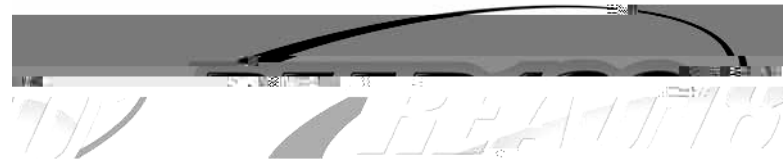




Lexiles: A System for Measuring Reader Ability and Text Difficulty

A Guide for Educators

MetaMetrics, Inc.



Lexiles provide a common scale for measuring text difficulty and student reading ability. As the most widely adopted reading measure in use today, Lexiles offer a scientific approach that facilitates learning and instruction by improving interpretability and informing educational decisions and instructional strategies. Using Lexiles, it is possible to match students with appropriate texts and track student reading ability over time using a common scale.

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)^a is a research-based, computer adaptive reading comprehension assessment, developed in partnership with MetaMetrics, Inc., creators of the Lexile Framework[®] for Reading, the research-proven measure of reading ability and text difficulty. SRI is the first assessment that can be administered individually or as a group and that directly reports student reading levels using the native Lexile item format.

Consider this: A father takes his son to the store to buy some shoes. The salesperson asks, "What kind of shoes do you need?" The father replies, "He needs basketball shoes." As the salesperson leads them to the basketball shoes, he asks, "How old is your son?" The father answers, "He is 12." So the salesperson points to five pairs of shoes on the wall and says, "There are our age 12 basketball shoes."

Lexiles: An Overview

How Lexiles Inform Instruction

Lexiles are a highly useful tool for educators, allowing them to track student progress and assign each student appropriate reading materials. For example, if a text is too difficult for readers, they may struggle, quickly become frustrated, and give up. On the other hand, if the text is too easy, readers may not be challenged, and become easily distracted or bored.

A unique benefit of Lexile measures is that they place students and texts on a common absolute scale. The Lexile scale ranges from 0 to 12.1 (y

How Lexiles Work

Interpreting Lexiles

A Lexile measure (for either text or reader) is a number followed by an "L." The Lexile scale typically ranges from 200L to 1700L, although actual Lexile measures can be lower or higher. For example, a simple picture book might have a Lexile measure of 100L, while a college textbook might be measured at 1700L or higher.

Students' Lexile measures are the level at which they can read with moderate success (about 75 percent comprehension). When given books with Lexile measures slightly below their tested Lexile measure, students are likely to experience greater success; books with higher Lexile measures are likely to be challenging or even frustrating.

Growth in reading comprehension is easy to measure because the Lexile scale is an "equal-interval" scale, similar to inches when measuring height. Two inches of growth in height is twice as much as a one-inch increase in height. Growth on the Lexile scale is similar. A 200-point difference is twice as much as a difference of 100 points in terms of the amount of reading comprehension measured.

Lexiles and Grade Levels

Lexile measures do not directly translate to grade levels. That is because within any grade, there will be a range of both readers and reading materials. Some readers are far ahead of the average reader for that grade, and some are far below. Reading materials are usually chosen to correspond to this range in performance. It is therefore this range that is most useful on which to focus.

Nevertheless, it is useful to consult a "Lexile Map" that annotates the Lexile scale with reading materials that are typical in different grades. Usually, educational levels displayed on the Lexile Map approximate the middle 50 percent of materials found in a typical grade-level classroom. Similarly, numerous studies with large numbers of students have observed reading levels for students in each grade (approximately the middle 50 percent of the students—the interquartile range).

The table below shows examples of the typical reader and text measures for various grades. Remember that about 50 percent of the students are reading higher or lower than these ranges.

1	Up to 300L	300L to 400L
2	400L to 500L	500L to 600L
3	600L to 700L	700L to 800L
4	800L to 900L	900L to 1000L
5	1000L to 1100L	1100L to 1200L
6	1200L to 1300L	1300L to 1400L
7	1400L to 1500L	1500L to 1600L
8	1600L to 1700L	1700L to 1800L
9	1800L to 1900L	1900L to 2000L
10	2000L to 2100L	2100L to 2200L
11	2200L to 2300L	2300L to 2400L

The challenge for the typical teacher facing a heterogeneous classroom of readers is that there is often a gap between the abilities of the students and the required text. Armed with the information provided by Lexile measures, the teacher can overcome these differences, improving both reading skills and content area knowledge in the process.

To illustrate how important it can be to target the reader with text of appropriate difficulty, it may be useful to consider two passages on the same topic that have different Lexile measures. The following two passages illustrate such a scenario. Each passage is followed by its Lexile measure in parentheses. The first passage is very easy to read and has a correspondingly low Lexile measure.

[Redacted passage text]

The second passage is on the same topic but places a much higher demand on the reader, as evidenced by the higher Lexile measure.

[Redacted passage text]

Knowing the Lexile measure of text in relationship to the Lexile score of a student helps teachers choose reading material that will appropriately challenge the student without creating frustration.

Using Lexiles as an Actionable Tool

By incorporating Lexiles into reading management systems, it is possible to remove much of the guesswork and inaccuracy inherent in traditional reading instruction strategies. Teachers now have more targeted options for measuring reading comprehension. Lexiles can influence instructional decisions in numerous ways.

Different Lexiles for Different Circumstances

In general, teachers should assign texts at or below the student's Lexile measure when factors

Using Lexiles as an Actionable Tool

Track Progress on a Day-to-Day Basis

Lexile measures can tie day-to-day classwork to critical high-stakes tests, which also report scores in Lexiles. This commonality allows teachers to provide interim assessment and feedback while using the same consistent measurement. Lexiles help teachers set measurable goals, monitor and evaluate reading programs, and easily track progress without additional testing.

Apply Lexiles Across the Curriculum

More than 450 publishers provide Lexiles for their titles, enabling teachers to match student reading ability to text across the curriculum. Using students' Lexile measures, teachers can connect them to more than 100,000 books and 80 million articles (available at www.Lexile.com) that have Lexile scores.

Easily Communicate with Families

Lexiles provide a clear, nonjudgmental way of communicating a student's reading ability to parents. They allow teachers to generate reading lists that help parents guide their children to appropriately challenging reading materials. Lexiles are also used to promote summer reading and to select books that will provide easily understood information for homework assignments.

A Diagnosis, Not a Solution

Just as a thermometer won't cure your cold, Lexiles will not cure a student's reading problems. Lexiles are most valuable in the hands of educators and parents who know how to evaluate and use the information they provide and who create an environment that fosters each student's literacy development.

Read for Life: Developing Reading Skills in Middle and High School

The National Association of State Boards of Education report, "Reading at Risk: The State Response to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy", stresses that improving literacy is the key to raising student achievement. The literacy skills students acquire throughout their schooling not only make them competent students but will be vital to make them productive members of society and, ultimately, successful in life.

Research shows that strong literacy skills are needed throughout a student's education, including middle and high school. This is when content-area teachers in subject areas such as language arts, science, and history are vital to the development of literacy skills as textbooks and other materials that students use become more complex. For success, it is imperative in middle and high school to continue to build the academic vocabulary and comprehension skills of every student.

To put it another way, if there is a gap between students' reading ability and the requirements of either college or the work force, then students will be unprepared to graduate high school and move on to become productive and successful in whatever it is they choose to do. However, to ascertain whether the gap is purely an ability gap or whether there is also a textual gap requires that both ability and textual difficulty be measured. Doing this necessitates a method that places both text and student ability on the same scale.

Using SRI and The Lexile Framework™ for Reading places both reader and text on the same scale, making it possible to define gaps between a reader's comprehension and the various types of text that members of society need to understand in order to productively go about their daily lives.

Graduate Record Exam
(n=8)

University (13-14)
(n=100)

Community College
(n=50)

Workplace
(n=1401)

Citizenship
(n=54)

Military (n=22)

SAT I, ACT, AP
(n=20)

High School (11-12)
(n=75)

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

Q:



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