

# How we read on the web

Web users read information on a screen differently to how they might read it in a printed format.

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It's important to present information clearly for users.

Aim for the following statistics:

- an average sentence length of 12 words
- Flesch-Kincaid reading ease score of 60 and over

The [Flesch-Kincaid score](#) tells you how easily understandable text is to read. If the score is high, the sentence is more readable. To find this in Microsoft Word, follow these instructions:

- 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

## Hemingway Editor

[Hemingway Editor](#) is another tool that will assess the readability grade of your content and suggest ways to improve your score.

Do not paste sensitive information or unpublished data into Hemingway – it is a security risk. Use the Flesch-Kincaid reading level tool in Microsoft instead.

Hemingway Editor will not allow you to paste into it if opened in some browsers. We advise using Google Chrome.

Eye-tracking studies have been carried out to analyse which areas of web pages web users viewed the most.

The studies found that there were dramatic differences between how people read online content and print. Whilst reading print content, users tend to read line by line, from left to right in Western languages. For digital content,

the studies found the predominant reading pattern formed an [F shape](#). First, users read horizontally across the upper part of the page, then move down the page and read horizontally across. Finally, users scan vertically down the left-hand side.

This means that web content needs to be written differently from print content. The most important information needs to go at the beginning of sentences. Users can then decide if this is what they want to read and continue. The way to do this is to frontload content.