

Writing Tools

Much of this material can be sighted at the [My Writing Pot blog](#).

Office tools

Spelling and Grammar

File/Options/Proofing

Readability Statistics

As above to activate.

Click book icon in status bar to view

Other options

right click book icon in status bar

Office features

Formatting

File/Options and select header for purpose

Outlining

See article in writing blog. Find in View or status bar

Outline view provides

another powerful way for you to view the structure of your document and to rearrange the order of presentation of the **topics. The outline structure assumes that you've used specific heading and body styles to organize your document into a hierarchy of topics and subtopics .**

Styles

Useful for setting up document headers before outlining but can alter.

Even short informal notes deserve a little formatting . You might choose a new font for the boring, old Times Roman . Maybe **you'll use a different color . Or perhaps you'll** go all out for your document and apply font, color, spacing, and alignment options

as you create a new format . Word makes it easy for you to quickly add formatting to selected text or set all the formatting for the paragraphs to give your documents a consistent and professional look . You can apply formatting whenever you want—**before you type, while you're typing, or after you've** typed all your text

Tracking

Open in Review tab

When you have a document that needs to be reviewed or changed and you want to mark the changes you or others make, you can use the Track Changes feature in Word 2010. When this feature is turned on, additions, deletions, moves, and even formatting changes are marked so that you can see them easily . You can also add comments that appear in the **margins of the document** . **When you're reviewing the edited** document, you can accept or reject any change or comment, view the changes made by individual reviewers, and even view the document as it was before the changes were made . You can also view the document as it would look if you accepted all the changes .

Navigation Pane (Document Map in 2003 and 2007)

Open in View tab.

Word 2010 includes a great new feature called the Navigation Pane that enables you to search for and **find just the content you're looking for in your docu-**ment . The Navigation Pane makes it simple for you to search through your document by clicking headings, choosing pages, or entering words or phrases in a

search box .

Images

Never copy and paste an image. Always use Insert tab. To compress an image use right click format. This is important to reduce document size – especially for web work. Select image and right click. Open Format picture.

Alt text

Find in same Format picture tab as above. Important for visual impairment or for detail about an image.

Saving as PDF

Office 2007/2010 allow you to save as a PDF. Good (often) for reducing file size. Note options.

Software

Several on-line tools (cloud) to check your documents for readability and rubbish.

Include e.g. [Drivel Defence](#), [Bullfighter](#) (that can also be a Word add-on) and [Calculate readability](#).

The [Wasteline test](#) looks at the 'flabbiness' of documents

Tools and explanation

Flesch reading ease

You've just completed a bit of writing for your Web site or blog and you're happy with the results. Well, what about your readers? Do you think you've written at a level that's appropriate for their education and ability to make sense of what you've written?

How to determine readability of one's writing has been a topic of discussion among scholars for close to 100 years and in that time they've developed a variety of formulas that aim to get at the heart of the question.

Two of the best known readability formulas are the Flesch-Kincaid and the Gunning Fog Index. Both are similar in that they look at the number of syllables per word and number of words per sentences and calculate the grade level required to understand the text.

I wouldn't rely exclusively on readability formulas because the level of literacy today is lower than in previous generations but either can be helpful in reminding you to write succinctly and with clarity.

U.S. government agencies use the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula as their standard readability formula. **It's so popular that Microsoft Word, Google Docs and other writing apps can calculate readability based on the Flesch formula for you.**

The Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula

ASL = Average Sentence Length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = Average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

RE = Readability Ease

$RE = 206.835 - (1.015 \times ASL) - (84.6 \times ASW)$

The result is a number between 0 to 100. The higher the number, the easier the text is to read.

90-100 : Very Easy

80-89 : Easy

70-79 : Fairly Easy

60-69 : Standard

50-59 : Fairly Difficult

30-49 : Difficult

0-29 : Very Confusing

To put that into perspective, *Reader's Digest* has a readability index of about 65, *Times* scores about 52, and the *Harvard Law Review* scores in the low 30s.

Microsoft Word will calculate the Flesch Reading Ease Index for you. On the Tools menu, click Options, and then click the Spelling & Grammar tab. Select the Check grammar with spelling check box. Select the Show readability statistics box, and then click OK. On the Standard toolbar, click Spelling and Grammar or hit F7. When Word finishes checking spelling and grammar, it displays information about the reading level of the document.

Gunning Fog Readability Index

Back when I was in grad school, chiseling my term papers on stone tablets, I had a writing prof who hammered into my loopy little head how to write lean and athletic prose. One of his bibles was *The Technique of Clear Writing*, by Robert Gunning. Gunning also devised a method of measuring the readability of text called the [Gunning Fog Index](#).

Gunning died decades ago and his book is out of print, although [you can still find used copies online](#) and at your local library. I got to thinking about Gunning's principles and wondered if they would still hold up today, especially for Web writing. You know what? For the most part, they still do (you probably saw that coming). So, in an abbreviated form, here are Gunning's "10 Principles of Clear Statement" (Adapted from "*The Technique of Clear Writing*," rev. ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973):

1. Keep sentences short. Fifteen to twenty words per sentence is a good average.
2. Prefer the simple to the complex. Writing shorter sentences usually means you use shorter words. Instead of "utilize" write "use," and instead of "modification" write "change."
3. Use the familiar word. Intelligent people use their large vocabularies only to impart clear, exact meaning—not to show off. Big minds use little words; little minds use big words.
4. Avoid unnecessary words. You can often cut your writing in half and still say the same thing. Use "to" instead of "in order to," for example.

5. Put action in your verbs. “The fullback hits the line.” That’s writing with an active verb. “The line is hit by the fullback.” That’s writing with a passive verb. The snap of action is gone.
6. Write like you talk. “Write like you talk” is poor grammar, but Gunning’s point is that you should adopt a natural, conversational writing style.
7. Use terms your reader can picture. **Avoid fuzzy words like “conditions,” “situations,” “facilities,” “inadequacies.”**
8. **Tie in with your reader’s experience.** To get your words read, understood and accepted, you must have a clear understanding of your own purposes and those of your readers.
9. Use variety. Good writers work within a strict discipline of simplicity. However, they vary sentence length, structure, and vocabulary so their writing does not seem choppy or childish.
10. Write to express, not impress. No writing is easy. However, we make it more difficult by using long, unfamiliar words, and in writing long, meandering sentences.

See also [How to Put the the Flesch in and Take the Fog Out of Your Writing](#).

Long documents

There are some useful rules for managing long documents in this [free Manchester University publication](#).