ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF YOUR LANGUAGE: The Fog Index

The "Fog Index," created by Robert Gunning, was developed as a way to determine the "readability," or level of complexity, of your writing. It can also be applied to oral communication, keeping in mind that people generally comprehend spoken words at a lower level of comprehension than they do written words.

HOW TO USE THE FOG INDEX – Use a sample of at least 100 words:

a. Find the average number of *words per sentence*. Divide the total number of words by the number of sentences. This gives you the average sentence length.

b. Count the number of words of *3 syllables or more* per 100 words. Do not count (a) words that are capitalized; (b) combinations of short easy words such as bookkeeper; (c) verbs that make 3 syllables by adding "es" or "ed" or "ing" (such as "created" or "trespasses").

c. Add the two factors above -- the average number of words per sentence plus the number of 3-syllable words. Then multiply this sum by 0.4. This will give you the Fog Index.

Example:

# of 3 syllable words	24
Avg. # of words/sentence	+ 15
Sum of 2 items above	39
Multiply sum by 0.4	X .4
= FOG INDEX (grade level equivalent)	15.6

Grade Level Equivalent

Index of 8 - 12	8th grade through high school reading level. Your writing will be read and understood fairly easily by most people, although some sources say that the "ideal" level is 7-8.
Index of 16	Comprehension is difficult for many readers.
Index of 20	Only experienced "insiders" will comprehend, often with careful re-reading.
Index of 25	"The fog is rolling in ..."

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