Jargon Reduction Audit

In 2001, executives at Travelocity, an online travel agency, noticed that call and email volume to their customer service lines was at an all-time high. Most notably, most of the questions prompting customers to reach out to the customer service department were already answered in the company's online Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

Upon further investigation, Travelocity's executives uncovered the reason that their customers could not find the answers to their questions in the FAQs: that section of the website was littered with passive-voice sentences, dense chunks of text, and travel industry jargon (e.g., "forced connection," or "oversold situation") that were difficult to interpret.

To simplify their online content, Travelocity conducted a jargon reduction audit using a free, online language simplicity calculator tool called the Gunning-Fog Index. The index score represents the number of years of education a person would need to comprehend a piece of text. Travelocity aims to keep their website language between a score of 8 and 9.

Through this exercise, the company reduced call volume to their customer service lines by 5% at little cost.

Translating Online Content to Student-Friendly Language

travelocity

Simplifying Content Reduces Call Volume

In 2001, measured spike in call and email volume for FAQs answered online	Gunning-Fog Index calculates reading level required to read online content	Removed jargon, used active voice, and simplified language used on website

BEFORE

Your airline may require either your e-ticket number or confirmation number when checking in. Both of these numbers are available in the Passenger and Ticket Information section of your itinerary.

Gunning Fog Index Score: 15.33

AFTER

Be sure to bring your Travelocity itinerary when you check in. This includes your e-ticket and confirmation number which you may need to show when you check in.

Gunning Fog Index Score: 9.88

5% Drop in call volume to Travelocity customer service call center after website content simplification

Source: Dixon M, Toman N, et al., *The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty*, London: Corporate Executive Board, 2013; Gunning Fog Index http://gunning-fog-index.com/; EAB interviews and analysis.

Higher Ed Terminology Translation Exercise

Website Jargon Reduction Audit

Purpose of the Tool

This worksheet identifies language commonly used by administrators and in new-student onboarding materials (e.g., handouts, webpages, etc.). This worksheet is designed as a group or individual activity to create student-friendly translations of technical jargon.

Directions

- Complete worksheet in a group or alone
- Fill in the translation section with a brief and simple definition of a term
  (recommended length: 7-10 words)
- Use Gunning Fog Index (GFI) online tool to assess the readability of your translation
  (www.gunning-fog-index.com)
- Share group or individual translations with colleagues and determine most suitable, concise,
  and lowest GFI score translation
- Optional: Formalize into handout for all staff, new hires, and even students
- Optional: Consider with staff how these translations may vary based on a student or parent audience

Admissions		
Term	**Translation**	**Gunning Fog Index Score (GFI)**
Articulation Agreement		
High School Transcript		
GED		
ESL		
Credit for Prior Learning		
Certificate		
Course Equivalency		
Degree		
Transfer		
Residency		
Early College Enrollment		
Prospective Student		
Course Load Status		
Class Status		
Certificate		
Tuition and Fees		
Tuition		
Payment Plan		
Tuition Schedule		
Subsidy		
Fee Schedule		
Tuition and Fee Refund		
Withdrawal		
Registration Fee		
Program Eligibility		

Higher Ed Terminology Translation Exercise (cont.)

Financial Aid		
Term	**Translation**	**Gunning Fog Index Score (GFI)**
Academic Year		
Accreditation		
Additional Eligibility		
Adjusted Gross Income		
Associate Degree		
Attending School		
Award Amount		
Award Letter		
Award Year		
Cancellation		
Collection Agency		
Collection Charges		
Cost of Attendance (COA)		
Data Release Number (DRN)		
Default		
Default Rate		
Deferment		
Delinquent		
Dependency Status		
Direct Loan		
Disbursed Amount		
Disbursement		
Discharge		
Eligible Noncitizen		
Eligible Program		
Enrollment Status		
Entrance Counseling		
Exit Counseling		
Expected Family Contribution (EFC)		
FAFSA		
Federal Pell Grant		

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Higher Ed Terminology Translation Exercise (cont.)

Financial Aid, (cont.)		
Term	**Translation**	**Gunning Fog Index Score (GFI)**
Federal Perkins Loan		
Federal School Code		
Federal Student Aid		
Federal Student Aid PIN		
Federal Student Loan		
Federal Work-Study		
Financial Aid Offer		
Financial Aid Package		
GED		
Grace Period		
Grant		
Guaranteed Student Loans		
Income Tax		
Independent Student		
Interest		
Legal Guardianship		
Lender		
Loan Forgiveness		
Loan Holder		
Loan Services		
Master Promissory Note		
Merit-Based		
Need-Based		
Net Price		
Net Price Calculator		
Overpayment		
PLUS Loan		
Private Loan		
Promissory Note		
Regular Student		
Repayment Date		

Higher Ed Terminology Translation Exercise (cont.)

Financial Aid, (cont.)		
Term	**Translation**	**Gunning Fog Index Score (GFI)**
Satisfactory Academic Progress		
Scheduled Award		
Scholarship		
Standardized Test		
Student Aid Report		
Subsidized Loan		
TRIO		
Unsubsidized Loan		
Verification		
Work-Study		
Placement Tests		
Evaluation of Prior Coursework		
COMPASS/ACCUPLACER		
ACT		
Remedial		
Developmental		
Cutoff Score		
Accelerated		
Placement		
Registration		
Registrar		
Elective		
Prerequisite		
Course Load		
Credit Hour		
General Degree Requirement		
Additional Terms		
GPA		
Office Hours		

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Higher Ed Jargon Reduction Exercise

Purpose of the Tool

The following exercise may be used with staff members to conduct a jargon reduction audit, so that students and other audiences may more effectively navigate the college website, newsletters, handouts, and other written materials.

Directions

- Ask IT Department staff to identify top 10 college webpages with highest volume of traffic

- Brainstorm all student- and parent-facing material that generates a high volume of in-person traffic

- Provide staff with print copies of webpages identified by IT staff and additional self-identified webpages

- Ask staff to complete the following tasks:

    1. **Reduce multisyllabic words:** Underline all words with more than two syllables. Identify and replace them with shorter words (even if this requires using multiple words in the place of one multisyllabic word)

    2. **Remove passive voice:** Ask staff to highlight all language in passive voice; rephrase sentences to be in active voice

    3. **Group related information:** Condense all text that pertains to the same topic in a specific area and use white space to separate it from information pertaining to another topic

    4. **Translate jargon:** Use the results from the Higher Ed Terminology Translation Exercise (page 40) to replace jargon (where appropriate) with translations for a non-higher education audience (this step is especially effective when completed with new employees unfamiliar with higher education jargon)

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Higher Ed Jargon Reduction Exercise (cont.)

Example:

Original Text:

Take the College Placement Test

After you have been admitted to the college, you must take the **college placement test**. Schedule your test by going to www.eabcc.edu or by calling. If *you have* successfully completed a **college-level** English or math course from another college or have taken EABCC placement testing at an earlier date, you may qualify for an **exemption** from all or part of the test. In order to be **eligible** to participate in a specific academic program and/or enroll in **credit classes**, students must achieve a **minimum score** of 33 out of 120 on the reading portion of the test.

Gunning Fog Index Score: 12.65

Revised Text:

Take the College Placement Test

If you are an admitted student, you must take a test that measures what classes you are ready to take, called "Placement Tests." It's important to prepare for this test because it could impact how fast you can graduate if you place into classes that do not count towards your degree. To enroll in classes that do count towards your degree, you need score at least 33 out of 120 on the reading section.

You'll need an appointment to take the test. You should schedule it by going to www.eabcc.edu or by calling (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

There are two reasons you may not need to take the test.

1) If you completed and passed an English or math course for college credit at another school

2) If you took the placement test at EABCC in the past

Gunning Fog Index Score: 8.79

Key:

Passive Voice

Jargon

<u>Multisyllabic</u>

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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