

## THE FOG INDEX

The Fog Index, developed by Robert Gunning, a Professor of English at Oxford University, is a system of measuring the communicative efficiency of a written document. The Fog Index value indicates the approximate number of years of schooling generally required to read and understand a written communication without undue difficulty. The lower the Fog Index, the more easily your writing will be understood. William Shakespeare usually wrote at a Fog Index of 20 to 25. Within a corporate environment, a Fog Index of 5 to 7 should not be exceeded in the interests of clear and unambiguous communication.

1. Select a typical sample of your writing. Count about 100 words, finishing at the end of a sentence. Count the number of sentences in that sample. This gives your average number of words in a sentence. Under 20 is good. 25 to 30 is difficult to read.
2. In your 100-word sample, count the number of words of three syllables or more. You should omit :
  - \* Capitalized words,
  - \* short words combined, ie 'undergo', 'doorkeeper', etc.,
  - \* verbs ending in 'ed' or 'es', like 'created' or 'trespasses'.Of the 100 words, under 10 percent three-syllable words is best.
3. Add 1 and 2 and multiply by 0.4 to calculate your Fog Index.

## SELF-TEST RATING

- |    |                                    |       |
|----|------------------------------------|-------|
| a. | Number of words in sample          | : 115 |
| b. | Number of sentences                | : 5   |
| c. | Average sentence length (a/b)      | : 23  |
| d. | Number of 3-syllable words per 100 | : 9   |
| e. | Fog Index (c+d x 0.4)              | : 12  |

## OTHER ITEMS PROMOTING CLEAR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- \* Column Width
- \* Serif Font vs Sans Serif Font
- \* Pitch
- \* Leading
- \* Proportional vs Non-proportional Spacing
- \* Upper- vs Lower-case font
- \* Color

## SAMPLE

In the dark, all things are equal - no color, no texture, no shape is portrayed. Desert and *oasis* are one, bush and barren the same. No nature, just gray, with *stygian* blackness either deep shadow or deep hole. Black is beauty, beauty is black, gray is eerie, misty and *uncertain*. That is darkness and darkness is night and The King sleeps.

Then there is day. As the virgin sun surfaces from its vestal boudoir beyond the unseen horizon, burnishing the star-fading heavens with its reds, oranges and yellows, nature rises and takes notice, the long sinewy fingers of silvery red light slowly, *tentatively*, *hesitantly*, ease to the west, pausing to snuffle at the base of a foliage-garbed *sentinel* of the forests or a granite ancient of *generations* gone by, then slowly surfacing to fill another dark hole with its shadow. In yet another shadow, The King sleeps on.

149 words, 8 sentences, 19 words / sentence, 7 longs = 19 + 7 x 0.4 = Fog 10