



THE STARTER KIT

Considerations when using an open educational resource or creating your own.

Open educational resources (OERs) are a broad and diverse category. This may make the prospect of adopting or creating an OER daunting - leaving many instructors unsure of where they should start. This toolkit will provide you with some considerations before you start using OERs in your classroom, in addition to strategies, practices, and web resources.

1. Considerations before using or creating an OER
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Considerations Before Using or Creating an OER

The benefits provided by OERs include the volume and variety of resources available, the low barrier to entry, and the ability to adapt resources for your needs. Instructors at higher education institutions from all over the world contribute to the OER movement by depositing learning objects into open repositories. The challenge, however, is avoiding duplication of resources. When creating an OER your goal should be to provide the maximum value to learners.

Below are some starting questions you should think about before undertaking your project:

- Does what you want to create already exist?
- What kind of materials are available in your discipline?
- Are there any OERs you find inspiring?
- Is there an OER you think you could improve upon?

1. Does the OER already exist?

There are many OER repositories, as we will see in the following section of this toolkit (*see table in 2. Copyright*). Your first step should be searching existing OER repositories to see if what you want to create already exists. Additionally, if you're unsure what kind of OER to create, these searches can help inspire you.



2. Who is your audience?

Once you've decided that you're ready to adopt an existing OER, or create your own, it's important to consider your target audience(s).

- Do you have a primary audience? For example, educators in K-12.
- Do you have a secondary audience? For example, casual learners.
- Does your audience belong to a specific geographic location or ethnicity?
- Are there cultural differences you need to consider before creating your OER?



3. Could the OER be easily reused or repurposed?

The primary goal of OERs is that they're easily accessible and reusable. When adopting an existing OER, you'll want to choose one that isn't so specific that it can't be adapted to your needs. Similarly, if you create your own OER, making it easy to adapt will broaden its use among other instructors.

Starting questions:

- In what formats could you make your OER available?
- What OER formats are you most comfortable working with?
- Is the OER designed in such a way that you can pick and choose what content to use?



WEB RESOURCE: [*The 5R of Open Educational Resources*](#)

4. What expertise is required?

Creating an OER can be a considerable amount of work, especially if you're starting from scratch. It's important to consider all aspects for your project including content instructional design, technology and graphics.

Integrating an existing OER into your curriculum doesn't need to be a solo process. Instructional Designers and Librarians can provide guidance and help you incorporate open resources into your course.

Considerations:

- What design aspects of the project are you not comfortable with?
- Do you have access to professional instructional designers at your institution?
- What expertise would be required to create your OER?



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Copyright and Licensing

An OER is comprised of many components. When using an OER, or creating your own, you will need to be mindful of copyright and licensing restrictions, so you know what objects you can and cannot include in your OER.

Canadian Copyright Act

Under the Canadian Copyright Act, the creator of any work is provided the sole right to produce or reproduce that work. The copyright term is limited to the life of the creator plus fifty years after his/her death. Once this term has ended, the work enters the public domain.

WEB RESOURCE: [*Canadian Copyright Act*](#)

Many materials are copyrighted this way. In fact, the majority of the materials from your institutional or local library are not suitable for OERs due to the terms of use and licensing agreements.

Creative Commons Licensing



CCO Image Source

Typically, OERs are licensed under an open licensing system, the most popular being the [*Creative Commons \(CC\)*](#) licensing system. The Creative Commons is an “open” license that allows others to reuse, adapt, and re-publish content. CC allows creators to explain, in plain language, how their works can be used by the broader community.

The Four Components of Creative Commons Licenses



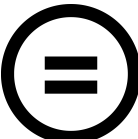
Attribution (BY)

Proper attribution must be given to the original creator of the work



Noncommercial (NC)

The work cannot be used for commercial means such as for-profit advertising



No Derivative Works (ND)

The work cannot be altered or “remixed.” Only identical copies of the work can be redistributed without additional permission from the creator.



Share Alike (SA)

Iterations of the original work must be made available under the same license terms.

Image Source

These elements are combined to create a total of *six creative commons licenses*, all of which can be viewed on the CC website.

NOTE: *The No Derivative Works and Share Alike elements are incompatible and cannot be combined under one license.*

WEB RESOURCE: [*All Creative Commons Licenses*](#)

Choosing a Creative Commons license can be confusing at first. Thankfully, the organization has created an online tool that will help you choose your license. The tool will also generate HTML code that you can embed in your OER.

WEB RESOURCE: [*Creative Commons License Chooser*](#)

Example Generated License:



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Attribution and Referencing

When using an OER or including content in an OER you create, it's important that you provide proper attribution to the original creator of the work. The Creative Commons has an online guide that demonstrates proper and improper attribution, providing attribution for multiple resources, as well as each component of the attribution.

WEB RESOURCE: [*Creative Commons Attribution Guide*](#)

Finding Creative Commons and other OER Content

There are many places online where you obtain content that is licensed under the Creative Commons and other open license frameworks.

RESOURCE	ACCESS	DESCRIPTION
CC Search Tool	https://search.creativecommons.org/	Searches across multiple databases to find CC content
OER Commons	https://www.oercommons.org/	OER repository
Merlot II	https://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm	OER repository
MIT Open Courseware	http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm	OER repository and open courses
Lumen Learning	http://lumenlearning.com/	OER repository and open courses
National Science Digital Library	https://nsdl.oercommons.org/	OER repository
Saylor Academy Library	http://www.saylor.org/books/	OER repository
Global Text Project	http://globaltext.terry.uga.edu/	Open textbook repository
BCampus Shareable Online Learning Resources	https://solr.bccampus.ca/wp/	Open course materials
BC Open Textbook Initiative	https://bccampus.ca/open-textbook-project/	Open textbooks
OpenStax	https://openstaxcollege.org/	Open textbooks

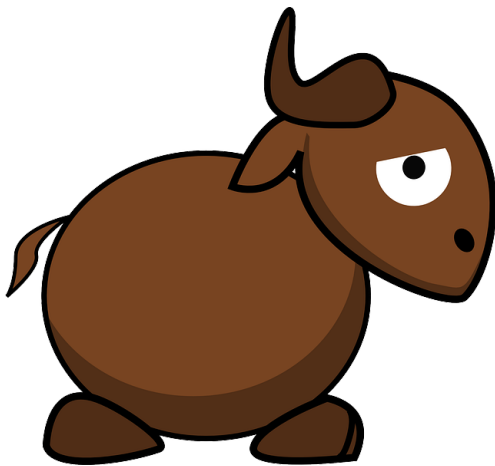
Google Advanced Search - Usage Rights Filtering

Google is also a useful resource for finding Creative Commons specific content. The Advanced Search (https://www.google.com/advanced_search) feature in Google allows you to filter results by “usage rights.” Here you can choose a variety of usage options.

NOTE: *Google doesn't completely filter out copyrighted content. Make sure to double check the copyright terms of objects you find using Google.*

Other Open Licenses:

While the Creative Commons is the most ubiquitous of the open licensing platforms, there are alternatives such as the GNU General Public License (from the Free Software Foundation) and the MIT License (from Massachusetts Institute of Technology).



GNU General Public License (*CCO Image*)
<https://www.gnu.org/licenses/licenses.en.html>



MIT License (*CCO Image*)
<https://opensource.org/licenses/MIT>

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Accessibility and Usability

Definition of Web Accessibility

“Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can use the Web. More specifically, Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web. Web accessibility also benefits others, including older people with changing abilities due to aging.”

~ [W3 Schools](#)

Accessibility and usability are what will determine the adoption of an OER. As mentioned in the first section of this toolkit, one advantage of OERs is the availability and diversity of open content. Not all this content is created equal, however. Exemplary OERs borrow many best practices from web design - ensuring that content is readable and works as intended for all users.

File Format Considerations

When using an OER, it is important that you can easily modify it for your purposes. Ideally, the OER should not require proprietary software.

OPEN FORMATS		PROPRIETARY FORMATS	
HTML	ePub	MS Word	Pages
RTF	Mobi	PowerPoint	Keynote
PNG	XML		
PDF			

If you have found an OER that you want to adapt for your course, but it is not available in an open format do not be discouraged. Many OERs are available in a variety of formats.

Teaching in a Digital Age

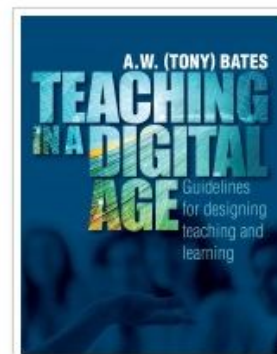
Description: The book examines the underlying principles that guide effective teaching in an age when everyone, and in particular the students we are teaching, are using technology. A framework for making decisions about your teaching is provided, while understanding that every subject is different, and every instructor has something unique and special to bring to their teaching. The book enables teachers and instructors to help students develop the knowledge and skills they will need in a digital age: not so much the IT skills, but the thinking and attitudes to learning that will bring them success. This resource includes a translated version in Vietnamese, as a PDF.

Author: A.W. (Tony) Bates

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Open Textbook(s):

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[Screenshot source](#)

The above screenshot is taken from the BC Campus Open Textbook Project. You can see at the bottom that the title is made available in a variety of formats including pdf, epub, and mobi.

OERs for print and electronic

While many OERs are digital *only* objects, others are designed for both on and off-line use. Examples of an offline OER might include

- Speaker notes
- Presentation slides
- Textbooks or guides

If the OER you want to use or create is designed with print in mind, you need to format web links accordingly. Web links should be *explicit*.

IMPLICIT LINK	EXPLICIT LINK
<u>Source</u>	Source: (https://www.wikipedia.org/)

If the OER design does not permit the inclusion of *explicit* links in the text, implicit links can be used, and a more detailed list of sources should be provided at the end or in a separate document.

Fonts and Colours

OERs should be usable for those with visual and auditory disabilities as well. Some design best practices include:

- Large font options
- Always accompanying captions with audio
- Having clear contrast between colours
- Making sure OERs work in grayscale format

For a more detailed list of accessibility considerations check out the W3 Web Accessibility initiative, which provides guidelines for creating a variety of resources.

WEB RESOURCE: [W3 Accessibility initiative](#)

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Other Guides and Resources

While this toolkit is designed to provide you with what you will need to start using and creating OERs, it's by no means the only resource available. Below are other guides that will help you on your OER journey.

OER Handbook for Educators http://wikieducator.org/OER_Handbook/educator_version_one

Inclusive Learning Design Handbook <http://handbook.floeproject.org/>

Jisc open educational resources <https://jisc.ac.uk/guides/open-educational-resources>

BC Open Textbook Toolkit <https://open.bccampus.ca/open-textbook-101/open-textbooks-toolkit/>