Calculating Readability

The Gunning-Mueller Fog Index*

1. Select a sample of at least 100 words.
2. Divide the total number of words in the sample by the number of sentences. This gives the average length of the sample.
3. Count the number of words in the sample with three or more syllables.
   - Don't count words that are capitalized.
   - Don't count words that are combinations of words (like "bookkeeper" or "butterfly")
   - Don't count words that are verb forms made into three syllables by adding -ed or -es (like "created" or "trespasses")
4. Divide the number of hard words by 100 (the number of words in the sample).
   - For example, 15 hard words divided by a sample 100 words long gives you 15% hard words in the passage.
5. To get the Fog Index, add the sentence length and percentage of hard words.
   - Multiply this total by .4. The answer corresponds to the years of education needed to easily understand the piece of writing.
   - Anything over 17, call "17 plus," meaning above the level of a college graduate.

Using the Fog Index

Following is a sample that's not made up! The calculations determine the fog index.

For the purposes of this policy sexual harassment may be defined as unsolicited nonreciprocal behavior by an employee who is in a position to control or affect another employee's job or a student's status as a student or who uses the power or authority of that position to cause that student or employee to submit to sexual activity, or to fear that he or she would be punished for refusal to submit. Sexual harassment also includes any employee conduct reasonably interfering with another employee's work performance or student's status as a student by creating an intimidating hostile or offensive [100 words] working or educational environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average sentence length</th>
<th>50 words</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent hard words</td>
<td>+ 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .4</td>
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<td>28.0 or 17 plus</td>
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Seventeen plus years of education are needed to easily understand the sample.
NOTE: Don't over-use the Fog Index. Use it only occasionally to spot-check your writing.

*From How to Take the Fog Out of Writing by Robert Gunning and Douglas Mueller.
The Gettysburg Address (5th Version)

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate - we cannot consecrate - we cannot hallow - this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.