

Spache Readability Index Computation Sheet

Directions: Select a text sample of 100-150 words from a primary grade level text (grades 1-4). Complete the steps below to compute a readability index.

1. Count the *total number* of words in the reading sample.

Total Number of Words =

2. Count the *number of sentences* in the reading sample.

Number of Sentences =

3. Compute the *average sentence length* by dividing the number of words (item 1) by the number of sentences (item 2):

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \boxed{} & / & \boxed{} = \boxed{} \\ \text{Number of Words} & & \text{Number of Sentences} \quad \text{Avg. Sentence Length} \end{array}$$

4. *Count up the number of words in the sample that are *not* found on the Spache Revised Word List (*difficult words*). Note: Count each difficult word only *once*:

Number of Difficult Words =

5. Compute the *percentage of difficult words* by dividing the number of difficult words (item 4) by total number of words in the sample (item 1) and multiplying by 100:

$$\left(\frac{\boxed{}}{\boxed{}} \right) * 100 = \boxed{}$$

Number of Difficult Words Total Number of Words Percentage of Difficult Words

6. Plug the values from items 3 & 5 into this formula to compute the Spache Readability Index for this passage:

Spache Readability Index: $(0.141 * \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ Avg. Sentence Length}) + (0.086 * \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ Percent Difficult Words}) + 0.839 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ Grade Level}$

Spache, G. (1953). A new readability formula for primary-grade reading materials. *The Elementary School Journal*, 55, 410-413.

*Guidelines for identifying 'Difficult Words' in the Spache Readability Formula:

Familiar Words. Count the following as familiar or 'known' words:

- Words appearing on the Revised Spache Word List.
- Variants of words from the Revised Spache Word List that have regular verb form endings *-ing, -ed, -es*
- Plural and possessive endings of nouns from Revised Spache Word List
- First names
- Single letters standing alone as words: e.g., 'B is the second letter of the alphabet'.

Unfamiliar ('Difficult') Words. Difficult words (those not on the Spache Word List) are counted only once—even if they appear later with other endings.

Count the following as unfamiliar or 'unknown' words:

- Words *not* appearing on the Revised Spache Word List (other than first names).
- Variants of words from the Revised Spache Word List that have irregular verb form endings—unless those variant forms also appear on the Spache List.
- Variants of words from the Revised Spache Word List that have adverbial, comparative, or superlative endings: e.g., *-ly, -er, -est*

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