

Broadcast Disclosures and
Communication Effectiveness: Required
Reading Comprehension Rate

Keith B. Murray, PhD
Professor, Graduate School
Bryant College

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

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

