

## Readability Information for Western Washington University

Readability and informed consent form is one of the most challenging parts of the IRB application process. It is however, the most important. Participants must know what they are signing up for in your research study and it must be perfectly clear. Best practices and organizations that train IRB reviewers and members (like [CITI](#) and [PRIM&R](#)) have recommended informed consent be written at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. We are asking the informed consent form to be written around the 10<sup>th</sup> grade level.

Many factors make a difference for readability. Our template is over the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level because we must give you enough information so that you can choose what best works for your study, the kind of study etc.

- The headings in on the consent form will make a difference in the readability. When you run the readability, include only the content of your letter. Remove the headings and this will help you reduce the readability.
- Use short sentences
- Use layman's terms

When you submit your readability, please include the text with the readability information so that that reviewer can clearly discern if it was your informed consent form or a recruitment document.

### Adult Participants

For participants aged 18 or older, the recommended readability level is **grade 10 or below on the Flesch-Kincaid or Consensus scales**.

This readability score is intended for the general adult population and seeks to maximize accessibility and comprehension across varying levels of education and literacy. In specific circumstances, it is ok to have higher readability scores given an appropriate justification based on the education level of the participants. In addition, the IRB may require lower readability scores for similar reasons.

\*\*The IRB members check in general if the readability level is commensurate with the reading level of the participants. For examples, teachers or leaders in business may have a higher reading level and that is appropriate.

### Minor Participants

For participants under the age of 18, the recommended readability level, on the Flesch-Kincaid or consensus scales, is 3 grades below the age of the youngest participant.

## How do I get a readability score?

You get a readability score by using a readability calculator. You can choose from the following readability calculators:

[Microsoft Word](#)

[Readability Formulas](#)

[Online Utility](#)

To save your readability score, you will take an image or screenshot, save the image as a file (jpg., etc.), and upload that file into your IRB application:

[How to take a screenshot on Windows](#)

[How to take a screenshot on a Mac](#)