

Abstract Analysis and Revision Assignment Instructions

(Using MS Word Readability Statistics)

This assignment requires you to find a published abstract in a peer reviewed journal or professional conference proceedings and revise it with emphasis on improving readability and style. You will apply the research skills we've been working on in class to first locate an abstract pertaining to your final project topic. Next you will use the readability statistics tool in MS Word to determine the scores for reading ease, grade level, and passive voice in your original abstract. Finally, you will improve upon these scores by applying revision strategies to rewrite the abstract, aiming to increase the reading ease score, lower the grade level score, and lower the percentage of passive voice while still maintaining appropriate professional style.

Day 1: In class you will have time at your workstation to begin searching for abstracts in your discipline. I will circulate and look over your shoulders and provide on-the-spot feedback. I will also answer any questions and provide instruction for those who need help enabling the readability statistics tool or performing screen captures.

Day 2: The assignment is due. (Note: this time sequence assumes a class that meets 2xs a week).

Evaluation

While there is no magic number to shoot for, your assignment will be evaluated by the overall quality of your revised abstract as well as demonstration of *significant* improvement in at least two of the three readability categories (and improvement in all three readability categories).

Tips

- Choose an abstract with room for improvement in the three readability categories (most will have room for improvement, but you may have a difficult time if you find an abstract with 5% passive voice for example)
- Pay attention to the average words per sentence metric as you're revising the abstract. In general, the longer the sentence, the less readable it will be. Remember that Subject+Verb+Object sentence structure is most accessible by readers.
- Don't be afraid to restructure the organization of the abstract (rather than approach revising each sentence one by one). Consider reorganizing sentences, looking for unnecessary redundancies, and eliminating information that may not be appropriate for an abstract.
- Since the abstracts you find will be discipline-specific, you may choose to leave certain jargon in. Consider the actual intended audience for the abstract and what terms those readers would be expected to know. (Even if it includes technical terms or jargon, your revised abstract should still have clarity and logical organization).
- Be careful that your revision is not changing the overall meaning of the original abstract's content.

Drafting and Submission

We will not peer review drafts of this assignment in class; however, you will most likely revise your abstract multiple times as you work to improve the statistics. I am happy to work with you during office hours if you have questions or would like feedback on a draft of this assignment.

Upon submitting your final version, include the original abstract with corresponding citation (formatted in the preferred style of your discipline) and an accompanying screenshot of the readability statistics (see Figure 1 below). Within this same document you will also include your revised abstract with an accompanying screenshot of the readability statistics.

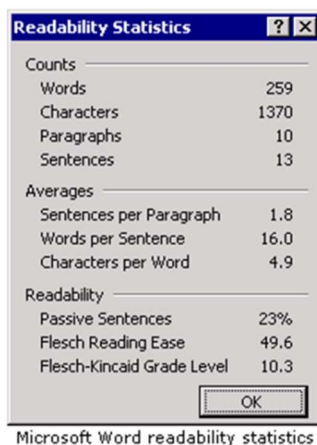


Figure 1: Readability statistics screenshot example

To enable the readability statistics tool in Microsoft Word

- Click the **Microsoft Office Button**, and then click **Word Options**.
- Click **Proofing**.
- Make sure **Check grammar with spelling** is selected.
- Under **When correcting grammar in Word**, select the **Show readability statistics** check box.

Abstract Analysis and Revision Assignment
(Using MS Word Readability Statistics) Grading Rubric

Student:

Reading Ease (30 pts. possible)

Original # _____

Revised version # _____

Comments:

Grade Level Score (30 pts. possible)

Original # _____

Revised version # _____

Comments:

Passive voice (30 pts. possible)

Original # _____

Revised version # _____

Comments:

Overall quality of revised abstract (10 pts. possible)

Grade: _____/(100 possible points)