



# Readability



**SIMPLE IS BETTER**

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# Readability

## READ AND SUMMARIZE THIS

Use predictive analytics as a decision support tool to drive a forward-looking analysis of scenarios, response effectiveness, and critical correlations that can complicate or escalate events.

Better understanding of the drivers of extreme events, whether external developments or internal process interactions, can help build a robust, flexible and dynamic crisis management program.

The objective for enhanced analytics is not to predict events, but to help companies develop more meaningful warning indicators, and an increased awareness of their leverage in preventing or managing 'runaway' crises.



# Readability

**NOW READ AND SUMMARIZE THIS**

## **Learn from the past**

If you know what causes crises, you can prepare for them. Analyze what's happened in the past to help you predict what might happen in the future.

## **Benefit and impact**

Doing so will let you spot the warning signs that a crisis is unfolding. You can stop it from escalating or even happening at all.

# Readability

## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

- Readability: the ease with which a reader can understand written text.
- Involves many factors, including:
  - Word length
  - Sentence length
  - Paragraph length
  - Formatting



# Readability

- What we'll cover:
  - Writing style and standards
  - Examples and tools
  - Benefits





# Readability

## WRITING STYLE AND STANDARDS

- How can you make your content more readable?

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### CONCISE TEXT

- Use fewer words
- Active voice
- Short sentences

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### SCANNABLE LAYOUT

- Bullet points
- Headings
- Descriptive links

# Readability

## WRITING STYLE AND STANDARDS

- Write less. People will read more.
- People will read more if your content has:
  - Short paragraphs
  - Short sentences
  - Short words



# Reading is hard

## CONSIDER LITERACY LEVELS

- Newspapers aim for a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.
- 70 percent **read** at intermediate level.
- 97 percent can't **understand** 11<sup>th</sup> grade-level text.





# Use math when you write

## READING LONGER WORDS REQUIRES MORE EFFORT

- Word length:
  - 5-character words
  - 2-syllable words
- Sentence length:
  - 8-14 words ideal; 21 words max
  - People read short and long sentences differently
- Short sentences add power to your message.





# Use math when you write

- Paragraph length
  - Good paragraph length: 1-3 sentences, 42 words
  - 25 words max for FIRST paragraph
  - Write inverted-pyramid style
- Use the 1-2-3-4 rule
  - 1 main thought, expressed in
  - 2 to 3 short sentences, taking up no more than
  - 4 lines on the page

# Navigation and mobile

MAKE YOUR CONTENT LOOK GOOD, EASY TO NAVIGATE

- Short paragraphs, help people move through your story.
- Especially true for mobile devices (mobile vs. desktop viewing).
- Ask yourself: “how does this look on mobile?”





# Other tips for readability

- Personal pronouns
- Reduce unfamiliar words
- Infographics
  - For in-depth information or statistics

# Tools and examples

## IS YOUR CONTENT READABLE?

- We'll cover:
  - Hemingway App
  - Yoast SEO
  - Making an article more readable





# Hemingway App

MAKES YOUR WRITING BOLD AND CLEAR

- Analyzes the readability of your content
- Shows areas for improvement
  - Yellow = hard to read. Shorten or split your sentence.
  - Red = very hard to read. Too dense.
  - Catches unnecessary adverbs, passive voice.
- Reassess your content as you make changes



# Yoast SEO

## WORDPRESS PLUGIN

- Gives readability assessment before you post; prioritizes for SEO purposes
- Updates in real time
- Shows areas for improvement
  - Headings/links
  - Transition words
  - Long paragraphs



# Example

- How do you add and gauge readability?
- Let's do an example





# Benefits

WHY SHOULD YOU WANT BETTER READABILITY?



**AUDIENCE REACH**



**INCREASE  
READERSHIP**



**CREATE ACTION**



**SAVE \$\$\$**



# Benefits

## AUDIENCE REACH

- Better readability allows you to more easily reach your audience.
  - Declining literacy rates
  - Varying audiences and platforms
  
- Remember: “How does this look on mobile?”



# Audience reach

- People want to get and read information at a level below their reading capacity.
  - Most people read at an intermediate level.
  - Don't assume that CEO or Dean can digest your wall of text.



# Benefits

## INCREASE READERSHIP

- Better readability means you'll increase your readership.
  - No. 1 way to increase your readership
  - Average web page visit: 28 seconds



# Benefits

*“I’d lecture a bunch of chemists or engineers about the importance of not saying, ‘it would be appreciated if you would contact the undersigned by telephone at your earliest possible convenience’ and instead saying, ‘please call me as soon as you can.’*

*“That was revealed wisdom to these people.”*

- Dave Barry, Pulitzer prize-winning humorist. (Long and stuffy words are hard to read)

# Benefits

WRITE “LOWER,” BE EFFECTIVE



## COMPREHENSION

Easy copy =  
easy to  
understand



## RETENTION

Easy copy =  
easy to  
remember



## ACTION

Take action for a  
cause, sign  
up/attend an event.

# Benefits

## SAVE MONEY!

- Bad writing is costly
- Navy and FedEx readability projects



# Readability



Be like  
Lincoln!