

Why Literacy Matters: **check your reading.**

Six questions on one real news article. Each uses a different reading skill, from finding a fact to judging what to trust.

READ THIS FIRST

Online privacy policies can be 90,000 words long. Here are 3 ways to simplify them

Adam Andreotta, Curtin University · The Conversation · January 26, 2025

<https://theconversation.com/online-privacy-policies-can-be-90-000-words-long-here-are-3-ways-to-simplify-them-247095>



How to use it. Read the whole article first. Keep it open while you answer, the way you would at the kitchen table. The questions go roughly from easier to harder. The levels are a guide to how hard each kind of task is on the international adult literacy test, not a score. The answer key is on the last page.

DECODE LEVEL 1

1. Paragraph 11 describes “automated consent.” What does that mean?

LOCATE LEVEL 1 TO 2

2. How long can a privacy policy be, and what share of Australians say they read all the policies that apply to them?

RESTATE LEVEL 2

3. In one or two sentences of your own, what is the article’s main point?

INFER LEVEL 3

4. Paragraph 24 says several car brands collected and sold driving data, and many drivers did not know. Based on the rest of the article, why might they not have known?

COMPARE LEVEL 3

5. Compare two of the proposed fixes, visuals and automated consent. What problem does each one solve, and what does each leave unsolved?

EVALUATE LEVEL 4 AND UP

6. The author is writing about Australia. Which parts would you need to check before applying them to the United States?

Answer key

1. Decode. Software that accepts or rejects privacy policies on your behalf, based on preferences you set once, so you do not have to read each policy yourself.

Where to look: Paragraphs 11 to 14

2. Locate. Up to 90,000 words. Only 6% say they read them all.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2 and 3

3. Restate. Privacy policies are too long and too many for anyone to read and understand, so the author proposes three fixes: policies built around visuals, software that consents for you, and outside ethics review of the policies themselves.

Where to look: Paragraphs 3, 5 and 6

4. Infer. The practice was most likely described in long privacy policies that almost nobody reads or fully understands. Being written down in fine print is not the same as being understood. The article never says this about the cars directly; you have to connect it to paragraphs 2 and 3.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2, 3 and 24

5. Compare. Visuals make a policy easier to understand, but there would still be too many policies to read. Automated consent removes the reading, but raises new questions: who is liable if the software makes a mistake, and the software would need its own privacy policy.

Where to look: Paragraphs 7 to 17

6. Evaluate. The 6% figure comes from an Australian survey, and the bank example, the court fine, and the new privacy law reforms are all Australian. The length problem and the research software from Carnegie Mellon are not country-specific. Before using the numbers or the legal points for the U.S., you would look for U.S. data and U.S. rules.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2, 8, 19 and 29