

Bible Chart with Grade Levels

Preface: I have been meaning to do a chart like this for some time; the problem being is, I don't really know how to judge reading levels. However, I have thought about subdividing the translations for the exegetical study of each chapter of the Bible and adding in another category of *easy-to-read* translations. In order to do that, I needed to know which translations were *easy-to-read*. This resulted in the following chart, culled mostly from elsewhere, with the credit given at the bottom of the chart.

Bible/ Abbreviation	Reading Level by Grade/ Target Audience	Description/ Translation Philosophy	Commentary	Distinctives	Examples	Published/ translators
Amplified Bible AMP	11 th Grade Those looking for more detailed shades of meaning in Scripture	Dynamic Word-for-word plus additional amplification of word meanings in brackets	This translation is really a mini-commentary which features a system of verse-end alternate translations and comments on different shades of meaning in the original languages.	A popular translation used to understand the hidden meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. Break through the language barrier.		New Testament 1958; Old Testament 1964; Revised 1987
Common English Bible CEB	7 th grade CBS, BY					
Contemporary English Version CEV	4 th Grade 5.4 grade level 5 th BY Unchurched	Paraphrase Thought-for- thought	This version seeks to be readable, yet faithful to the meaning of the original texts. Nouns describing God's actions (righteousness, salvation, etc.) are rendered in varying ways. This version avoids complicated language, obscure vocabulary and difficult sentence structure to produce a translation understandable to a wide variety of modern readers.	Written at an elementary-school reading level, the CEV is readable and understandable for the modern reader.		New Testament 1991; Old Testament 1995

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Emphasized Bible	12 th Grade	Formal Equivalent	Joseph R. Rotherham's translation features special markings, indentations, and footnotes designed to convey the sense of Hebrew and Greek to the modern reader.			New Testament 1878, 1897; Old Testament 1902
English Standard Version ESV	8 th Grade 7.4 grade level 10 th grade CBS 10 th BY Bible readers of all ages	Formal Equivalent Word-for-word	The ESV uses the classic principles of word-for-word translation and literary excellence as exemplified by the KJV and most recently the RSV. Highly accurate, the ESV closely reflects the original meaning of the text in clear, readable, enduring English.	A literal update of the Revised Standard Version, seeks to produce word-for-word correspondence.		Fall 2001
God's Word God's Word™ GW	4 th – 5 th Grade 4.3 grade level 5 th grade CBS Christians and non-Christians; adults and children	Dynamic Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	This revision utilizes the translation process employed by global mission organizations for translating the Bible into new foreign languages. The goal is to express the meaning of what appears in the forms of the original biblical languages into those expressing essentially the same meaning in modern English.	A meaning-based, contemporary translation utilizing the thought-for-thought translation philosophy		New Testament 1988; Old Testament 1995
Good News Version (Today's English Version) GNV, GNT, TEV	7 th Grade 6 th grade (LfJ) 7 th BY 6.0 (Zond.)	Paraphrase; Emphasis on Functional Equivalent	A thought-for-thought translation theory called dynamic equivalence was used for this version. It uses common English throughout, and modern idioms are sometimes substituted for ancient ones in the interest of clarity.			New Testament 1966; Old Testament 1974, Revised 1993

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Holman Christian Standard Bible HCSB	NT 7 th – 8 th grade 7.5 grade level 7 th – 8 th grade CBS Bible readers of all ages	Functional equivalence; Optimal Equivalence Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	The HCSB is a combination of word-for-word and dynamic renderings that is both faithful to the words God inspired and user friendly to modern readers.	A translation that attempts to combine both formal and dynamic equivalence		NT 2001
International Standard Version ISV	8 th – 9 th					
Living Bible LT	8 th Grade	Paraphrase	This paraphrase of the American Standard Version was an attempt by Kenneth L. Taylor to put the Bible in language his children could understand. It is useful for introducing the Bible to people who are unfamiliar with it.			New Testament 1962; Old Testament 1971
The Message	7 th Grade 5.5–10 depending on the passage 4 th – 5 th CBS 4.8 (Zond.) Christians who want a fresh Bible-reading experience and seekers	Paraphrase Thought-for- thought. Converts the original languages into the tone and rhythms of modern-day American speech while retaining the idioms and meaning of the original languages	Pastor and biblical scholar Eugene H. Peterson's aim in developing this contemporary language version is to transfer the informal and earthy flavor of the Greek into the rhythms and idiom of everyday English.	This paraphrase was translated using the rhythms and tone of contemporary English to communicate to the modern reader		New Testament 1993; Psalms 1994; Complete Bible, July 2002

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New American Bible NAB	11 th Grade 6.6 grade level 7 th BY 6.6 (Zond.) Catholic	Formal equivalent, Dynamic Word-for-word	This is the first complete American Catholic Bible translated from the original languages. Its style is more direct than that of the Jerusalem Bible.	Published under the direction of Pope Pius XII, this Catholic version of the Bible represents more than 25 years of effort by the Catholic Biblical Association of America. All editions include the Deuterocanonical/ Apocryphal books		1970; NT revised 1986; Psalms revised 1992
New American Standard NASB	11 th Grade 10 th BY (for updated version) Conservative, evangelical Protestant	Formal Equivalent Word-for-word	Especially popular among Evangelicals and others who want a word-for-word translation of the original manuscripts, this translation was prepared as an update of the 1901 American Standard Version (ASV).	A highly respected, formal translation of the Bible. Purpose of the work was to update the American Standard Version into more current English. The most literal is now more readable		New Testament 1963; Whole Bible 1971, Revised 1995
New Century Version NCV	3 rd Grade 5.6 grade level 3 rd grade CBS 4 th BY Those who want a highly readable translation of the Bible in today's language	Formal Equivalent Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	From the translators of the International Children's Version, this conservative evangelical translation is in simple English, designed to be easy to read.	Based on the ICB (International Children's Bible), it's a readable and simple translation using the thought-for-thought translation methodology.		New Testament 1978; Old Testament 1986

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New English Bible NEB	8 th Grade	Dynamic	The first British Bible to be translated from the original languages since the King James Version, this is a thought-by-thought translation in modern British English. It has been replaced, for the most part, by the Revised English Bible.			New Testament 1961; Old Testament 1970
New English Translation NET	7 th BY					
New International Readers' Version NirV	3 rd Grade 2.9 grade level 3 rd grade CBS 3.5 grade (LfJ) Children ages 10 and under	Simple Functional Equivalent Balance between word-for-word translation and thought-for-thought, with an emphasis on meaning when necessary for simplification	The NirV is a simplified version of the NIV, developed by the same translation team that prepared the NIV. Very easy reading, designed for children as a stepping stone to the NIV, as well as those for whom English is a second language.	A thorough, scholarly simplification of the NIV, the NirV was specifically designed to help young children and new readers understand the Bible for themselves and create an easy stepping-stone from a children's Bible to an adult Bible. The NIV for kids		1996 Published in 1994. Updated in 1998.
New International Version NIV	7 th Grade 7.8 grade level 7 th – 8 th grade CBS 7.8 grade (LfJ) 8 th BY Evangelical Christians of all ages	Primarily functional equivalent with some attention to formal considerations Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Called "international" because it is transdenominational and contains the work of many scholars from many English-speaking nations, the NIV is a straightforward translation in contemporary English.	The bestselling translation, widely accepted by evangelical Christians. Purpose in translation was to "produce an accurate translation, suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use." Most read. Most trusted		New Testament 1973; Old Testament 1978

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New Jerusalem Bible NJB	9 th Grade 7.4 (Zond.) 8 th BY	functional equivalent	An update of the Jerusalem Bible, with revised footnotes and more dignified language.			1985
New Jewish Translation	12 th Grade	Formal Equivalent	A modern language translation of the Jewish Scriptures (Christian Old Testament); of special interest to students of the Old Testament.			Torah 1962; Nevi'im 1978; Kethubim 1982; Tanakh 1985
New King James Version NKJV	8 th Grade 7 th grade CBS 8.5 grade (LfJ) 9 th Zond. Those who want a readable translation of the Bible that is great for study but maintains the poetry of the KJV	Formal Equivalent Authors used the original KJV as a benchmark, while working to produce an accurate and modern word-for- word translation	This translation updates the language of the King James Version, changing archaic inflections and obsolete words, while preserving its basic literary structure.	A modern language update of the original KJV. Purpose was to update and modernize the original KJV but preserve the KJV as much as possible.		1982
New Life Bible		Dynamic	Missionaries Gleason and Kathryn Ledyard's work in the Canadian arctic inspired them to develop a simple language version which breaks down difficult concepts into simple phrases.			New Testament 1969; Old Testament 1986

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New Living Translation NLT	6 th – 7 th Grades 6.3 grade level 6 th grade CBS Adults and children	Functional Equivalent Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Using Kenneth Taylor's paraphrase, The Living Bible, as a base, a team of 90 Bible scholars worked for seven years, carefully comparing each verse with the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures to produce a true translation that is accurate and easy to understand.	Based on the work of 90 Bible scholars and a smaller team of English stylists. These scholars and stylists went back to the original languages and sought to produce the closest natural equivalent of the message in natural, contemporary English.		1996
New Revised Standard Version NRSV	10 th Grade 8.1–10.4 grade level 11 th grade CBS 10.4 grade (Zond.) Mainline and interconfessional	Emphasis on Functional Equivalent Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	An update of the Revised Standard Version (1952), this translation incorporates changes resulting from archaeological and textual discoveries in recent decades.	A widely accepted translation in the tradition of the King James Version. Purpose was to make a good one better." Published in 1990. A Bible for all Christians		1990
Revised English Bible REB	6 th Grade	Emphasis on Functional Equivalent	This revision of the New English Bible, which began in 1973, features clear, contemporary international English. This text is intended for both private reading and public worship.			1989
Today's NIV	8 th BY Today's generation of Bible readers looking for readability without sacrificing accuracy	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought		Remaining faithful to the original texts while using up-to-date language of today's world, the TNIV is a highly readable and highly accurate translation. Timeless truth. Today's language.		Complete Bible published in 2005.

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World English Bible WEB	7 th BY					
Young's Literal Translation	8 th – 9 th Grades college BY	Formal Equivalent	Robert Young sought to correct certain inaccuracies in the King James Version in this very literal translation.			1862, Revised 1887

This information was pulled together from:

<http://www.mardel.com/UserFiles/File/Bible%20Translation%20Chart.pdf> (2nd grade given; marked “grade level”)

<http://www.allbibles.com/bibleversions.asp> (1st grade given; marked “grade” “grades”)

http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/cms_content?page=652502&sp=1003 (3rd grade given; marked CBS)

http://livingforjesus.info/articles/selecting_bible.htm (Grade level marked LfJ)

<http://bethyada.blogspot.com/2011/11/bible-reading-level.html> (Marked BY)

All accessed March 3, 2013.

<http://www.apbrown2.net/web/TranslationComparisonChart.htm> (marked Zond.)

http://isv.org/ISV_Features_and_Benefits.pdf

Accessed March 9, 2013.

The chart below was courtesy of www.Zondervan.com

Formal Equivalent

These translations attempt to reproduce the Greek and Hebrew as exactly as possible into English. Words, figures of speech, and sometimes even the sentence structure of the original languages are reproduced in a much more limited way in this type of Bible. These hold -in varying degrees- to a generally word for word approach.

Dynamic Equivalent

These Bibles run on a more thought-for-thought philosophy than the Formal Equivalent translations, but do so in a much more sparing manner than paraphrases. Greek and Hebrew figures of speech are replaced with modern rough equivalents. They are more readable in a sense, though sometimes in a freer translation some passages become more interpretations than translations.

Paraphrase

These are not really translations, but rewordings of the Scriptures that speak in a very earthy, common tongue. Those who advocate these note that the New Testament was written in the common language of the people and not that of playwrights or philosophers. The results can be the clearest expression of Scripture on par with the original. However, theological biases can creep in and be readily apparent. These are acceptable for devotional reading, but even the authors themselves would not suggest using them for study or as a church Bible. Some paraphrases are based on the original languages, while others on translations themselves.

Aberrational Translations

These are translations done independently by a smaller religious sect. Usually they will "translate" Scripture by twisting it to fit their theologies, rather than conforming their theologies to the Scriptures. These groups often have a person or organization which is practically considered equal in authority with the Bible, and a number of them believe that their group is the only way to salvation.

I got this from

<http://www.tateville.com/translations.html>