii) Question, commands, requests and other sentences directly addressed to the reader.

(iii) Exclamations or sentence fragments, whose full meaning has to be inferred from the context.

### **Measuring readability :**

It seems that as on today, no other reliable and valid measure than the Readability scale of Rudolf Flesch is available. Rudolf Flesch has developed the scale for popular writing in English.

There are two major components of the scale as reading ease and human interest. The reading ease simplifies the job of reading and human interest provides motivation to reader. Reading ease and human interest go in hand. Therefore, both of them should satisfy the standard fixed for proper discrimination of information to the farmers.

Each of the two components include two sub components to measure readability as :

### **Ease in reading :**

1. Average number of words per sentence
2. Syllables per 100 words

### **Human interest :**

1. Number of personal words
2. Percentage of personal sentences

Steps in measuring readability

### **1. Pick the sample**

Select a sample from whole article or publication. Do not incline to select good or a typical sample. It is better to go strictly by numerical scheme say every third page or every third paragraph. Each sample should start at the beginning of paragraph. Sometimes you can examine whole article for testing its readability. As a thumb rule introductory paragraphs may be avoided, as they are not the typical of the writing.

**a) Ease in Reading**

**2. Count the number of words**

First count the number of words in your sample upto 100. Count abbreviations and hyphenated words as one word. For example, Rs., Eg., MAU, agro-climatic, two-way, sub-editor, etc. Count numbers and letters as words, if separated by space. For example, Rs. 250, 40° C, 20 Ltr.

**3. Count the average sentence length**

In 100 word sample, find the sentence that ends, nearest to the 100 word mark that might be 94th word or 109th word. Count the sentence upto that point and divide the number of words by the number of sentences in your sample.

**4. Count the syllables**

Count the syllables in your 100 word sample. If you are testing a whole piece of writing, divide the total number of syllables by the total number of words and multiply by 100. This comes to number of syllables per hundred words. Count the syllables the way you pronounce the word. For example, asked (one syllable), total (two syllables), 1940 (three syllables). Nineteen-fifteen (four syllables).

Now make use of "How easy chart" prepared by Flesch. The words per sentence and syllables per hundred words are compared with the reading ease score which ranges from very difficult to very easy.

**b) Human Interest Level:**

**1. Count the personal words:**

Count the personal words in your 100 word sample. Calculate the percentage of personal words if you are appraising readability of whole piece of reading material. Personal words include all proper names and all pronouns like I, we, he, she, you, they, him, her, us, etc. The nouns like mother, father, son, man, woman, daughter, people, persons, folks, etc. but not

persons indicated by their vocation/ profession like doctor, engineer, teacher, professor, lawyer, agricultural officer, businessman etc.

## 2. Count the personal sentences

Count the personal sentences in 100 words samples and divide the number of personal sentences in all your samples by the number of sentences in all your sample. If you are testing a whole piece of writing, divide the total number of personal sentences by the total number of sentence and multiply by 100. By this way you get the percentage of personal sentences to total sentences. The personal sentences are those sentences having direct commands (e.g. You do it first), suggestions (e.g. You may do it first), quoted conversation (The scientist said, —You should do it"), indirect addressing sentences (e.g. You see friends/Gopal, This is the point to be considered first) and exclamatory sentences (e.g. What a pleasant)

Now considering the number of personal words per 100 words and the number of personal sentences per 100 sentences, find the human interest score on "How Interesting Chart" provided by Flesch. The human interest score ranges from "Dull" to "Dramatic".

Thus, by following this procedure you can come to know how easy and how interesting the piece of writing or a publication as whole is.

### RUDOLF FLESCH FORMULA *Reading Ease*

Reading level	Very easy	Easy	Fairly easy	Standard	Fairly difficult	Difficult
Average sentence length in words	8	11	14	17	21	25
Syllables per 100 words	127	134	142	150	158	166

### Human Interest Level

Number of personal words in 100 word sample	Human interest level	Percentage of personal sentences
17	Dramatic	58
10	Very interesting	43
7	Interesting	15
4	Mildly interesting	5
2 or less	Dull	0

