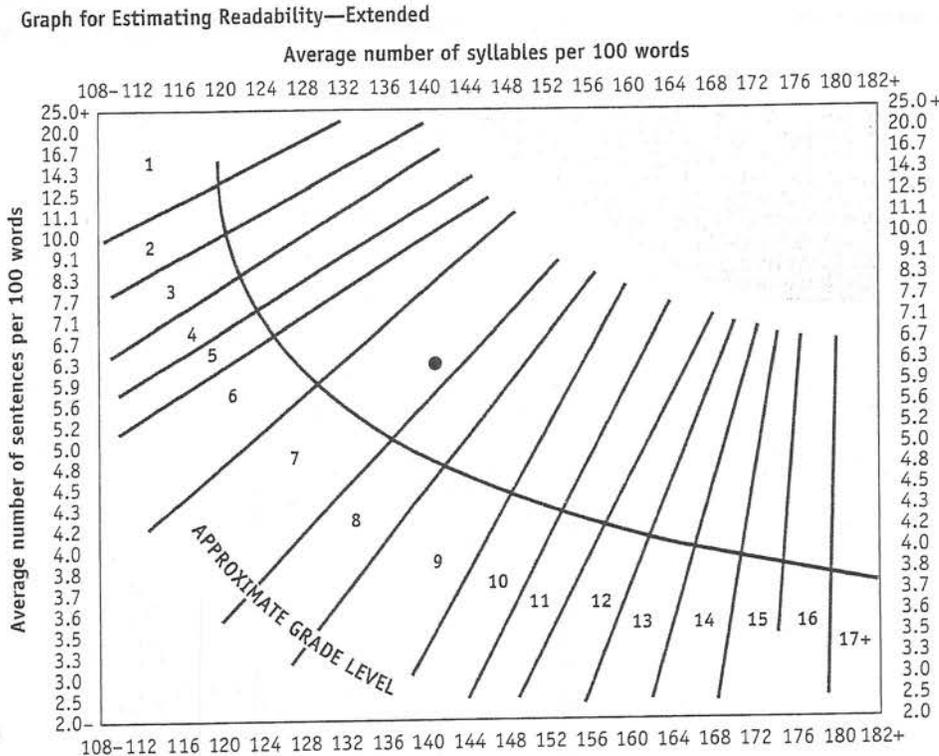


FIGURE 13.1  
Fry Readability Graph



count 100 words  
# of sentences  
# of syllables

check databases for leveled books  
• <http://registration.beavton.k12.or.us/lbldb/default.htm>  
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Expanded Directions for Working the Readability Graph

1. Randomly select three sample passages and count out exactly 100 words each, beginning with the beginning of a sentence. Do count proper nouns, initializations, and numerals.
2. Count the number of sentences in the 100 words, estimating length of the fraction of the last sentence to the nearest one-tenth.
3. Count the total number of syllables in the 100-word passage. If you don't have a hand counter available, an easy way is simply to put a mark above every syllable over one in each word, then when you get to the end of the passage, count the number of marks and add 100. Small calculators can also be used as counters by pushing numeral 1, then pushing the + sign for each word or syllable when counting.
4. Enter graph with *average* sentence length and *average* number of syllables; plot dot where the two lines intersect. The area where the dot is plotted will give you the approximate grade level.
5. If a great deal of variability is found in syllable count or sentence count, putting more samples into the average is desirable.
6. A word is defined as a group of symbols with a space on either side; thus, *Joe*, *IRA*, *1945*, and *&* are each one word.
7. A syllable is defined as a phonetic symbol. Generally, there are as many syllables as vowel sounds. For example, *stopped* is one syllable and *wanted* is two syllables. When counting syllables for numerals and initializations, count one syllable for each symbol. For example, *1945* is four syllables, *IRA* is three syllables, and *&* is one syllable.

Source: *Elementary Reading Instruction*, by E. B. Fry (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

In 1990, Fry noted that for short passages of 100 to 300 words in length, a formula for readability should account for difficulty of words and difficulty of sentences, as shown in Figure 13.2. Using the contextual meaning of difficult words and their corresponding grade level gives a more accurate reading level than sentence complexity alone. For example, the word *convention* has three meanings with three levels of difficulty.

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