

Broadcast Disclosures and
Communication Effectiveness: Required
Reading Comprehension Rate

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Role of reading comprehension in disclosure

Opportunity for a message recipient to process a disclosure is a necessary (but not sufficient) requirement for effective disclosure.

Likelihood to process and comprehend is a function of reading comprehension rate demanded.

Why RCR is important to understand

Reading comprehension rate is especially noteworthy in a broadcast context.

In TV broadcast, message exposure, processing and comprehension is “paced” by the medium.

Calculation of reading comprehension rates

RCR in a broadcast setting is a function of two variables, the

1. Length of the disclosure (measured in number of words)

and

2. Amount of time (as a proportion of a minute) the disclosure is presented.

It is expressed in terms of words-per-minute.

Reading comprehension rate(s) in U.S.

In the U.S. population, RCR is a variable factor.

Upper limits to reported reading comprehension rates are in the range of 300 WPM.

Lower limit thresholds are in the range of 100 WPM.

A good working estimate of average comprehension rate is approximately 150 WPM.

Brinks Home Security
Commercial Video here.

Brinks Home Security

Audio: For over 135 years Brinks has been protecting people and their valuables around the world without the loss of one single dollar.

Disclosure 1 (3%, 5 sec., 84 WPM) Refers to Brinks Incorporated armored car customers.

Disclosure 2 (2%, 2 sec., 1860 WPM) Brink's Home Security, Inc. does not warrant against loss to covered premises. Three year monitoring contract required. \$23.95 monthly monitoring fee. (In California a two year monitoring contract is required. Total monitoring price \$574.80) 1997 Brinks Home Security, Inc., 1828 Valwood Parkway, Carrollton, TX 75005 Florida License #000000 plus 14 more "words".

Implications of high RCR disclosures

Failure of affirmative disclosure to occur within reasonable RCR limits results in *theoretical* but not *actual* disclosure.

Thus, in a broadcast context this sets up the opportunity to communicate unrealistic (i.e., misleading and (or) deceptive) principal selling messages in a manner that is technically “corrected” by disclosure(s) but not practically so.

ERA Reality
Commercial video here.

ERA Sellers Security Plan commercial Segment 1

VO: (Broker identified as ERA Broker Terri Berkowicz, Chicago, IL):
Selling a house is no vacation, but that's just what the walkers got
when they sold their house with our ERA office. ERA Sellers
Security Plan

Disclosure 1

Conditions apply, including a program participation fee, house must
meet specific qualifications, and purchase price will be determined
solely by ERA.

Message size: Upper case lettering, 4% of vertical screen.

Duration: 1.9 seconds

RCR demanded: $[21 \text{ words}/2 \text{ seconds}] * 60 = 630 \text{ WPM}$

ERA Sellers Security Plan commercial

Segment 2

VO: (ERA Sellers Security Plan) guaranteed that if we didn't sell their house ERA would buy it. ERA even agreed to take the risk of selling the house at a loss.

Disclosure 2

Additionally, a second home must be purchased through a broker designated by ERA. Profit is exclusive of holding and selling expenses. Call your participating ERA broker for details.

Disclosure specs:

Message size: Upper case lettering, 4% of vertical screen

Disclosure duration: 2.85 seconds

RCR demanded: $[28 \text{ words} / [2.85 \text{ seconds}] * 60 = 590 \text{ WPM}$

ERA Sellers Security Plan commercial

Segment 3

VO: When we sold it for more, the Walkers got the profit. The ERA Sellers Security Plan. Just the kind of help you'd expect from a friend. They used the extra money to take a vacation. They even sent me a postcard!

Disclosure 3

Each office independently owned and operated.

Message size: Upper case lettering, 4% of vertical screen

Disclosure duration: 2 seconds

RCR demanded: $[6 \text{ words}/2 \text{ seconds}] * 60 = 180 \text{ WPM}$

Universal Studios
Commercial video here.

Universal Studios No Line, No Wait commercial

Disclosure:

**Universal Studios
No Line. No Wait.
Ride access
1-8777-Orlando**

Anticipated maximum wait 15 minutes. Restrictions apply.

Message RCR demanded: 18 words = 540 WPM

Appendix: How to calculate required reading comprehension rates for a broadcast disclosure

RCR in a broadcast setting is a function of two variables, the

1. Length of the disclosure (measured in number of words) [**A**], and
2. Amount of time (as a proportion of a minute) the disclosure is presented [**B**], where B equals the length of the disclosure time (in seconds) divided by 60.

Thus, reading comprehension rate (RCR) is expressed in the following formula:

$$\text{RCR} = A \div B$$

It is expressed in terms of words-per-minute.