

Exhibit 1. Description of PISA reading literacy proficiency levels: 2018

Proficiency level and lower cut score	Task description
Level 6 (698)	Readers at Level 6 can comprehend lengthy and abstract texts in which the information of interest is deeply embedded and only indirectly related to the task. They can compare, contrast and integrate information representing multiple and potentially conflicting perspectives, using multiple criteria and generating inferences across distant pieces of information to determine how the information may be used. Readers at Level 6 can reflect deeply on a text's source in relation to its content, using criteria external to the text. They can compare and contrast information across texts, identifying and resolving inter-textual discrepancies and conflicts through inferences about the sources of information, their explicit or vested interests, and other cues as to the validity of the information.
Level 5 (626)	Readers at Level 5 can comprehend lengthy texts, inferring which information in the text is relevant even though the information of interest may be easily overlooked. They can perform causal or other forms of reasoning based on a deep understanding of extended pieces of text. They can also answer indirect questions by inferring the relationship between the question and one or several pieces of information distributed within or across multiple texts and sources. Readers can establish distinctions between content and purpose, and between fact and opinion as applied to complex or abstract statements. They can assess neutrality and bias based on explicit or implicit cues pertaining to both the content and/or source of the information. They can also draw conclusions regarding the reliability of the claims or conclusions offered in a piece of text.
Level 4 (535)	Readers at Level 4 can comprehend extended passages in single or multiple-text settings. They interpret the meaning of nuances of language in a section of text by taking into account the text as a whole. In other interpretative tasks, students demonstrate understanding and application of <i>ad hoc</i> categories. They can compare perspectives and draw inferences based on multiple sources. Readers can search, locate and integrate several pieces of embedded information in the presence of plausible distractors. They can generate inferences based on the task statement in order to assess the relevance of target information. They can handle tasks that require them to memorize prior task context. Readers at this level can evaluate the relationship between specific statements and a person's overall stance or conclusion about a topic. They can reflect on the strategies that authors use to convey their points, based on salient features of texts (e.g., titles and illustrations). They can compare and contrast claims explicitly made in several texts and assess the reliability of a source based on salient criteria.
Level 3 (480)	Readers at Level 3 can represent the literal meaning of single or multiple texts in the absence of explicit content or organizational clues. Readers can integrate content and generate both basic and more advanced inferences. They can also integrate several parts of a piece of text in order to identify the main idea, understand a relationship or construe the meaning of a word or phrase when the required information is featured on a single page. Readers can search for information based on indirect prompts and locate target information that is not in a prominent position and/or is in the presence of distractors. In some cases, readers at this level recognize the relationship between several pieces of information based on multiple criteria. Level 3 readers can reflect on a piece of text or a small set of texts and compare and contrast several authors' viewpoints based on explicit information. Reflective tasks at this level may require the reader to perform comparisons, generate explanations or evaluate a feature of the text. Some reflective tasks require readers to demonstrate a detailed understanding of a piece of text dealing with a familiar topic, whereas others require a basic understanding of less-familiar content.
Level 2 (407)	Readers at Level 2 can identify the main idea in a piece of text of moderate length. They can understand relationships or construe meaning within a limited part of the text when the information is not prominent by producing basic inferences, and/or when the text(s) include some distracting information. They can select and access a page in a set based on explicit though sometimes complex prompts, and locate one or more pieces of information based on multiple, partly implicit criteria. Readers at Level 2 can, when explicitly cued, reflect on the overall purpose, or on the purpose of specific details, in texts of moderate length. They can reflect on simple visual or typographical features. They can compare claims and evaluate the reasons supporting them based on short, explicit statements.

Proficiency level and lower cut score	Task description
Level 1a (335)	Readers at Level 1a can understand the literal meaning of sentences or short passages. Readers at this level can also recognize the main theme or the author’s purpose in a piece of text about a familiar topic and make a simple connection between several adjacent pieces of information, or between the given information and their own prior knowledge. They can select a relevant page from a small set based on simple prompts, and locate one or more independent pieces of information within short texts. Level 1a readers can reflect on the overall purpose and on the relative importance of information (e.g., the main idea vs. non-essential detail) in simple texts containing explicit cues. Most tasks at this level contain explicit cues regarding what needs to be done, how to do it, and where in the text(s) readers should focus their attention.
Level 1b (262)	Readers at Level 1b can evaluate the literal meaning of simple sentences. They can also interpret the literal meaning of texts by making simple connections between adjacent pieces of information in the question and/or the text. Readers at this level can scan for and locate a single piece of prominently placed, explicitly stated information in a single sentence, a short text or a simple list. They can access a relevant page from a small set based on simple prompts when explicit cues are present.
Level 1c (189)	Readers at Level 1c can understand and affirm the meaning of short, syntactically simple sentences on a literal level, and read for a clear and simple purpose within a limited amount of time.

NOTE: To reach a particular proficiency level, a student must correctly answer a majority of items at that level. Students were classified into reading literacy levels according to their scores. Cut scores in the exhibit are rounded; exact cut scores are provided in table A-2 in the Methodology and Technical Notes. Scores are reported on a scale from 0 to 1,000.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2018.