

To both determine whether the most high-yield [online patient](#) materials for surgical specialties meet the 6th grade readability level recommended by the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) and [American Medical Association](#) (AMA), and to discover differences in readability across specialties. We hypothesize average readability scores will exceed an 11th-grade level.

The top five most common procedures for each of seven surgical specialties (neurological, orthopedic, plastic, general, thoracic, pediatric, and vascular) were searched using an incognito [Google](#) query to minimize location bias. The text from the top five patient-relevant links per procedure, excluding Wikipedia, journal articles, and videos, was extracted and inserted into Readability Studio Software for analysis.

The combined average grade level of materials (\pm standard deviation) was: 10.47 ± 2.51 Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL), 11-12 New Dale-Chall (NDC), 10.09 ± 1.97 Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG), 12 Fry Graph (FG). Thoracic, neurologic, vascular, plastic, and orthopedic were least readable (grade level 10+ by all metrics).

High [readability](#) of procedure materials for patients is not unique to neurosurgery: all specialties exceeded the recommended 6th grade level by three or more grades. Online [patient education](#) materials related to surgical subspecialties must be written more comprehensible ¹⁾.

¹⁾

Behmer Hansen R, Gold J, Lad M, Gupta R, Ganapa S, Mammis A. Health literacy among neurosurgery and other surgical subspecialties: Readability of online patient materials found with Google. Clin Neurol Neurosurg. 2020 Oct;197:106141. doi: 10.1016/j.clineuro.2020.106141. Epub 2020 Aug 22. PMID: 32861037.

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