

Language for Demographic Prompts

Goal: provide recommended plain language for demographic prompts that balance the (1) intent of what the prompt is trying to identify while (2) keeping the language as simple as possible so that most students could readily understand these questions.

Reading statistics:

Reading level corresponds with the grade level. Reading ease score is summarized in the table, below.

Score	Notes
90-100	very easy to read, easily understood by an average 11-year-old student
80-90	easy to read
70-80	fairly easy to read
60-70	easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students
50-60	fairly difficult to read
30-50	difficult to read, best understood by college graduates
0-30	very difficult to read, best understood by university graduates

Single Parent & Single Pregnant Women

Federal Definition:

Are you a single, separated, divorced, or widowed individual who has primary responsibility for one or more dependent children under age 18 (including single pregnant women)?

17.6 reading level; reading ease score of 16.4

Recommended plain language:

Are you raising children under 18 years old?

If yes, are you single, separated or widowed and the main caregiver for your child/children?

Are you pregnant and will be a single parent?

4.6 reading level; reading ease score of 78.5

Economically disadvantaged

Client Definition:

Do you or your family receive need-based financial assistance or is your income at or below the federal poverty level?

12.8 reading level; reading ease score of 38.4

Note that Perkins does not require 'economically disadvantaged' to be below the federal poverty line, this is up to states to decide. See ['A Common Postsecondary Data Dictionary for Perkins Accountability'](#).

Recommended plain language:

Are you (or your household) unable to pay for one or more basic living needs? *For example: food, bills, rent, childcare.*

4.7 reading level; reading ease score of 80.3

Individual with Disabilities

Federal Definition:

Do you have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or have a history or record of such an impairment? Are you perceived by others as having such an impairment?

10.7 reading level, reading ease score of 50.8

Recommended plain language:

Do you have any physical or mental conditions that disrupt your daily life activities? *This could include blindness, deafness, anxiety, learning disabilities, mobility challenges, etc.*

With examples of disabilities: 13.3 reading level, reading ease score of 21.5

Without examples of disabilities: 10.9 reading level, reading ease score of 41.5

Homeless

Federal Definition:

Do you lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; this includes

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campground due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- living in an emergency or transitional shelter;
- being abandoned in a hospital;
- awaiting foster care placement; or
- having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations

9.9 reading level; reading ease score of 42.1

Recommended plain language:

In the past year, have you experienced homelessness? *This could include living in a car, sleeping on a friend's couch, staying in a shelter, living in temporary housing (like a motel).*

8.3 reading level; reading ease score of 62.8