

Assessing the Reading Ability of People Living With Dementia: Are New Testing Instruments Needed?

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Standard Neuropsychological Reading Tests Currently in Use

- Lists of irregularly spelled words
- Used to estimate pre-morbid IQ
- Examples
 - National Adult Reading Test (NART), 1982, 1991, 2016
 - North American versions
 - AMNART, 1987
 - NAART, 1989
 - Hopkins Adult Reading Test (HART), 2009
 - Wechsler Test of Adult Reading (WTAR), 2001

Do These Tests Measure Actual Reading Ability?*

- The oral reading of single words presented as lists of words does not reflect functional reading behaviors of adults with a long history of literacy.
- Consider that most adults read a variety of stimuli in their daily lives that are mostly presented in sentence format (or multiword phrases).
- Sentences provide a multiplicity of cues beyond the orthographic-phonologic, such as grammar and context.
- Therefore, tests of single-word oral reading ability and reading comprehension may not reflect accurately the reading abilities of persons with Alzheimer's Disease.

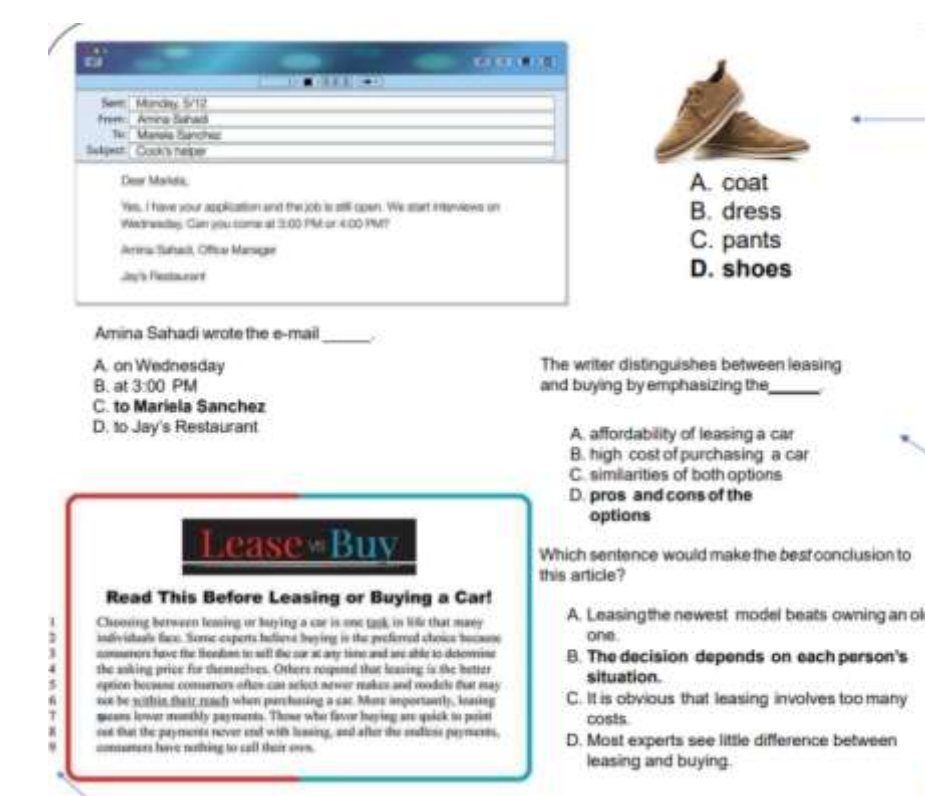
*Bourgeois, Michelle S. 2001. "Is Reading Preserved in Dementia?" *The ASHA Leader* 6 (9): 5. <https://doi.org/10.1044/leader.FTR2.06092001.5>

Other Adult Reading Diagnostic Tools

- [National Assessment of Adult Literacy \(NAAL\)](#)
- [Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies \(PIAAC\)](#)
- [Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems \(CASAS\) Reading Goals](#)
- [Reading Evaluation Adult Diagnosis \(READ\)](#)
- [Adult Diagnostic Reading Inventory \(ADRI\)](#)
- [Quick and Easy Adult Reading Assessments](#)
- [Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine \(REALM\)](#)

Drawbacks of Diagnostic Tools

- Designed for adults 16+
- Designed to test functional literacy
 - Financial literacy
 - Health literacy



https://www.casas.org/docs/default-source/product-brochures/reading-goals-flyer.pdf?sfvrsn=89e73f5a_10?Status=Master

- Not designed for everyday reading needs of people living with dementia
 - Pleasure, joy of learning
 - Meaningful activity
 - Stimulating memories
 - Stimulating conversation

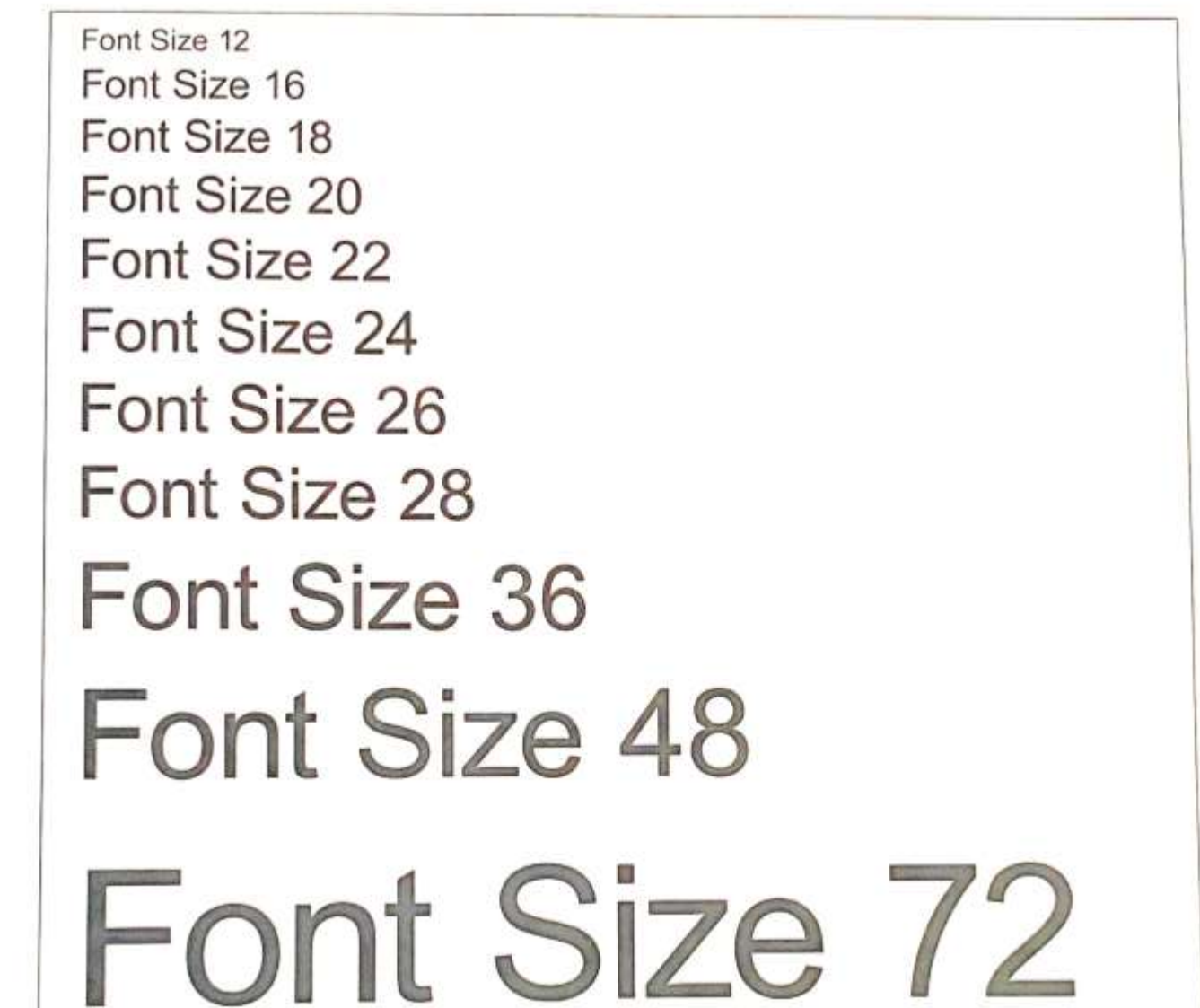
Readability Tests

- Flesch-Kincaid
 - Reading Ease
 - Grade Level
 - Often bundled with word processing programs (i.e. Microsoft Word)
- Dale-Chall Readability Formula
 - Revised in 1995
 - List of 3,000 familiar words

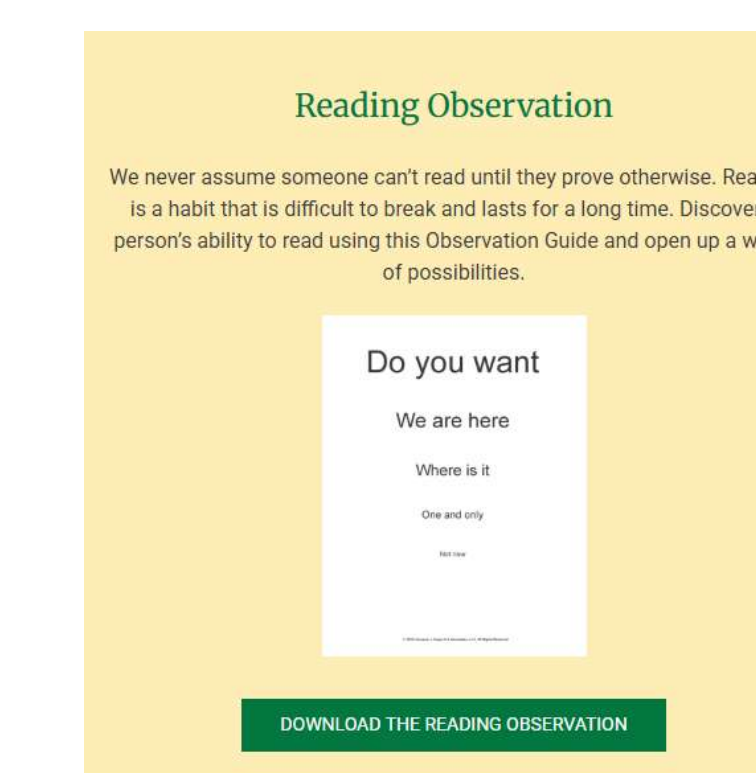
2024-25 U.S. Literacy Statistics

- 54% of U.S. adults read below a 6th-grade level
- <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/state-county-estimates.asp#4>

Font Size is Critical to Accommodate Vision Changes



Bourgeois, Michelle S. *Memory and Communication Aids for People with Dementia*. Health Professions Press, 2014. p. 19.



Free Reading Observation Tool from the Center for Applied Research in Dementia

<https://www.cen4ard.com/what/free-resources/>

Resources

- Bourgeois, Michelle S. 2001. "Is Reading Preserved in Dementia?" *The ASHA Leader* 6 (9): 5. <https://doi.org/10.1044/leader.FTR2.06092001.5>
- Bourgeois, Michelle S. 2014. *Memory and Communication Aids for People with Dementia*. Health Professions Press.
- Durant, David M. 2017. "Reading and Neuroplasticity." In *Reading in a Digital Age*. Against the Grain. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9944117>
- Ostrowski, Susan, and Peter S. Dixon. 2016. "Reading and Dementia." *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups* 1 (15): 26–36. <https://doi.org/10.1044/persp1.SIG15.26>
- Riedner, Mary Beth. 2025. "Reading: A Nonpharmacological Intervention for Dementia?" *Library Trends* 74 (2): 332-350. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/976067>
- Smrokowska-Reichman, Agnieszka, Edyta Janus, Jeannette Tamplin, et al. 2024. "The HOMESIDE Study—A Research Project to Support People Living with Dementia and Their Family Caregivers: Preliminary Report on Reading Intervention." *Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine* 10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23337214241239174>

National Adult Reading Test (NART) Word Card

CHORD	SUPERFLUOUS
ACHE	SIMILE
DEPOT	BANAL
AISLE	QUADRUPED
BOUQUET	CELLIST
PSALM	FACADE
CAPON	ZEALOT
DENY	DRACHM
NAUSEA	AEON
DEBT	PLACEBO
COURTEOUS	ABSTEMIOUS
RAREFY	DETENTE
EQUIVOCAL	IDYLL
NAIVE	PUERPERAL
CATACOMB	AVER
GAOLED	GAUCHE
THYME	TOPIARY
HEIR	LEVIATHAN
RADIX	BEATIFY
ASSIGNATE	PRELATE
HIATUS	SIDEREAL
SUBTLE	DEMESNE
PROCREATE	SYNCOPE
GIST	LABILE
GOUGE	CAMPANILE

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C3&q=national+adult+reading+test&og=, p. 25