Open Education in Practice

A PRACTICAL, STRATEGIC CURRICULUM FOR IMPLEMENTING OPEN EDUCATION AND OER

- OPEN MINDSET
- OPEN RESOURCES
- OPEN PEDAGOGY
- OPEN IMPACT

MEGAN BRITTANY-FRUIA ZARA

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Open Education in Practice

A Core Curriculum for Moving from Open Education Theory to Open Practice

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Version Statement

Version 1.0
May 2026

This PDF represents the first public core curriculum version of *Open Education in Practice*. It is intended to serve as a stable foundation for teaching, learning, adapting, remixing, and further development.

This version includes the core instructional content, topic activities, reflection prompts, references, licensing information, AI disclosure, and implementation guidance.

Future versions may include additional facilitator guides, editable worksheets, slide decks, Canvas modules, badge rubrics, tracker templates, accessibility updates, and adapted formats.

Because this curriculum is openly licensed, others may build from it now. Adaptations do not need to wait for a “perfect” final version. Open education grows through use, feedback, revision, and shared practice.

How to Use This Curriculum

Open Education in Practice is designed to be flexible. It can be read from beginning to end, used one topic at a time, adapted into a course, or remixed into local open education programming.

This PDF is the core curriculum version. It includes the main instructional content, topic activities, reflection prompts, references, licensing information, and implementation guidance. It is meant to serve as a foundation that I can continue building from, and that others can build from too.

Use It as a Self-Paced Guide

Individuals can use this curriculum to learn about open education at their own pace. Readers may move through all five topics in sequence, or they may begin with the topic that best matches their current question or project.

A reader might use it to:

- Understand the difference between free and open.
- Learn where and how to search for OER.
- Evaluate a possible resource for fit and feasibility.
- Interpret Creative Commons licenses.
- Plan an adaptation or remix.
- Think through hosting, maintenance, or implementation.
- Explore open pedagogy and student co-creation.

Use It as a Faculty Development Curriculum

Open education programs, libraries, teaching and learning centers, instructional design teams, departments, and grant programs may use this curriculum as the basis for faculty development.

It can support:

- A short workshop series.
- A semester-long learning community.
- A mini-grant or fellowship program.
- A faculty onboarding pathway.
- A departmental OER exploration process.
- A professional development course.
- A badge or microcredential pathway.

Facilitators are encouraged to adapt examples, timelines, activities, and outputs to match their own institutional context.

Use It as a Workshop Sourcebook

Each topic includes explanations, examples, reflection prompts, and practical activities that can be pulled into shorter learning experiences.

For example, a facilitator might use:

- Topic 1 for an introductory OER workshop.
- Topic 2 for an OER discovery and platform-selection session.
- Topic 3 for a Creative Commons and attribution workshop.
- Topic 4 for an adoption, adaptation, and remix planning session.
- Topic 5 for an open pedagogy or student co-creation workshop.

The curriculum does not need to be used all at once. It is designed so that pieces can stand alone while still belonging to a larger learning pathway.

Use It as a Badge or Microcredential Pathway

This curriculum was originally developed through the Open Education Trailblazers program at The University of Texas at Arlington, where it was built into Canvas as both static learning content and a badge experience for the UTA community.

Institutions and programs may adapt the curriculum into their own badge or microcredential structures. Possible badge outputs include:

- A repository list or OER search plan.
- A keyword bank and search tracker.
- An evaluated resource.
- An attribution draft.
- A license interpretation or compatibility check.
- An adaptation or remix plan.
- A hosting or implementation decision.
- A synthesis brief or recommendation.

Use It as a Remixable Foundation

This curriculum is openly licensed so that others can revise and build from it.

You are invited to:

- Localize examples.
- Add institutional support contacts.
- Revise activities for a specific discipline or audience.
- Pair the content with your own templates or rubrics.

- Build a Canvas course, Pressbooks book, LibGuide, workshop packet, or facilitator guide from it.
- Translate, reorganize, or expand sections.
- Use it alongside existing OER training resources.

If you adapt the curriculum, please keep clear attribution, indicate what changed, and share adaptations under the same license.

What This PDF Includes and Does Not Include

This PDF includes the core curriculum text, topic activities, reflection prompts, references, licensing information, AI disclosure, and implementation guidance.

This PDF does not include every Canvas interaction, badge configuration, quiz setting, downloadable worksheet, rubric, tracker, slide deck, or facilitation plan from the UTA Trailblazers implementation.

Future versions may include editable worksheets, facilitator materials, slide decks, Canvas import packages, badge rubrics, and additional implementation tools.

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Overview

About Open Education in Practice

Open Education in Practice is a practice-forward curriculum designed to help educators, learners, staff, librarians, instructional designers, program leaders, and curious humans move from understanding open education in theory to applying it in real learning contexts.

Open education is often introduced through definitions, licensing frameworks, repositories, and policy language. That foundation matters. But many people get stuck after the introduction. They understand why open education matters, but they are not sure how to begin. They may wonder where to search, how to track what they find, how to judge quality and accessibility, what Creative Commons licenses actually allow, how to adapt a resource responsibly, where an OER should live, or how to invite students into co-creation without creating risk.

This curriculum was created for that messy middle.

It is not meant to replace existing open education learning resources. Instead, it is meant to serve as an “in practice” companion: a bridge between “I understand the concept” and “I can make a thoughtful decision in my own course, program, project, or learning community.”

How This Curriculum Was Born

This curriculum grew out of open education work at The University of Texas at Arlington, where I served as OER Librarian and developed the Open Education Trailblazers program. That program began as a way to create a clearer, more supportive pathway into open education for faculty, staff, and students.

The earliest version of the work was built in Canvas as a self-paced learning experience. It introduced open education concepts, guided participants through OER discovery and evaluation, and connected learning to digital badges. Over time, the design evolved. The more I worked with faculty and students, the clearer it became that people were not getting stuck because they did not care. They were getting stuck because the work had too many hidden hinges.

People wanted to know:

- Where do I start?
- Where do I look?
- How do I keep track of what I find?
- How do I know whether a resource is good enough?
- What do I do if a resource almost fits?
- What does the license actually let me do?
- What about accessibility?
- What about ancillaries?

- Where would this resource live?
- Who maintains it later?

Those questions shaped the curriculum.

The goal became less about simply teaching people what OER are and more about building a guided path through the decisions that make open education possible in practice. The curriculum was designed to reduce overwhelm, make the work visible, and help learners produce small, useful artifacts along the way: search notes, evaluation records, attribution drafts, adaptation plans, hosting decisions, co-creation ideas, and eventually a clear recommendation or next step.

In other words, the curriculum was built as both teaching material and infrastructure. It teaches open education, but it also gives people a way to do open education without having to start from scratch.

Why Another Open Education Curriculum?

There are already excellent freely available open education resources, and this curriculum exists because of that larger ecosystem, not apart from it.

Resources such as the Texas OER Core Curriculum hosted through OERTX and Texas Learn OER from Austin Community College provide essential foundations for understanding OER. These resources introduce major concepts such as what OER are, why they matter, how Creative Commons licensing works, where to find OER, how to evaluate resources, how accessibility fits into open education, and how OER connects to the Texas higher education landscape.

Those resources are valuable. This curriculum is not intended to replace them.

Open Education in Practice is designed as a companion layer. It assumes that foundational learning is important, but it focuses especially on what happens after someone understands the basics and wants to take action.

Where a foundational OER course may provide the map, this curriculum offers trail markers, decision tools, practice activities, reflection prompts, and implementation scaffolds.

It is especially focused on questions like:

- How do I turn curiosity into a repeatable search process?
- How do I document what I find so it becomes useful evidence?
- How do I evaluate OER for fit, accessibility, representation, and hidden workload?
- How do I use licensing and attribution as decision-making tools?
- How do I decide whether to adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause?
- How do I make platform, format, hosting, and maintenance decisions?
- How do I design open pedagogy without forcing students into publicness?

- How do I create a path that others can follow later?

This curriculum is not a replacement for the open education field's existing resources. It is a practical companion for using those resources with more confidence, care, and follow-through.

What the Curriculum Includes

Open Education in Practice is organized into five topics.

Topic 1: Foundations of Openness introduces what open education is, how OER differ from free resources, why the 5Rs matter, what problems OER can help address, what values animate open practice, how trust works in the knowledge commons, where support can come from, and how open pedagogy expands the work beyond materials.

Topic 2: Open Tools and Platforms explores where OER live, how repositories and platforms differ, how format choices affect access and sustainability, how to choose hosting options, how to maintain and version resources, and how to organize an OER collection.

Topic 3: Licensing and Copyright introduces copyright basics, Creative Commons licenses, attribution using the TASL method, license compatibility, fair use, and how to apply licenses to original work.

Topic 4: Adopting, Adapting, and Modifying OER helps learners decide whether to adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause. It covers evaluation for fit, accessibility, representation, ancillaries, hidden workload, adaptation scope, remixing responsibly, piloting, feedback, revision, and sharing.

Topic 5: Open Pedagogy and Co-Creation focuses on student agency, renewable assignments, authentic audiences, care-centered co-creation, tools and formats for collaboration, consent, privacy, attribution, accessibility, cultural safety, and ethical design.

Together, these topics move from foundations to practice. The curriculum is designed so that each section can stand alone, but the full sequence builds toward thoughtful open education implementation.

How This Curriculum Can Be Used

This curriculum is intentionally flexible. It can be used in many ways.

It can be read as a self-paced guide for individuals who want to understand and practice open education.

It can be adapted into a faculty development course, learning community, workshop series, fellowship, mini-grant program, or badge pathway.

It can be used by librarians, instructional designers, teaching and learning centers, departments, or open education programs to support consultations and professional development.

It can be assigned in pieces, with individual topics or activities used as standalone learning modules.

It can be used with students to introduce open education, Creative Commons licensing, open pedagogy, and ethical participation in knowledge creation.

It can support a mini-grant or OER exploration process by helping participants document their search, evaluate resources, understand permissions, identify hidden workload, and make a clear recommendation.

It can be remixed with other openly licensed materials, adapted for local institutional contexts, or embedded into a learning management system when the license terms are followed.

The curriculum is not designed to prescribe one correct path. Instead, it helps learners ask better questions, make informed choices, and document their decisions in ways that can help others.

Use Case: UTA Open Education Trailblazers

One original use case for this curriculum is the Open Education Trailblazers program at The University of Texas at Arlington.

At UTA, the curriculum was built out in Canvas as both static information and an interactive badge experience for the UTA community. The Canvas course supported two broad kinds of participation. Learners could explore the content as a self-paced resource, or they could engage more formally through a badge pathway connected to open education learning, resource discovery, evaluation, licensing, implementation planning, and synthesis.

The Trailblazers model used the curriculum to help participants move from early interest to concrete action. It supported open education consultations, professional learning, mini-grant preparation, and the development of reusable work products such as OER trackers, evaluation notes, attribution drafts, implementation plans, and landscape briefs.

The UTA Canvas course is available here:

https://uta.instructure.com/courses/229332

The course and its contents can also be downloaded from Canvas Commons here:

https://lor.instructure.com/resources/6c211edb358940668b76b17be73aae66?shared

Institutions, programs, and individual educators are welcome to use the UTA version as an example of how this curriculum can be implemented inside Canvas. The Trailblazers model is

only one possible implementation. Others may adapt the curriculum into workshops, guides, asynchronous modules, communities of practice, microcredentials, or local open education onboarding pathways.

License

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A Note on Legal and Institutional Context

This curriculum includes information about copyright, Creative Commons licensing, fair use, attribution, accessibility, and open education implementation. It is intended for educational purposes and should not be understood as legal advice.

When applying this curriculum in a specific institution, program, course, or public project, users should consider local policies, intellectual property rules, accessibility requirements, student privacy expectations, platform terms of use, and any relevant legal or institutional guidance.

When in doubt, consult appropriate support professionals, such as librarians, copyright specialists, accessibility specialists, instructional designers, legal counsel, or institutional policy experts.

Generative AI Delegation Acknowledgment

I, Megan Brittany-Fruia Zara, used generative AI tools as delegated support during the development and revision of this curriculum. I conducted the underlying research, maintained my research trail and resource tracking, made substantive decisions, verified citations and factual claims against source materials, and reviewed and edited AI-assisted outputs to ensure the final work reflects my intent, professional judgment, and authorship.

Generative AI tools were used to support outlining, reorganizing, summarizing, rephrasing, formatting, and revision. These tools were used as a support strategy to reduce friction in drafting, sustain momentum, and help develop the curriculum more thoroughly and consistently. They did not replace authorship, interpretation, research judgment, or final responsibility for the work.

The use of AI in this project is disclosed in alignment with open education values of transparency, accountability, and ethical knowledge creation. The final curriculum reflects my decisions, my research, my professional practice, and my responsibility as author.

Invitation to Use and Adapt

Open education grows when people share not only finished resources, but also the paths, tools, questions, mistakes, and decision-making processes that help others begin.

This curriculum is offered in that spirit.

Use it as a starting point. Adapt it to your learners. Pair it with existing OER training. Break it into modules. Build a badge pathway. Use one activity in a workshop. Turn it into a local Canvas course. Use it to support a mini-grant. Remix it with your own institutional resources. Make it better for your context.

The goal is not for every institution or educator to use this curriculum exactly as written.

The goal is for fewer people to start from scratch.

Dedication

For the UTA community, whose questions, curiosity, creativity, and persistence inspired this project into being.

For the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, whose support helped make space for this work to grow from an idea into a practice-forward curriculum.

For my family and friends, who have encouraged my dreams, my weirdness, my courage, and my authenticity, even when the path was still becoming visible under my feet.

And for every person who may use, adapt, teach from, learn with, or benefit from this work:

You are all my students.

And I am honored to be one of your lead learners in Open Education.

Not because I stand above you, but because teaching is one of the ways I love the world. Because every shared resource is an invitation. Because every question is a doorway. Because every learner, educator, librarian, staff member, advocate, student, and curious human who enters this work becomes part of the community that keeps it alive.

This curriculum is dedicated to you, and to the open, unfinished, generous work of learning together.

Topic 1: Foundations of OpennesTopic 1 Overview

Open education is a social movement that seeks to make learning more equitable, accessible, collaborative, and participatory. It asks us to rethink who controls knowledge, whose voices are included, and how learning can be shaped through openness.

This topic introduces the core concepts, values, and practices that make open education possible. You will explore what “open” really means beyond “free,” understand the problems Open Educational Resources, or OER, can help address, and reflect on how openness connects to equity, access, trust, collaboration, care, and teaching practice.

Open education is not only about replacing expensive textbooks with free materials. It is about shifting the conditions of learning so that students and educators have more agency, more access, and more ability to participate in the creation and sharing of knowledge.

By the end of this topic, learners should be able to:

1. Define Open Educational Resources, or OER.
2. Explain the difference between “free” and “open.”
3. Describe the 5Rs of openness.
4. Identify major problems OER can help address.
5. Connect open education to values such as transparency, collaboration, generosity, care, and justice.
6. Explain how trust and quality are built in the knowledge commons.
7. Identify common sources of support for open education work.
8. Recognize open pedagogy as a teaching practice that extends beyond open materials.
9. Begin noticing, bookmarking, and evaluating open resources through guided practice.

1.1 What Does “Open” Really Mean?

When we say a resource is “open,” we are making both a practical and philosophical claim.

Practically, we mean that the resource is freely accessible and comes with permissions to use it in ways that go far beyond just reading or viewing.

Philosophically, we are signaling a commitment to education as a public good and a human right, not merely a commodity.

The term **Open Educational Resources**, or **OER**, was first coined at a 2002 UNESCO forum and later formally defined in UNESCO’s 2019 Recommendation as “learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others” (UNESCO, 2019, p. 5).

That definition is technically useful, but it does not fully capture what makes OER powerful in practice. Open education advocate David Wiley offers a more memorable framework: the **5Rs of Openness** (Wiley, 2023).

The 5Rs: What You Can Do With Open Materials

The 5Rs describe what users can legally do with open materials. These permissions are legal rights, not just nice ideas. An open license is a legal tool that grants specific permissions to users. When a creator releases something under an open license, most commonly a Creative Commons license, they are giving others permission to use the work in specific ways without asking for permission each time (Creative Commons, n.d.).

Retain

Examples include downloading a textbook, saving a PDF, duplicating a file, storing a copy in a course site, or keeping the material after a class ends.

Reuse

Examples include using a chapter in class, assigning a reading online, using a video in a study group, or incorporating a resource into a module.

Revise

Examples include translating a resource, updating examples, changing the reading level, improving accessibility, adding local context, or replacing outdated sections.

Remix

Examples include combining chapters from multiple open textbooks, adding openly licensed media to an open module, or creating a new teaching resource from several compatible open sources.

Redistribute

Examples include sharing an adapted textbook with colleagues, publishing a revised activity online, giving students a downloadable copy, or contributing a remixed resource back to the public commons.

Why the 5Rs Matter

Think about the textbooks, readings, videos, slides, or learning materials you have used. Could you remove chapters you did not need? Add case studies from your own context? Translate examples for multilingual students? Update outdated statistics? Combine pieces from multiple sources?

With traditional copyrighted materials, the answer is often no, or at least not without additional permission. With OER, the answer is often yes. That is the difference the 5Rs make.

Open materials give educators and learners more agency. Instead of treating educational content as fixed, locked, or untouchable, OER allows materials to become flexible, living resources that can be shaped around real learning needs.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

When faculty use openly licensed materials, they can customize course content without violating copyright. They can remove content that does not fit, add examples that reflect their students, update outdated sections, and create more flexible learning experiences.

The 5Rs allow educators to build learning materials around course goals and student needs, rather than forcing a course to follow a publisher’s structure.

What This Means for Students and Learners

With OER, students are not merely renting temporary access. They can often keep materials after a course ends, download them for offline use, share them with peers, and revisit them later.

OER can support students beyond the semester because access does not disappear when a course shell closes or an access code expires.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

When faculty ask, “Can I put this on the course site?” or “Can I edit this textbook?” support professionals who understand open licensing can help them answer confidently.

Open licensing reduces confusion, saves time, and supports ethical reuse.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

The 5Rs make it possible to customize materials across programs without copyright violations. Departments can align materials with shared outcomes, revise resources over time, and build continuity across course sections.

OER can become part of curriculum planning, not just textbook replacement.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Open licensing creates institutional and community assets that can be shared, improved over time, and used to demonstrate commitment to affordability, access, innovation, and student success.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

The 5Rs give you the freedom to build your own learning path and share what you find with your community legally and ethically.

Practice: Spot the 5Rs

Find an openly licensed image, video, textbook chapter, learning module, or other educational resource. Read its Creative Commons license or open license statement.

Then answer:

1. Can you retain it?
2. Can you reuse it?
3. Can you revise it?
4. Can you remix it?
5. Can you redistribute it?
6. What conditions apply?
7. What attribution would you need to provide?
8. What would you actually want to do with this resource in a course, workshop, project, or personal learning context?

This activity is not about finding the “perfect” resource. It is about practicing how to recognize permissions and imagine what openness makes possible.

1.2 Free vs. Open: Why the Difference Matters

It is easy to assume that “free” and “open” mean the same thing. After all, if you can access something without paying, isn’t that open?

Not quite.

Free means you do not have to pay for access. A YouTube video, a PDF on someone’s website, a free tutorial, or a scanned textbook chapter shared in a course site might all be free to access, but they are not necessarily open.

Open means you have legal permission to do more than access the content. You can adapt it, share it, translate it, build on it, and redistribute your new version, depending on the license.

Open resources come with an open license, usually Creative Commons, that explicitly grants these permissions (Creative Commons, n.d.).

Free materials give you access. Open materials give you agency.

Example 1: Free but Not Open

You can watch the videos for free and use them in your own learning. However, Khan Academy’s Terms of Service restrict uses such as downloading, reproducing, creating derivative works, transmitting, or selling materials from the website. Because there is no visible Creative Commons license granting broad reuse and adaptation permissions, these videos are free to access but not open in the OER sense (Khan Academy, n.d.).

The bottom line: free to access does not mean you have the legal right to adapt or redistribute.

Example 2: Open and Free

With an openly licensed textbook, an educator may be able to delete chapters they do not teach, add examples or case studies, translate sections, combine chapters with compatible open content, and share an adapted version publicly, depending on the license terms.

The bottom line: open materials are free to access and come with legal permission to adapt, remix, and share.

How to Identify Open Licensing

When evaluating a resource, look for:

1. Creative Commons icons, often at the bottom of webpages or in a book’s copyright page.
2. An explicit license statement, such as “This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0.”
3. A link to the license deed.

4. Terms that indicate openness, such as “You are free to share and adapt this work.”
5. Clear permissions for reuse, adaptation, and redistribution.

If you see “All rights reserved,” a copyright notice with no additional permissions, unclear licensing, or terms of service that restrict downloading or adaptation, the resource may be free but not open.

What Is Not OER?

Just as important as knowing what OER is, is understanding what does not count as OER.

Free access without an open license is not OER. Examples include free YouTube tutorials, Khan Academy videos, or PDFs on websites without Creative Commons licenses. These may be useful, but they are not OER unless they include open permissions.

Materials behind login walls are not fully open. Even if materials are free to users at a particular institution, requiring institutional access, paid access, or account-based access may mean the resource is not truly open.

“All rights reserved” materials are not OER. If a resource includes only a traditional copyright notice and no additional permissions, it is not openly licensed.

Materials with unclear licensing should not be treated as OER. If you cannot find licensing information, assume the resource is not openly licensed until you can verify otherwise.

Commercial textbook free trials or access codes are not OER. Temporary free access is not open access.

Paywalled journal articles are not OER. Even when an institution pays for access, paywalled articles are not open educational resources.

Fair use excerpts in course packets are not OER. Fair use may allow limited use of copyrighted materials in teaching, but it does not grant the broad rights to revise, remix, redistribute, or treat the material as open.

Complicated Cases

Public Domain Materials

Public domain materials are open in practical terms because they can be used freely. However, they are not always “OER” in the technical sense because they may not have been intentionally released under an open license. They may simply no longer be under copyright, or they may never have been eligible for copyright protection.

For practical purposes, public domain materials can often function like OER.

Government Works

Many U.S. federal government publications are in the public domain and can be freely used. However, state, local, and international government materials may have copyright restrictions. Always check before assuming.

NC and ND Licenses

Materials with NonCommercial, or NC, restrictions limit commercial use. Materials with NoDerivatives, or ND, restrictions do not allow adaptations to be shared.

These materials may use Creative Commons licenses, but they are more restricted. Some open education practitioners debate whether NC and ND materials fully support the 5Rs. They are sometimes described as “open-ish” or freely available educational resources rather than fully open educational resources.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

That free PDF you found may not be legally editable. If it is not openly licensed and the link breaks, you may have to start over.

Openly licensed alternatives are more sustainable because you can download, revise, preserve, and share them according to the license.

Using materials that seem open but are not can create legal risk. When in doubt, look for a Creative Commons license or explicit open license statement.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Free materials might disappear after the semester or become unavailable when a platform changes. Open materials can often be downloaded, saved, and kept.

This matters if you are building a personal reference library for your education, career, or lifelong learning.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

When helping others find resources, check for open licenses, not just free access. This helps ensure materials can be adapted to meet diverse student needs.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Investing in open materials, not just free ones, builds capacity to customize curriculum and reduces dependency on external vendors.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Open licensing creates long-term value and reduces the risk of copyright violations across courses, programs, and institutions.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Knowing the difference between free and open protects you. If you share, edit, or build on free materials without permission, you may be violating copyright. Open licenses give you clarity and protection.

Practice: Free or Open?

Choose three educational resources you have used, assigned, watched, downloaded, or recommended.

For each resource, answer:

1. Is it free to access?
2. Is it openly licensed?
3. Where is the license or terms of use statement?
4. What can you legally do with it?
5. What can you not legally do with it?
6. Would you describe it as free, open, both, or neither?
7. How confident are you in your answer?

Suggested examples to compare:

- A free YouTube video.
- A Khan Academy lesson.
- An OpenStax textbook.
- A public domain image.
- A PDF found on a personal website.
- A Creative Commons licensed image from Wikimedia Commons.
- A library-licensed article.
- A government report.

This practice helps build the habit of checking permissions before using, adapting, or sharing materials.

1.3 The Problems OER Addresses

Open education is not just about making materials available. It is about solving real, urgent problems that affect students, educators, and institutions.

OER can help address at least three major problems:

1. Cost barriers.
2. Access and equity barriers.
3. Timeliness and relevance barriers.

These problems are interconnected. A student who cannot afford a textbook faces more than a financial barrier. They may also be locked out from day one, unable to complete early assignments, unable to access materials in needed formats, and unable to benefit from content that reflects their experiences.

Problem 1: Cost Barriers

Even so, required course materials continue to affect student decision-making. According to a 2022 survey of 13,831 students across Florida's public colleges and universities, 53.5% of students did not purchase at least one required textbook due to cost. Students also reported taking fewer courses, not registering for specific courses, earning poor grades, and dropping courses because of textbook costs (Florida Virtual Campus, 2022).

This is not merely an inconvenience. It is a structural barrier to learning and degree completion.

OER helps remove cost barriers by providing no-cost materials that students can access on day one of class, before the add/drop deadline, before financial aid arrives, and without having to choose between textbooks and groceries.

Real-World Impact of Cost Barriers

Student Decision-Making

When students cannot afford required materials, they may:

1. Not purchase a required textbook.
2. Take fewer courses.
3. Avoid registering for a specific course.
4. Earn a poor grade.
5. Drop a course.
6. Delay progress toward a degree.

National Savings

OpenStax reports that since its founding, it has served 36.7 million students across 153 countries and saved students more than $2.9 billion in education costs (Rice University, 2024).

These savings matter because money not spent on textbooks can remain available for food, housing, transportation, childcare, and other basic needs.

Market Impact

Textbook prices rose sharply for many years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that consumer prices for college textbooks increased 88% between January 2006 and July 2016 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). More recently, OER and other affordable learning efforts have contributed to downward pressure on textbook costs, though broader market shifts should not be attributed to a single study or organization (Rice University, 2024).

Institutional and State-Level Examples

Tidewater Community College launched the nation's first Z-Degree pathway in 2013, creating a full degree pathway with zero textbook costs. SPARC's impact story and Wiley et al. (2016) document the model as an early institutional example of scaling OER beyond individual courses (SPARC, 2016; Wiley et al., 2016).

State-level grant programs and affordable learning initiatives have also supported OER adoption, adaptation, and creation across institutions, demonstrating how OER can move beyond individual courses and become part of broader affordability and student success strategy.

Problem 2: Access and Equity

Timing

Students cannot access traditional textbooks until they purchase them. This might be days or weeks into the semester, often after the first assignments are due.

OER Solution: Materials can be available on day one of class so no student falls behind because of delayed access.

Format

Traditional textbooks often come in limited formats. Students with different learning preferences, access needs, or device constraints may need alternatives.

OER Solution: The same content can often be offered as a PDF, web page, ebook, audiobook, accessible HTML, editable file, or downloadable package. For example, many OpenStax textbooks are available in multiple formats at no cost, including web view, PDF, and mobile app.

Language

Commercial textbooks are often available only in English, creating barriers for multilingual students and students whose first language is not English.

OER Solution: Open licensing can allow translation and localization, depending on the license. Educators can adapt materials for multilingual communities.

Accessibility

Traditional textbooks and digital materials may lack captions, alt text, screen-reader compatibility, meaningful headings, readable structure, or accessible design.

OER Solution: Open materials can be designed with accessibility from the start or adapted to meet specific needs. Accessibility can include alt text, captions, appropriate color contrast, document structure, descriptive links, readable tables, and screen-reader compatibility. The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides practical guidance for making OER more accessible, including guidance on images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Geography and Connectivity

Students without reliable internet access may struggle with online-only materials. Students in remote areas may face shipping delays from bookstores.

OER Solution: OER can often be downloaded for offline use in multiple formats and accessed on a range of devices.

OER Solution: Continuous Improvement

Research consistently suggests that OER adoption can have especially meaningful benefits for students who are most affected by textbook costs.

In an analysis of more than 24,000 students at the University of Georgia, Colvard, Watson, and Park (2018) found that OER adoption was associated with improved final grades and reduced DFW rates across student groups. The benefits were especially meaningful for students who are often most affected by textbook costs, including Pell-eligible students, part-time students, and students from historically underserved racial and ethnic groups (Colvard et al., 2018).

The Tidewater Z-Degree model also demonstrated that zero-textbook-cost pathways can support student success and retention while reducing costs (Wiley et al., 2016).

OER does not just save money. It can advance equity by removing structural barriers that disproportionately harm students from marginalized communities.

Problem 3: Timeliness and Relevance

Traditional textbooks can take years to publish. By the time they reach students, content may already be outdated, especially in fields such as technology, health sciences, current events, business, law, policy, and science.

Publication Timeline

Commercial textbook revision cycles often lag behind changes in rapidly evolving fields.

Revision Cycle

New editions may appear every few years, which can be too slow for fields where knowledge, data, tools, or practices change quickly.

Cost of Updates

Faculty often cannot fix errors, add new research, or update examples without waiting for publishers to release new editions, which students must then purchase.

OER Solution: Continuous Improvement

Openly licensed materials can often be updated more quickly. If new research emerges, examples become outdated, or a major event shifts public understanding, educators can revise materials in real time when the license allows.

For example, during rapidly changing events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, educators using OER could add public health case studies, update economics examples, revise biology content, or create modules on remote work, supply chains, health equity, and vaccine development without waiting years for a new commercial textbook edition.

OER makes this possible because educators and communities, not only publishers, can participate in the improvement process.

Relevance and Cultural Responsiveness

Commercial textbooks are often written for broad national or global audiences. They may:

1. Center examples from dominant cultural groups.
2. Use generic scenarios that do not reflect diverse student experiences.
3. Exclude or minimize perspectives from marginalized communities.
4. Ignore local history, local data, and current issues students care about.

OER allows educators to localize and adapt content to reflect students' lived experiences.

Educators can adapt OER to include:

1. Local case studies.
2. Regional data.
3. Community issues.
4. Diverse authors and perspectives.
5. Examples that reflect students' cultures, languages, and identities.
6. Current events connected to course concepts.
7. Multilingual glossaries.
8. Discipline-specific updates.

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of connecting teaching to students' cultural experiences, identities, and communities (Gay, 2018). When students see themselves, their communities, and their realities reflected in course materials, learning can feel more relevant and engaging. This can support motivation, belonging, and persistence.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

When you adopt OER, you address multiple barriers at once.

You can remove financial obstacles for every student in your course, ensure equitable access from day one, customize content to reflect your students' lived experiences, replace generic examples with local or culturally relevant case studies, update outdated content in real time, and adapt materials to meet diverse learning needs.

Choosing accessible, culturally responsive OER is an equity practice. It signals that student success matters more than publisher convenience or profit.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Cost should not determine whether you can participate fully in your education. OER helps ensure that it does not have to.

Beyond cost, OER can support students who need multiple formats, offline access, translated materials, accessible design, or content that reflects their identities and communities.

If a textbook includes examples from your own community, images that reflect diverse people, and case studies addressing issues you care about, learning can feel more relevant and meaningful.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Students who are worried about textbook costs are not being dramatic. They may be making impossible choices that affect enrollment, persistence, grades, and degree completion.

Knowing about OER helps support professionals refer students to affordable options, advocate for systemic change, and guide students toward more equitable learning experiences.

Supporting faculty in adapting OER to reflect student communities is equity work.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Textbook costs affect retention, time-to-degree, and student success. The impact is often greatest for students from underrepresented groups and low-income backgrounds.

Supporting OER adoption in high-enrollment courses can measurably improve affordability and support completion goals.

If equity goals include closing achievement gaps and supporting underrepresented students, OER adoption should be part of strategic planning, not a side initiative.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

OER initiatives provide concrete, measurable evidence of institutional commitment to access, affordability, and student success.

But OER is more than an affordability strategy. It can also support missions related to equity, inclusion, innovation, public service, and community engagement.

Investment in OER infrastructure, including staffing, grants, publishing platforms, accessibility support, and faculty development, demonstrates institutional values in action.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

If you are learning outside formal institutions, textbook costs can make entire fields of study feel closed off. OER can open those doors.

Access to knowledge should not depend on where you live, what languages you speak, how your brain processes information, or whether you can afford a book.

Open education is a justice issue.

Practice: Map the Barrier, Match the Open Solution

Think about a course, workshop, learning experience, or training program you know well.

Complete the following:

1. Identify one cost barrier learners might face.
2. Identify one access barrier learners might face.
3. Identify one equity or inclusion barrier learners might face.
4. Identify one timeliness or relevance issue in the materials.

5. For each barrier, describe how OER might help.
6. Note whether the solution requires adoption, adaptation, creation, or a combination.

You may use this simple structure:

- Barrier:
- Who is affected:
- Why it matters:
- Possible OER solution:
- What support would be needed:
- What would improve for learners:

Reflection: Access, Equity, and Relevance

Consider:

1. Have you ever delayed buying or accessing a required resource because of cost?
2. Have you ever assigned, used, or supported a resource that was difficult for learners to access?
3. What types of students are most affected when materials are expensive, delayed, inaccessible, or culturally disconnected?
4. What would change if all learners had access to course materials on day one?
5. What would change if learners saw their communities, languages, and experiences reflected in course materials?

1.4 Values That Animate Open Practice

Open education is more than a set of licensing permissions. It is also shaped by values about who gets to access, adapt, create, and share knowledge.

Creative Commons licenses provide legal tools that allow creators to share their work while communicating permissions for reuse and adaptation (Creative Commons, n.d.). But the licenses are only part of the story.

Different people come to open education for different reasons, but several core values show up again and again:

1. Transparency.
2. Collaboration.
3. Generosity.
4. Care.
5. Justice.

These values are not abstract. They shape how people teach, publish, support learners, build programs, and share knowledge.

Transparency

Open education operates in the light. When materials, processes, and decisions are openly shared, they can be examined, questioned, improved, and reused.

Transparency builds trust and invites participation.

What Transparency Looks Like in Practice

An educator might publish not just an open textbook, but also the course syllabus, assignment rubrics, revision notes, accessibility statement, and student feedback about what worked and what did not.

A program might share cost-savings data publicly so students can see which courses use no-cost or low-cost materials.

A research team might publish findings in peer-reviewed venues and share methods, instruments, or datasets when possible so others can examine, replicate, or build on the work.

A statewide or institutional repository might make educational resources publicly searchable and support curated collections.

Collaboration

Open education assumes we are smarter together than alone. Materials improve through multiple perspectives. Problems are solved through shared effort. No one has to reinvent the wheel.

What Collaboration Looks Like in Practice

Multiple institutions might collaborate to adapt shared OER for common courses, dividing the labor of review, accessibility checking, localization, and assessment.

Students might co-author case studies, create public-facing learning resources, or contribute examples that future students can use.

Librarians, instructional designers, accessibility specialists, faculty, students, and administrators might work together to create better materials than any one group could create alone.

Open publishing communities such as The Rebus Community have supported collaborative textbook creation by bringing together authors, editors, reviewers, designers, and project managers to develop open textbooks.

Generosity

Open education asks, “What can I contribute?” rather than “What can I protect?”

It is rooted in abundance rather than scarcity: the belief that sharing knowledge creates more knowledge.

What Generosity Looks Like in Practice

An educator might release a full course, including readings, lectures, activities, and assessments, so others do not have to start from scratch.

A student might create an openly licensed study guide for a difficult course and share it with future learners.

A foundation or organization might fund open education infrastructure, advocacy, or openly licensed educational materials.

An institution or nonprofit publisher might support open publishing so resources can be used globally, not just by paying customers.

OpenStax is one example of a large-scale open education initiative that has made educational materials available globally and reports serving millions of students across many countries (Rice University, 2024).

Care

Open education centers care for learners, educators, and communities.

It asks:

1. Who is burdened by the current system?
2. Who is excluded?
3. Who has to pay, wait, translate, troubleshoot, or go without?
4. How can we design for everyone's flourishing, not just efficiency?

What Care Looks Like in Practice

An instructor who learns that students dropped a course because they could not afford the textbook might adopt OER the next semester and clearly communicate that course materials now cost $0.

A financial aid counselor or advisor might help students identify sections with no-cost or low-cost materials.

An institution might offer stipends or grants for faculty adopting, adapting, or creating OER, not as full payment for labor, but as recognition that the work matters.

An OER community of practice might create a supportive space where newcomers can ask basic questions without judgment.

Justice

Open education challenges the idea that knowledge is only a commodity to be bought and sold.

It asks:

1. Who profits from education?
2. Who is harmed by current systems?
3. Who gets to create knowledge?
4. Whose knowledge is treated as legitimate?
5. How can we shift power?

What Justice Looks Like in Practice

Students might organize textbook affordability campaigns and collect stories about how costs affect learning.

An educator might refuse to assign materials from publishers that use exploitative pricing models.

A program might frame OER as part of student success, affordability, and institutional equity.

Educators in different global contexts might adapt, translate, and create OER that center non-Western perspectives and challenge whose knowledge is considered standard.

These Values Are Not Neutral

Open education values are political in the sense that they challenge existing structures of power and access. Different practitioners may prioritize different values, but most agree that open education is about more than materials.

It is about how we relate to one another and to knowledge itself.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Reflect on which values resonate with your teaching philosophy. Let those values guide your decisions about adopting, adapting, or creating OER.

What This Means for Students and Learners

When instructors choose OER, they are signaling values about access, care, and participation. It is worth recognizing that textbook choice is also a teaching choice.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Understanding the values behind OER helps you communicate why this work matters beyond cost savings.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Articulating the values your unit prioritizes helps faculty see OER not as one more initiative, but as aligned with mission, curriculum, and student success.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Institutional values statements often reference equity, access, innovation, and student success. OER is one concrete way to live those values.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

If these values resonate with you, you are part of a global movement, even if you never set foot in a classroom.

Practice: Values-Based Resource Noticing

Explore one or two open education repositories, guides, or collections. You are not trying to find the perfect resource yet. Instead, pay attention to what the resource or platform seems to value.

Possible places to explore include:

1. Pressbooks Directory.
2. OER Commons.
3. Open Textbook Library.
4. MERLOT.
5. OpenStax.
6. BC Open Collection.
7. DOAJ.
8. OASIS.
9. Open Research Library.
10. A subject-specific OER guide from a library, teaching center, or open education organization.

As you browse, ask:

1. Where do you see transparency?
2. Where do you see collaboration?
3. Where do you see generosity?
4. Where do you see care?
5. Where do you see justice?
6. Whose knowledge seems centered?
7. Whose knowledge might still be missing?
8. What would make this resource or platform more open in practice, not just in license?

Reflection: Your Open Education Values

Consider:

1. Which value resonates most with you: transparency, collaboration, generosity, care, or justice?
2. Which value feels most challenging to practice?
3. Where do you already see these values in your teaching, learning, work, or community?
4. What would change if your materials, assignments, or programs were designed around these values?
5. What value would you want learners to feel when they encounter your course or resource?

1.5 Trust and the Knowledge Commons

One of the most common questions about open education is:

“If it’s free, how do I know it’s good?”

This question reveals an important tension. Many people have been taught to associate cost with quality, assuming that expensive things are better. But in education, that relationship does not always hold.

The most expensive textbook is not necessarily the most accurate, inclusive, current, accessible, or pedagogically sound.

Open education challenges us to build trust differently: not through price signals, but through transparency, peer review, community use, accessibility, and ongoing stewardship.

What Is the Knowledge Commons?

The term **commons** refers to resources that are shared and managed by a community. Historically, a commons might have been a shared pasture, a community well, or another resource that people depended on together.

The **knowledge commons** applies this idea to information, data, scholarship, educational materials, and other forms of knowledge. Hess and Ostrom (2007) describe knowledge as a shared resource that can be examined through questions of access, contribution, governance, and sustainability.

The knowledge commons asks:

1. Who has access?
2. Who contributes?
3. Who governs?
4. How is the resource sustained over time?
5. Who benefits?
6. Who is excluded?

OER are part of the knowledge commons. They are not locked behind a single company’s paywall or controlled only by a publisher. Instead, they can be shared, reused, adapted, translated, improved, and redistributed under open licenses.

This does not mean there are no standards or quality controls. It means quality is built and maintained through different mechanisms, including author expertise, peer review, transparent licensing, public feedback, revision processes, accessibility practices, and community stewardship.

How Trust Is Built in Open Education

Authorship and Credentials Matter

Just like with traditional textbooks, knowing who wrote an OER and what expertise they bring helps you assess credibility.

A strong OER should make authorship visible.

Look for:

1. Author names.
2. Institutional or organizational affiliations.
3. Professional credentials.
4. Contributor information.
5. Reviewer information.
6. Editorial or project roles.

For example, many OpenStax textbooks include author, reviewer, and contributor information in the front matter or book details, allowing users to evaluate who created the resource and what expertise shaped it.

Peer Review Matters

Many OER go through formal review processes. Some are reviewed before publication, some are reviewed after publication by faculty users, and some are improved through community feedback over time.

When reviewing an OER, look for statements about:

1. Who reviewed the resource.
2. What criteria were used.
3. Whether reviews are public.
4. Whether the resource has been used in real courses.
5. Whether there is a process for correcting errors.

The Open Textbook Library is one useful example. It provides a searchable collection of open textbooks that are free to use, adapt, download, edit, and distribute. Many textbook records include public faculty reviews, giving instructors a way to examine how other educators have evaluated the resource before adopting it (Open Education Network, n.d.).

Community Use Matters

Community use is another trust signal. If a resource is widely adopted, actively discussed, and regularly recommended by educators in a field, that does not automatically prove it is perfect, but it does suggest that the resource is useful enough for others to keep using, adapting, and improving.

OpenStax is a large-scale example. Rice University reports that OpenStax has served 36.7 million students across 153 countries and saved students more than $2.9 billion in education costs (Rice University, 2024). That scale of use does not replace faculty evaluation, but it can be one indicator that materials have been tested across many teaching contexts.

Transparency Matters

Open resources often make more of the teaching and publishing process visible. Depending on the platform, users may be able to see licensing information, author notes, version information, accessibility statements, contributor details, or links to source files.

Transparency lets educators and learners ask better questions:

1. Who created this?
2. Can I adapt it?
3. When was it last updated?
4. What can I change?
5. What license applies?
6. How does this resource handle accessibility?
7. Is there a way to report problems?
8. Is there a version history?

LibreTexts, for example, describes itself as a nonprofit OER platform that supports educators in creating, customizing, remixing, and sharing accessible, interactive textbooks and ancillary materials. Its emphasis on adaptability and customization allows educators to revise and remix content for their own teaching contexts (LibreTexts, n.d.).

Continuous Improvement Matters

Traditional textbooks are often treated as finished products. OER can be treated as living resources.

When an error is found, when examples become outdated, or when students need a different explanation, open materials can often be revised more quickly than commercial textbooks. This does not happen automatically, though. A strong OER should have a visible maintenance process.

OpenStax provides one example through its errata and correction process. Users can report errors, and OpenStax tracks corrections through its publishing workflow (OpenStax, n.d.).

Quality is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing practice.

Accessibility Matters

Accessibility is also part of trust. A resource is not truly open in practice if some students cannot use it.

The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides practical guidance for creating open textbooks that are free and accessible for all students, including guidance on images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Quick Quality Checklist for Evaluating OER

When you are considering an OER for adoption or adaptation, use this checklist to assess whether it fits your course, your students, and your learning goals.

Content Quality

Ask:

1. Is the content accurate and current?
2. Does it align with your learning objectives?
3. Is the scope and depth appropriate for your students?
4. Are claims supported with evidence and citations?
5. Does the resource present multiple perspectives where appropriate?
6. Does it avoid unnecessary bias or stereotypes?

Authorship and Credibility

Ask:

1. Can you identify the author or authors?
2. Are credentials or areas of expertise listed?
3. Is there information about contributors, reviewers, or editors?
4. Has the resource gone through peer review or faculty review?
5. Is there evidence that the resource has been used in real courses?

Accessibility

Ask:

1. Are images accompanied by alt text?
2. Is the text readable by screen readers?
3. Are headings used consistently?
4. Are videos captioned?
5. Is color used meaningfully, rather than as the only way to communicate information?
6. Is contrast sufficient?
7. Is navigation clear and consistent?

Licensing and Permissions

Ask:

1. Is there a clear Creative Commons or other open license?
2. Do you understand what you can and cannot do with the resource?
3. Are third-party materials properly attributed?
4. Are images, videos, and other media also openly licensed or clearly marked?
5. Can you legally revise, remix, or redistribute the material?

Usability and Design

Ask:

1. Is the resource well organized?
2. Are sections and chapters clearly labeled?
3. Is the writing clear and appropriate for the audience?
4. Are examples relevant and inclusive?
5. Is the design clean and not distracting?
6. Can students easily find what they need?

Format and Flexibility

Ask:

1. Is the resource available in multiple formats, such as web, PDF, ebook, or editable files?
2. Can you download it for offline use?
3. Can you edit or adapt it?
4. Can you use only selected chapters or sections?
5. Will it work with your learning management system or teaching platform?

Currency and Maintenance

Ask:

1. When was the resource last updated?
2. Is there a version history or revision note?
3. Is there a way to report errors?
4. Is there an active community or support system around the resource?
5. Does the resource identify who maintains it?

No resource will be perfect. The real question is whether this OER is strong enough for your learning goals, accessible enough for your students, and flexible enough to improve.

One of the strengths of open education is that you are not limited to accepting a resource exactly as you found it. When the license allows, you can adapt it, improve it, localize it, and make it more useful for the learners in front of you.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Start with curated repositories such as OpenStax, Open Textbook Library, MERLOT, OER Commons, Pressbooks Directory, or discipline-specific OER collections where resources are easier to inspect. As you gain confidence, you can evaluate resources on your own.

You do not have to find perfect resources. You are looking for resources with enough quality, clarity, accessibility, and flexibility to support learning.

What This Means for Students and Learners

It is okay to ask your instructor, “How did you choose this textbook?” and “How do we know it is accurate?”

Those are smart questions no matter what materials you are using.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Understanding how trust is built in open education helps you respond to concerns about quality with specific, evidence-based information.

Instead of saying “OER is good,” you can point to authorship, peer review, accessibility, versioning, community use, and licensing.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Building trust in OER at the department level means investing in faculty training, peer review processes, accessibility support, and time for thoughtful adoption.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Institutional endorsement of OER through grants, policies, professional development, staffing, or public statements signals that quality OER is valued and supported.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Trust in the knowledge commons is earned through participation. As you use OER, you can contribute to that trust by sharing feedback, reporting errors, improving resources, or helping others find useful materials.

Practice: Compare Three OER Discovery Spaces

Choose three OER repositories, directories, or curated lists to explore.

Suggested options:

1. Pressbooks Directory.
2. OER Commons.
3. Open Textbook Library.
4. MERLOT.
5. OpenStax.
6. BC Open Collection.
7. DOAJ.
8. OASIS.
9. Open Research Library.
10. A subject-specific OER guide from a library, teaching center, discipline association, or open education organization.

For each space, note:

1. What kinds of resources are available?
2. Is licensing visible?
3. Is authorship visible?
4. Are reviews, ratings, or usage indicators available?
5. Can you download or adapt the resource?
6. Does the platform feel easy to search?
7. Does the platform help you assess trust and quality?
8. What would you want to investigate further before using a resource from this space?

Practice: Start a Simple OER Tracker

As you explore, your ideas will evolve. You will notice what you like, what does not quite fit, and what might work later. Keeping track of early impressions saves time when you are building a course, requesting design support, collaborating with colleagues, or returning to a resource weeks later.

Create a simple tracking table with the following columns:

1. Repository or source.
2. Resource title.
3. Link.
4. License.
5. Author or organization.
6. Initial thoughts.
7. Possible use.
8. Quality or trust notes.
9. Accessibility notes.
10. Tags, such as unit, topic, course week, audience, or format.

If it takes more than a minute to find the license, mark it as “Unknown” and move on. The goal is to stay organized and realistic, not to solve every question immediately.

Prompts for your initial thoughts column:

1. What did you like?
2. What seemed outdated, incomplete, or confusing?
3. Which chapters, sections, or activities might be useful?
4. What would need to be revised?
5. What questions would you need answered before adopting it?
6. What made the resource feel trustworthy or not trustworthy?

Reflection: What Builds Trust for You?

Consider:

1. What trust signals do you notice first: author, institution, reviews, license, design, citations, accessibility, or something else?
2. Which repositories or collections felt most useful or approachable?
3. Which felt confusing or frustrating?
4. Did anything surprise you about the types of resources available?
5. What patterns did you notice in how you searched?
6. Where do you want to return and explore more deeply?

1.6 Institutional Support: You're Not Alone

One of the biggest misconceptions about open education is that it is a solo endeavor: that individual faculty or students have to find resources, evaluate them, adopt them, adapt them, and troubleshoot problems on their own.

In reality, many colleges, universities, libraries, teaching centers, consortia, nonprofits, and open education communities have support structures that can help with different parts of the OER process, including discovery, licensing, accessibility, course design, adoption planning, publishing, and assessment.

These supports look different from place to place, but open education is rarely just one person doing everything alone.

Who Can Help?

OER Librarians

OER librarians specialize in helping faculty, students, and staff find, evaluate, adopt, adapt, and create open resources. They understand major repositories, Creative Commons licensing, attribution, permissions, and common adoption barriers.

They can also help educators think through whether OER adoption, adaptation, or creation is the best fit for a particular course or learning need.

Instructional Designers

Instructional designers can help integrate OER into course design, ensuring that materials align with learning outcomes, activities, assessments, and the learning environment.

They can also help make sure students understand how and where to access materials.

Accessibility Specialists

Accessibility specialists can review OER for accessibility issues and help make materials usable for all students.

This may include checking document structure, alt text, captions, color contrast, headings, tables, formulas, multimedia, and screen-reader compatibility.

Copyright and Licensing Experts

Copyright and licensing experts, often located in libraries, legal affairs, teaching-support units, or scholarly communication offices, can answer questions about what educators can legally use, revise, remix, or redistribute.

This support is especially helpful when a course combines openly licensed materials, library-licensed resources, public web content, instructor-created materials, and student-created work.

Faculty Development Centers

Faculty development centers often support OER through workshops, consultations, course redesign programs, learning communities, grants, or stipends.

Even when they do not house OER work directly, they often partner with libraries and instructional design teams.

OER Coordinators or Program Managers

OER coordinators and program managers help connect support structures. They may coordinate grant programs, track course marking, support assessment, facilitate communities of practice, and help build campus-wide or system-wide strategies for affordable and open learning.

Students and Learners

Students can also be powerful partners in open education. They can share experiences with textbook costs, participate in advocacy, review materials for usability, co-create learning resources, and contribute to open pedagogy projects.

Examples of Support Models

Library-Based OER Support

Many institutions house OER support in the library. Library-based support may include consultations, resource discovery, copyright guidance, publishing support, workshops, grant programs, and help with attribution.

Texas State University Libraries, for example, describes OER support that includes syllabus review, OER discovery, and consultation with an Open Educational Resource Librarian (Texas State University Libraries, n.d.).

Public Hubs and Repositories

Some institutions and systems use public hubs or repositories to organize and share open and affordable learning resources. These hubs can help students, faculty, and support staff locate resources in one place and make affordability work more visible.

Houston Community College, for example, uses an OERTX hub to organize and share open and affordable learning resources connected to institutional OER work (Houston Community College, n.d.).

Statewide Support Models

Affordable Learning Georgia offers a statewide example of support at scale. Its website describes grant programs, resource collections, training modules, accessibility guides, open licensing and copyright support, and infrastructure for affordable and open materials. Affordable Learning Georgia reports significant student textbook cost savings, student impact, and hundreds of affordable learning projects (Affordable Learning Georgia, n.d.).

Publisher-Institution Collaboration

Some open education providers support institutions through coaching, training, and community-building. OpenStax's Institutional Partner Program provides planning support, templates, cohort meetings, adoption tracking, and peer-to-peer support for institutions seeking to launch or expand OER initiatives (OpenStax, n.d.).

Communities of Practice

Many OER efforts grow through communities of practice. These communities may be campus-based, regional, statewide, disciplinary, national, or global.

Community of practice models may include:

1. Campus OER working groups.
2. Library-led faculty learning communities.
3. Statewide OER networks.
4. Discipline-specific OER groups.
5. National or international organizations such as the Open Education Network, CCCOER, SPARC, Rebus, OE Global, and the Open Education Association.

These communities matter because OER work involves both technical questions and human questions. Faculty may need help finding a textbook, but they may also need encouragement, examples, feedback, and a place to ask questions without feeling like they are behind.

Finding Support in Your Context

If you are unsure what OER support exists in your context, start with the people and offices most likely to be connected to textbook affordability, open licensing, and teaching support.

Start with the Library

Many institutions house OER support in the library. Search the library website for terms such as:

1. OER.
2. Open educational resources.
3. Affordable learning.
4. Open education.

5. Scholarly communication.
6. Copyright.
7. Course materials.

Check with Teaching and Learning Centers

Many teaching and learning centers offer OER workshops, grants, consultations, course redesign support, or learning communities.

Ask a Librarian

Even if there is no dedicated OER staff member, librarians can often point you to resources or connect you with colleagues doing OER work.

Search Your Institution's Website

Try searching for phrases such as:

1. OER grant.
2. Textbook affordability.
3. Zero textbook cost.
4. Low-cost course materials.
5. Course marking.
6. Affordable learning.
7. Open education.
8. Open pedagogy.
9. Pressbooks.
10. Open publishing.

Connect with Your State, System, or Professional Network

Many state higher education systems, consortia, and professional organizations support OER through repositories, grant programs, policy guidance, convenings, or professional development.

Look Beyond Your Institution

If your institution does not have formal OER support yet, you can still connect with broader communities.

Possible starting points include:

1. Open Education Network.
2. SPARC OER Forum.
3. CCCOER.
4. Rebus Community.

5. OE Global.
6. Open Education Association.
7. Discipline-specific OER groups.
8. Library subject guides from other institutions.
9. Publicly available faculty OER toolkits.
10. Open pedagogy communities.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Do not start by googling “free textbooks” and wandering alone into the search abyss. Start by contacting someone who understands OER discovery, licensing, course design, or accessibility.

A short conversation with an OER librarian, instructional designer, accessibility specialist, or teaching center consultant can save hours of work.

What This Means for Students and Learners

If you are interested in OER, reach out to your library, student government, teaching center, or faculty members who use no-cost materials. Many institutions have student ambassador, peer educator, or textbook affordability advocacy opportunities.

Students can help shape open education efforts by sharing what material costs and access barriers actually feel like.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Make sure you know who provides OER support in your context so you can refer faculty and students to the right people.

You do not have to be the expert in everything. You can be the bridge.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Connecting faculty to OER support increases adoption success and reduces individual burden.

OER should not depend on isolated champions. Departments and colleges can support adoption by recognizing the time, expertise, and collaboration involved.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Investment in OER infrastructure, including staffing, training, incentives, accessibility support, and community building, is what makes large-scale adoption possible.

Without infrastructure, OER can remain a grassroots effort that burns out the people most committed to it.

Successful programs often combine:

1. Financial support, such as grants or stipends.
2. Dedicated staffing, such as librarians or instructional designers.
3. Training and professional development.
4. Publishing or hosting infrastructure.
5. Communities of practice.
6. Recognition and assessment.
7. Student-facing course marking.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Even if you are not affiliated with an institution, many OER communities offer free support, training, examples, and connection to others doing this work.

You do not have to wait for permission to begin learning about open education.

Practice: Build Your Open Education Support Map

Create a support map for your own context. This could be an institution, department, program, community organization, independent teaching project, or personal learning network.

Identify who or what could help with each area:

1. Finding OER.
2. Evaluating quality.
3. Understanding licenses.
4. Creating attribution.
5. Improving accessibility.
6. Adapting or remixing materials.
7. Designing assignments.
8. Publishing or hosting materials.
9. Assessing impact.
10. Connecting with others.

Use this structure:

- Support need:
- Person, office, organization, or community that could help:
- Link or contact:
- What I could ask:
- Next step:

Practice: Ask for Help Before You Need It

Draft a short message you could send to a librarian, instructional designer, teaching center, colleague, or open education community.

Use or adapt this template:

Hello,

I am exploring open educational resources for a course, project, or learning experience and would like help thinking through my options. I am especially interested in finding resources that are openly licensed, accessible, and adaptable.

Could you point me toward any repositories, guides, tools, or people who might help with OER discovery, licensing, accessibility, or course design?

Thank you.

Reflection: You Are Not Alone

Consider:

1. Who could help you with OER in your current context?
2. What support do you already have?
3. What support is missing?
4. What questions would you want to ask before adopting or adapting OER?
5. How could support structures reduce the burden on individual educators or learners?
6. How might students be included as partners in open education work?

1.7 Beyond Materials: Open Pedagogy

Open education extends beyond textbooks and course materials. It also includes open pedagogy: teaching and learning practices that use the collaborative and participatory possibilities of open licensing.

Open pedagogy, sometimes called OER-enabled pedagogy, asks a powerful question:

What can students do with OER that they could not do with traditional copyrighted materials?

Open pedagogy engages students as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive consumers. It invites learners to participate in creating, revising, sharing, and critiquing knowledge.

Scholars such as Rajiv Jhangiani, Robin DeRosa, David Wiley, and John Hilton have described open pedagogy as a shift from simply using open materials to designing learning experiences that are made possible by open licensing (DeRosa & Robison, 2017; Jhangiani & DeRosa, 2017; Wiley & Hilton, 2018).

Key Characteristics of Open Pedagogy

Open pedagogy often includes:

1. Students creating openly licensed works that benefit future learners.
2. Learning made public in thoughtful, ethical, and consent-based ways.
3. Collaboration and peer learning.
4. Renewable assignments that replace disposable ones.
5. Student agency and choice.
6. Contributions to the knowledge commons.
7. Reflection on power, access, and participation.

Renewable Assignments

A disposable assignment is created for a grade, seen by the instructor, and then discarded or forgotten.

A renewable assignment has value beyond the classroom. It can be revised, shared, used by future students, or contributed to a public audience.

Examples of renewable assignments include:

1. Students creating openly licensed study guides.
2. Students writing or improving Wikipedia articles.
3. Students creating public-facing tutorials.
4. Students developing case studies for future classes.
5. Students contributing examples to an open textbook.
6. Students recording accessible explainer videos.

7. Students creating community resource guides.
8. Students building glossaries, timelines, annotated bibliographies, or data visualizations.

Renewable assignments should be designed carefully. Students should have agency, privacy options, clear consent, and alternatives if they do not want their work shared publicly.

Examples of Open Pedagogy

Open pedagogy can include:

1. Wikipedia assignments.
2. Open textbook contributions.
3. Community-engaged projects.
4. Multimedia OER creation.
5. Public scholarship.
6. Student-authored learning objects.
7. Collaborative annotation.
8. Open course blogs or portfolios.
9. Student-created accessibility improvements.
10. Peer review of open resources.

Why Open Pedagogy Matters

Open pedagogy can increase motivation because students know their work matters beyond a grade. It can develop critical consciousness by helping learners examine who creates knowledge, who has access, and whose voices are missing. It can build digital literacy, collaboration skills, public communication skills, and ethical participation.

Open pedagogy also shifts power dynamics. Students are treated as knowledge creators, not only knowledge consumers.

Open Pedagogy and Equity

Open pedagogy should not mean forcing students to perform publicly or give away their labor. Ethical open pedagogy must include choice, consent, privacy protections, accessibility, and care.

Students should know:

1. What they are being asked to create.
2. Whether their work will be public.
3. What license, if any, will apply.
4. What alternatives are available.
5. How their privacy will be protected.
6. How their work will be assessed.

7. How they can revise or remove work when appropriate.

Open pedagogy is strongest when it expands agency rather than extracting student labor.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Open pedagogy invites you to rethink what “course materials” can be.

Instead of assigning students to write papers that only you will read, consider designing assignments where students create openly licensed resources that future students or communities can use.

This shift can increase student motivation, support authentic learning, and build course materials over time.

Start small. One renewable assignment per semester is enough.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Open pedagogy means your work can have impact beyond the semester.

Instead of writing papers that disappear into a learning management system, you might create resources that help future students, contribute to public knowledge, or address real community needs.

This approach treats you as a knowledge creator, not just a knowledge consumer. It can also help you build a public portfolio of work to share with future employers, graduate programs, or communities, when you choose to do so.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

When faculty adopt open pedagogy, they may need support with tools, licensing, accessibility, publishing workflows, privacy, assessment, and student consent.

Knowing about open pedagogy helps support professionals anticipate needs and connect faculty to resources.

Staff can also consider how their own work, such as workshops, guides, tutorials, templates, and training materials, could be openly licensed to benefit learners beyond one institution or program.

What This Means for Department and College Leaders

Open pedagogy aligns with high-impact practices such as community-engaged learning, undergraduate research, collaborative assignments, writing-intensive learning, digital literacy, and public scholarship.

Faculty experimenting with open pedagogy may need different kinds of support than those simply adopting OER. They are trying new pedagogical approaches, not just swapping textbooks.

Professional development, peer learning communities, recognition, and ethical guidance are especially important.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Open pedagogy creates visible evidence of student learning and institutional contribution to public knowledge.

When students publish openly licensed work, it can demonstrate an institution's commitment to learning, community engagement, workforce development, and public impact.

Promotion, tenure, and evaluation systems should recognize open pedagogy as teaching innovation, public scholarship, and community-engaged practice.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Open pedagogy is where open education becomes most transformative.

It is not just about accessing free textbooks. It is about participating in knowledge creation.

If you are learning outside formal institutions, you can still contribute to the commons by writing guides, creating tutorials, documenting your learning journey, translating resources, improving accessibility, or sharing examples from your own context.

Your experience and expertise have value. Open licensing lets you share them in ways that ripple outward.

Practice: Transform a Disposable Assignment

Choose one assignment, activity, worksheet, discussion prompt, or project that currently has a short life. It is submitted, graded, and then disappears.

Redesign it as a renewable assignment.

Use this structure:

1. Current assignment:
2. What learners currently produce:
3. Who sees it:

4. What happens to it after grading:
5. Possible public or future audience:
6. How it could help future learners or a community:
7. What open license might be appropriate:
8. What privacy or consent issues need attention:
9. What alternative option should be available:
10. What support learners would need:
11. How the assignment would be assessed:

Practice: Contribute to the Commons in a Small Way

Choose one small contribution you could make to the knowledge commons.

Examples:

1. Bookmark and annotate three useful OER.
2. Share a resource list with colleagues or peers.
3. Report an error in an open textbook.
4. Add accessibility notes to your OER tracker.
5. Create a short glossary for future learners.
6. Write a short reflection that helps others understand an OER search process.
7. Adapt a small activity and share it with attribution.
8. Add a local example to an openly licensed resource.
9. Create a public-facing explanation of a difficult concept.
10. Share feedback with an OER creator.

Open education grows through many small contributions, not only large textbook projects.

Reflection: From Access to Participation

Consider:

1. What is the difference between giving students access to knowledge and inviting them to help create knowledge?
2. What kinds of student-created work could benefit future learners?
3. What risks or ethical concerns should be addressed before asking students to publish or share work?
4. How can open pedagogy increase student agency?
5. How can open pedagogy accidentally reproduce inequity if not designed with care?
6. What is one small, low-risk way you could experiment with open pedagogy?

Topic 1 Closing Reflection

You have now explored open education as a set of permissions, practices, values, and possibilities.

You have considered what “open” means, how open differs from free, what problems OER can help address, what values animate open practice, how trust is built in the knowledge commons, where support can come from, and how open pedagogy moves beyond materials into participation.

Take a few moments to reflect:

1. What did you think open education meant before this topic?
2. What do you think it means now?
3. Which idea challenged your assumptions the most?
4. Which idea felt most connected to your own teaching, learning, work, or values?
5. What is one open education practice you want to try?
6. What is one question you still have?
7. What support would help you take the next step?

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Topic 2: Open Tools and Platforms

Topic Overview

Open Educational Resources, or OER, do not all live in the same kind of place. Some are hosted in dedicated repositories. Some are built and maintained on publishing platforms. Some live inside institutional collections, library guides, learning management systems, public websites, shared folders, or repositories. Some are polished textbooks. Others are modules, simulations, videos, assignments, images, guides, or collections of links.

Knowing where open resources can live helps you make better decisions about access, usability, sustainability, and reuse. A resource that is easy to find but difficult to adapt may serve one purpose. A resource that is editable but hard to maintain may create another kind of challenge. The goal is not simply to find something free. The goal is to find, organize, host, and maintain resources that are usable, clearly licensed, accessible, and realistic for your context.

This topic introduces major OER platforms, format decisions, hosting options, maintenance practices, and collection management strategies. It is designed to help you move from “Where do I put this?” to “How will people actually access, use, adapt, preserve, and return to this resource over time?”

By the end of this topic, learners should be able to:

1. Identify major OER repositories, platforms, and discovery spaces.
2. Explain why platform and format choices affect access, usability, and sustainability.
3. Compare common resource formats such as web pages, PDFs, EPUBs, editable documents, videos, audio, LMS pages, and open publishing platforms.
4. Choose hosting options that match a resource’s purpose, audience, stage of development, and maintenance needs.
5. Describe basic practices for maintenance, versioning, attribution, and long-term stewardship.
6. Create a simple system for organizing and managing an OER collection.
7. Track key information about OER, including title, URL, creator, license, format, accessibility notes, quality notes, use plan, and next steps.

2.1 Major OER Platforms and Where Things Can Live

Not all OER live in the same kind of place. Some are hosted in dedicated repositories. Some are built and maintained on publishing platforms. Some live inside institutional collections, library guides, course shells, shared folders, or public websites.

Knowing where things can live helps you make better decisions about access, sustainability, and reuse. A resource that is easy to find but difficult to adapt may serve one purpose. A resource that is editable but hard to maintain may create a different challenge.

The goal is not just to find “something free.” The goal is to find resources that are usable, clearly licensed, accessible, and realistic for your context.

One important reminder before you begin: always check the license on the specific item you want to use. Platforms may host materials under different licenses, and even one resource may include exceptions for images, logos, trademarks, or third-party content.

General OER Repositories and Platforms

General OER repositories and platforms are strong starting places when you are looking for open textbooks, course materials, teaching activities, modules, or reusable learning objects.

OpenStax

What It Is

OpenStax is a nonprofit educational initiative based at Rice University that publishes free, openly licensed textbooks and related learning resources. OpenStax describes its textbooks as peer-reviewed, openly licensed, and 100% free, and notes that the books are written by expert authors and reviewed through a peer-review process (OpenStax, n.d.).

Good For

OpenStax is especially useful for high-enrollment courses, introductory college courses, general education, and common course sequences.

Common Subjects

Common subject areas include math, science, social sciences, humanities, business, and related fields.

Why You Might Use It

OpenStax is often a good first stop when you need a full textbook that is professionally developed and easy for students to access. Many books also include instructor resources, although access to some ancillaries may require instructor verification.

Check Carefully

Do not assume every OpenStax title has the same license. Check the copyright or license information for the specific book you want to use.

OER Commons

What It Is

OER Commons is a searchable digital library created by the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, or ISKME. It helps users find open and freely available teaching and learning materials across disciplines. Resources can be searched and filtered using descriptive information such as education level, subject, material type, and conditions of use (Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, n.d.).

Good For

OER Commons is useful for searching across many types of resources, including lesson plans, modules, activities, textbooks, videos, and full courses.

Common Subjects

OER Commons includes materials for K-12, higher education, workforce education, and general education across many disciplines.

Why You Might Use It

OER Commons is useful when you are still exploring what exists and want to cast a wide net. It is also helpful because you can filter by license type, subject, level, and resource format.

Check Carefully

OER Commons includes resources from many creators and sources. Check the license, original source, author or organization, resource type, date, accessibility, and conditions of use for the specific item you want to use.

Open Textbook Library

What It Is

The Open Textbook Library is a searchable collection of open textbooks supported by the Open Education Network. It describes open textbooks as works that are licensed to be freely used, adapted, downloaded, edited, and distributed at no cost (University of Minnesota Libraries, n.d.).

Good For

The Open Textbook Library is useful for finding full open textbooks and reviewing faculty feedback before deciding whether a book is worth exploring.

Common Subjects

Common subject areas include business, education, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, medicine, student success, and more.

Why You Might Use It

The Open Textbook Library is especially useful when you want a full textbook and want to see how other educators have reviewed it. Many records include faculty reviews, licensing information, and download options.

Check Carefully

Licenses vary by textbook. Some may be easy to adapt, while others may have more restrictions. Always check the license on the book record and in the book itself.

MERLOT

What It Is

MERLOT, which stands for Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching, is a long-running collection of online teaching and learning materials. MERLOT describes itself as a curated collection of free and open online teaching, learning, and faculty development services contributed and used by an international education community (MERLOT, n.d.).

Good For

MERLOT is useful for finding multimedia resources, assignments, simulations, learning exercises, tutorials, and discipline-specific teaching materials.

Common Subjects

MERLOT includes all major academic disciplines, including humanities, STEM, business, education, health sciences, and social sciences.

Why You Might Use It

MERLOT can be useful when you need more than a textbook. It often surfaces smaller learning objects, teaching activities, and discipline-specific resources that can be used to supplement a course.

Check Carefully

Not everything in MERLOT has the same review status, license, or format. Look for peer reviews, user ratings, license information, and the original source.

SkillsCommons

What It Is

SkillsCommons focuses on workforce development and career-oriented learning materials. Its site describes it as a large open library of workforce training materials designed for 21st-century employment, with browsing by industry, credential type, material type, occupation, and instructional program (SkillsCommons, n.d.).

Good For

SkillsCommons is useful for career and technical education, workforce training, applied programs, professional skills, and competency-based learning.

Common Subjects

Common subject areas include healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, business, trades, apprenticeships, and workforce pathways.

Why You Might Use It

SkillsCommons is a strong option when your course or program is connected to job skills, technical training, credentials, or applied learning outcomes.

Check Carefully

Licenses and formats can vary. Check the item record and any attached files for permissions, accessibility, and update dates.

LibreTexts

What It Is

LibreTexts is a nonprofit open education platform that supports the creation, customization, remixing, and sharing of textbooks, homework, and ancillary materials. LibreTexts describes itself as an adaptable OER platform for creating, customizing, and sharing accessible, interactive textbooks and related materials (LibreTexts, n.d.).

Good For

LibreTexts is useful for finding and remixing textbook content, building custom textbooks, and exploring interactive or homework-supported OER.

Common Subjects

Common subject areas include biology, business, chemistry, engineering, humanities, mathematics, health sciences, physics, social sciences, statistics, workforce education, and more.

Why You Might Use It

LibreTexts can be especially useful when you want to customize or remix content rather than adopt a textbook exactly as-is. The platform emphasizes remixing, customization, and textbook construction.

Check Carefully

Licensing can vary by page, book, or included material. Always check the specific LibreTexts page or book for its license and any attribution notes.

Statewide, System, or Institutional OER Repositories

Some systems or states maintain OER repositories or hub spaces that support local, regional, or statewide priorities.

What They Are

Statewide or system-level OER repositories may include free educational resources, e-textbooks, workforce materials, teaching collections, institutional hubs, and groups for sharing collections by subject, project, or organization.

Good For

These repositories are useful for locally relevant OER discovery, statewide or system-level initiatives, institutional collaboration, shared collections, and materials connected to common curriculum requirements or workforce pathways.

Why You Might Use Them

A statewide or system-level repository can connect OER discovery with local priorities, institutional hubs, and resources created or curated by educators in a particular region or system.

Check Carefully

As with other repositories, resources can vary in license, format, quality, accessibility, and level of completion. Check the specific item record before using or adapting a resource.

Pressbooks Directory

What It Is

The Pressbooks Directory is a discovery space for open books published across Pressbooks networks. It helps users find books created by institutions, educators, and publishing programs using Pressbooks (Pressbooks, n.d.).

Good For

The Pressbooks Directory is useful for finding open textbooks, guides, workbooks, handbooks, and course materials published in a book-like format.

Why You Might Use It

Pressbooks materials often have readable web versions and may include downloadable formats such as PDF or EPUB, depending on how the book was published.

Check Carefully

Pressbooks is a publishing platform, not a single publisher. Licenses, quality, accessibility, and maintenance vary by book and institution. Check the individual book's license page, copyright page, or footer.

Discipline-Specific and Media-Specific Discovery Spaces

General repositories are helpful, but discipline-specific platforms can sometimes get you closer to what you need faster. These resources may not all be OER in the same way, so check the license, terms of use, and reuse permissions for each item.

STEM

PhET Interactive Simulations

PhET provides free online simulations for physics, chemistry, biology, earth science, and math. The site includes simulations, teaching activities, translated simulations, and information on accessibility and offline access (PhET Interactive Simulations, n.d.).

PhET is especially useful when students need interactive practice, visual modeling, or conceptual demonstrations.

MIT OpenCourseWare

MIT OpenCourseWare provides free lecture notes, exams, videos, and teaching materials from MIT courses. The site states that materials are free and that no registration is required (MIT OpenCourseWare, n.d.).

MIT OpenCourseWare is useful for exploring course structures, lecture notes, problem sets, syllabi, and examples from existing courses.

Humanities and Social Sciences

Digital Public Library of America

The Digital Public Library of America, or DPLA, is useful for finding cultural heritage materials, primary sources, images, and texts from libraries, archives, and museums across the United States.

DPLA can be useful for humanities, social sciences, history, literature, cultural studies, art, media, and public history projects.

Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is useful for public domain literature and older texts. It is a strong option for classic works that can be downloaded and reused, but users should still check the specific terms attached to each item.

Internet Archive

The Internet Archive is a large digital library that includes texts, audio, video, software, websites, and archived web pages. It can be useful for finding historical materials, public domain works, and borrowable digital texts.

Media: Images, Video, and Audio

Wikimedia Commons

Wikimedia Commons is a media repository for images, audio, video, and other media files. It is useful for finding openly licensed or public domain media, but each file has its own license and attribution requirements.

Unsplash and Pixabay

Unsplash and Pixabay provide images and other media that may be free to use under their own platform licenses. These are useful for visuals, but they are not the same as Creative Commons licenses. Always read the platform license before using the material in an OER.

YouTube Creative Commons Filter

YouTube allows creators to mark some videos with a Creative Commons license, and users can filter search results for Creative Commons content. However, you should still open the specific video, check its license, and consider whether any third-party content in the video may affect reuse.

How to Choose Where to Start

Use the purpose of your search to guide where you begin.

If you need…	Start with…
A full textbook for a common college course	OpenStax, Open Textbook Library, LibreTexts
A wide search across formats and levels	OER Commons, MERLOT
Statewide, system, or locally relevant resources	Statewide repositories, institutional hubs, system-level repositories
Workforce or career/technical materials	SkillsCommons
Simulations or interactive STEM activities	PhET, MIT OpenCourseWare
Public domain literature or historical texts	Project Gutenberg, Internet Archive
Images, media, or primary sources	Wikimedia Commons, DPLA, Internet Archive
Examples of openly published books	Pressbooks Directory

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You do not have to start from scratch. Major OER platforms can help you find full textbooks, smaller modules, media, activities, simulations, and examples from other educators.

For example, if you are redesigning an introductory course, you might start with the Open Textbook Library or OpenStax for a possible textbook, then use OER Commons or MERLOT to find activities, videos, or supplemental materials.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Knowing where OER live helps you find materials that support your learning beyond what is assigned in class.

For example, if a concept is not clicking, you might use LibreTexts, OpenStax, PhET, or MIT OpenCourseWare to find another explanation, practice activity, or simulation.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Repositories and platforms give you practical starting points when helping faculty or students locate materials.

For example, if someone asks for open materials in a workforce-focused course, SkillsCommons may be a better starting point than a general textbook repository.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Platform awareness can support program-level planning. Departments can identify common resources, reduce duplicated searching, and create shared collections.

For example, a department might build a shared list of recommended OER platforms by course level or discipline so instructors are not starting from an empty search box every semester.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Platform decisions affect discoverability, sustainability, and institutional impact. When institutions support shared repositories, publishing platforms, and library guidance, OER work becomes easier to find and maintain.

For example, an institution might support a repository, Pressbooks network, or open publishing workflow so faculty-created OER have a stable home beyond one semester or one course shell.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

OER discovery is not about knowing every platform. It is about knowing a few good places to begin and checking each resource carefully.

If you find a promising resource, pause before using it. Look for the title, author, license, format, date, accessibility features, and whether it can be downloaded, linked, adapted, or shared.

Practice: Choose Three Starting Places

Choose a course, topic, training need, or learning goal. Then choose three OER discovery spaces that might be good starting points.

For each one, note:

1. Why this platform seems relevant.
2. What kinds of resources it includes.
3. Whether it is better for textbooks, media, activities, simulations, or collections.
4. Whether licensing is visible.
5. Whether resources can be downloaded or adapted.
6. Whether the platform seems easy to search.
7. What you would need to check before using a resource from this platform.

Use this template:

- Learning goal or topic:
- Platform:
- Why I chose it:
- What I found:
- License notes:
- Access or format notes:
- Next step:

2.2 Platform and Format Decisions: Access, Usability, and Sustainability

Choosing a platform is not just a technology decision. It is also an access decision, a teaching decision, and a sustainability decision.

Where a resource lives affects how students encounter it: whether it loads on a phone, whether it works with assistive technology, whether it can be downloaded, whether links stay stable, and whether someone can update it later.

A resource may be free and openly licensed, but if students cannot easily access or use it, it will not fully serve its purpose.

Accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG, are designed to help make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. WCAG includes guidance on text, images, audio, structure, presentation, and code, all of which can affect how students experience digital course materials (W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, n.d.).

The goal of this section is to help you make thoughtful platform and format choices. You do not need the most advanced tool. You need a tool, platform, or format that supports your learners, your goals, and your ability to maintain the resource over time.

Platform Is an Access Decision

When students access course materials, they bring different devices, internet connections, schedules, learning needs, and accessibility needs.

Some students may read on a laptop. Others may rely on a phone. Some may need screen reader compatibility, captions, keyboard navigation, high contrast, or downloadable files. Some may have reliable broadband. Others may be working with limited bandwidth, shared devices, or inconsistent access.

A platform choice can either reduce or increase those barriers.

Before choosing where a resource should live, ask:

1. Will this work on a phone?
2. Does it require students to create an additional account?
3. Is the navigation clear?
4. Can students download it for offline use?
5. Does it require a strong internet connection?
6. Can students access it without paying?
7. Does it work with screen readers or other assistive technologies?
8. Can the resource be printed if needed?
9. Will the link still work next semester?

A platform that looks polished may still create barriers. A simpler platform that students can reliably access may be the better choice.

Format Matters Too

The platform is where the resource lives. The format is how the resource is delivered.

Common formats include:

1. Web pages.
2. PDFs.
3. EPUB files.
4. Word documents or Google Docs.
5. Slide decks.
6. Videos.
7. Audio files.
8. Interactive tools.
9. Learning management system pages.
10. Pressbooks or LibreTexts chapters.
11. Downloadable course packets.

Each format creates different possibilities and limits. A web page may be easy to update and navigate, while a PDF may be easier to download and print. An EPUB may work well for reading on different devices, while a slide deck may be useful for presenting but harder to use as a complete learning resource.

The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides guidance for creating open textbooks and learning materials that are free and accessible for all students, including attention to images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Common Format Tradeoffs

Web Page

A web page is often flexible and easy to update. It can work well for students if the page has clear headings, readable structure, descriptive links, accessible images, and mobile-friendly design.

Strengths

1. Easy to update.
2. Can include links, images, videos, and embedded tools.
3. Often works well on multiple devices.

4. Can be public and shareable.

Watch For

1. Broken links.
2. Poor mobile layout.
3. Unclear navigation.
4. Accessibility issues in embedded content.
5. Platform changes over time.

PDF

A PDF can be useful when students need to download, print, or annotate a stable document. However, PDFs can create accessibility problems if they are not properly structured.

Strengths

1. Easy to download.
2. Easy to print.
3. Stable layout.
4. Useful for offline access.

Watch For

1. PDFs that are scanned images instead of readable text.
2. Missing headings.
3. Missing alt text.
4. Poor reading order.
5. Tables that do not work with screen readers.
6. Files that are difficult to read on phones.

EPUB

An EPUB is designed for digital reading and can reflow text across devices. It may be a good option for book-length resources.

Strengths

1. Works well with many e-reader tools.
2. Text can resize and reflow.
3. Useful for longer readings.
4. Often better than PDF for mobile reading.

Watch For

1. Formatting issues.
2. Missing alt text or captions.
3. Compatibility differences across devices.
4. Whether students know how to open the file.

Editable Document

Editable documents, such as Word documents or Google Docs, can be helpful during drafting, collaboration, and adaptation.

Strengths

1. Easy to revise.
2. Useful for collaboration.
3. Familiar to many users.
4. Can often be exported into other formats.

Watch For

1. Version confusion.
2. Accidental editing.
3. Unclear sharing permissions.
4. Accessibility issues with headings, tables, and images.
5. Long-term ownership if stored in a personal account.

Video or Audio

Video and audio can support multimodal learning, but they need captions, transcripts, and clear access pathways.

Strengths

1. Useful for demonstrations, interviews, walkthroughs, and lectures.
2. Can support different learning preferences.
3. May make abstract ideas more concrete.

Watch For

1. Missing captions.
2. Missing transcripts.
3. Platform ads or distractions.
4. Account requirements.
5. Streaming bandwidth.
6. Unclear reuse permissions.

Learning Management System Page

A learning management system page, such as a Canvas, Blackboard, Brightspace, or Moodle page, can be convenient for enrolled students.

Strengths

1. Easy for students to find inside the course.
2. Can connect directly to assignments, modules, and gradebook items.
3. Familiar course structure.
4. Good for private or course-specific materials.

Watch For

1. Limited public reuse.
2. Access ending after the course closes.
3. Difficulty sharing beyond one section.
4. Content being tied to one instructor or course shell.
5. Export and backup limitations.

Key Questions for Choosing a Platform or Format

1. Access: Can Students Actually Get to It?

A resource should be easy for students to reach without unnecessary barriers. Consider whether it requires payment, account creation, special software, high-speed internet, or multiple clicks through confusing pathways.

Ask:

1. Can students access this from the first day of class?
2. Does it require a login outside the learning management system?
3. Does it work on a phone?
4. Can it be downloaded?
5. Is there an offline option?
6. Are there stable links?

2. Accessibility: Can All Students Use It?

Accessibility should be part of the platform decision from the beginning, not something added at the end. WCAG organizes web accessibility around principles such as making content perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, n.d.).

Ask:

1. Are headings used correctly?
2. Do images have meaningful alt text when needed?
3. Are videos captioned?

4. Are transcripts available for audio or video?
5. Are tables simple and readable?
6. Is color contrast sufficient?
7. Are links descriptive?
8. Can the resource be navigated by keyboard?
9. Does the format work with screen readers?

3. Usability: Is It Easy to Navigate?

Students should not have to spend extra energy figuring out where to click, what to download, or which version to use. Usability matters because confusion can become an access barrier.

Ask:

1. Is the navigation clear?
2. Are sections labeled consistently?
3. Are instructions visible?
4. Can students tell what to read or do first?
5. Is the layout clean and readable?
6. Are there too many file types or duplicate versions?

4. Editability: Can You Update It Later?

Some resources are easy to revise. Others are difficult to change once they are published. If you know the content will need regular updates, choose a format that allows editing without rebuilding everything.

Ask:

1. Can I revise this myself?
2. Do I need special software or platform access?
3. Can someone else update it if I am unavailable?
4. Can I fix errors quickly?
5. Can I update examples, links, data, and accessibility features?

5. Export and Portability: Can You Take It With You?

Export matters. If your work only lives inside one platform and cannot be downloaded, backed up, or moved, it may be vulnerable to platform changes, account changes, or institutional transitions.

Ask:

1. Can I export this as PDF, EPUB, HTML, Word, XML, or another usable format?
2. Can I back it up?
3. Can the content move to another platform later?

4. Who owns the account or platform space?
5. What happens if the tool changes, disappears, or becomes paid?

6. Privacy: What Does the Tool Ask From Students?

A platform may be free but still ask students to create accounts, share personal data, accept terms of use, or use a third-party tool outside institutional systems. This does not automatically make the tool unusable, but it should be part of the decision.

Ask:

1. Do students need to create an account?
2. What personal information is collected?
3. Is there an alternative for students who cannot or do not want to use the tool?
4. Does the platform include ads or tracking?
5. Does the tool meet privacy expectations for the course or institution?

7. Maintenance: Who Will Keep It Alive?

Every platform choice creates future work. Someone may need to update links, replace broken media, revise outdated information, check accessibility, update citations, and communicate version changes.

Ask:

1. Who will maintain this?
2. How often should it be reviewed?
3. Where will update notes live?
4. Who can fix errors?
5. What happens if the original creator leaves?
6. Is there a backup copy?

Simple Platform Decision Matrix

Use this matrix when comparing possible formats or platforms.

Question	Why It Matters
Can students access it easily?	Reduces barriers from cost, login issues, device limits, and confusing pathways.

Does it work on mobile?	Many students rely on phones for reading, checking assignments, or reviewing materials.
Can it be downloaded or printed?	Supports offline access and different study habits.
Is it accessible?	Helps ensure students using assistive technologies can use the resource.
Can it be edited?	Makes future updates, corrections, and adaptations easier.
Can it be exported?	Protects the work from platform changes or loss of access.
Is it stable?	Helps students and future users find the same resource over time.
Who maintains it?	Makes sustainability realistic instead of accidental.
Does it protect student privacy?	Reduces unnecessary data collection or account requirements.
Does it support your teaching goal?	Keeps the platform from driving the pedagogy instead of supporting it.

Low-Bandwidth and Mobile-Friendly Choices

A resource does not need to be fancy to be effective. In many cases, the most student-friendly choice is a clear web page, a well-structured PDF, an EPUB, or a simple course page with stable links.

A good platform decision asks not only “Can students access this?” but also “Can students access this under real-life conditions?”

If students may have limited internet access, consider:

1. Providing downloadable versions.
2. Keeping file sizes reasonable.
3. Avoiding unnecessary large images or autoplay media.
4. Offering transcripts for videos and audio.
5. Using compressed files when appropriate.
6. Providing text-based alternatives.
7. Making readings available before they are needed.
8. Avoiding platforms that require constant streaming.

Practical Example: Sharing an Open Textbook Chapter

Imagine you are sharing an open textbook chapter with students.

Option 1: Link to the Web Version

This keeps students connected to the most current version, but it requires internet access.

Option 2: Provide a Downloadable PDF

This supports offline access and printing, but it may be less comfortable on a phone and harder to update.

Option 3: Use an EPUB

This may be better for mobile reading, but students may need help opening it.

Option 4: Build a Course Page With Selected Excerpts and Links

This keeps everything inside the course, but it may be harder to reuse outside that course shell.

Option 5: Publish Your Adapted Version in Pressbooks or Another Open Platform

This may support public access, downloads, and reuse, but it requires more planning and maintenance.

None of these options is automatically best. The right choice depends on your students, your goals, your time, and your maintenance plan.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

The platform you choose affects how students experience the resource. A beautiful resource that is hard to access may not support learning as well as a simpler resource that is easy to find, download, and navigate.

For example, if students often read on phones, a mobile-friendly web page or EPUB may be more usable than a large fixed-layout PDF.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Format affects your learning experience. If a resource is hard to open, difficult to read, or impossible to use with your device, that is not a personal failure. It is a design issue.

For example, if a PDF is hard to read on your phone, check whether the resource also offers a web, EPUB, or HTML version.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help others think beyond “Where should I upload this?” and toward “How will people actually use this?”

For example, if a faculty member wants to share a resource publicly, you might help them compare a course page, Pressbooks book, institutional repository record, and PDF download option.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Platform choices affect consistency across courses and programs. Shared standards can reduce confusion for students and make materials easier to maintain.

For example, a department might decide that shared course materials should include a web version, a downloadable version, an accessibility check, and a named person responsible for updates.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Institutional support for accessible, sustainable platforms can make OER work more durable. Without that support, open materials may depend too heavily on individual effort.

For example, supporting platforms with export options, accessibility guidance, and long-term hosting can help faculty-created OER remain usable beyond one semester or one instructor.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

When choosing a tool, ask what it makes easier and what it makes harder. Every platform has tradeoffs.

For example, a tool may look exciting, but if students need a new account, strong internet, and a laptop to use it, it may not be the best choice for the learning goal.

Practice: Compare Two Formats

Choose one resource you might assign, share, adapt, or publish. Compare two possible formats for that resource.

For example:

1. Web page vs. PDF.
2. PDF vs. EPUB.
3. Course page vs. public webbook.
4. Video vs. text-based guide.
5. Google Doc vs. Pressbooks chapter.

Use this structure:

- Resource:
- Audience:
- Learning goal:
- Format option 1:
- Strengths:
- Barriers:
- Accessibility concerns:
- Maintenance concerns:
- Format option 2:
- Strengths:
- Barriers:
- Accessibility concerns:
- Maintenance concerns:
- Best choice for now:
- Why:

Reflection: Design Under Real-Life Conditions

Consider:

1. What devices are learners most likely to use?
2. What access barriers might they face?
3. What formats would make the resource easier to use?
4. What formats might make the resource harder to use?
5. What would need to be true for the resource to remain usable next semester or next year?

2.3 Hosting and Implementation Options: Low-Risk to High-Lift

Once you find or create an open resource, you need to decide where it will live. This decision matters because the “home” you choose affects who can access the resource, how easy it is to update, whether it can be reused beyond one course, and how much maintenance it will require.

There is no single best hosting option for every OER project. A simple link to a stable resource may be enough for one course. A public Pressbooks site may be better for a textbook or guide that will be shared beyond one semester. A learning management system module may be the most realistic option for something still being tested privately with students.

The goal is not to choose the most impressive platform. The goal is to choose a home that fits the purpose, audience, permissions, and maintenance capacity of the project.

Start With the Purpose

Before choosing a hosting option, ask what you need the resource to do.

Are you trying to:

1. Help students access assigned materials?
2. Organize resources for one course?
3. Share a resource publicly?
4. Adapt an existing OER?
5. Create a new textbook or module?
6. Invite collaboration from colleagues?
7. Preserve a finished version?
8. Make the resource easy for others to reuse?

Different goals point toward different homes. A private course module may work well for one semester of teaching, but it may not support public reuse. A public platform may support reuse beautifully, but it may require more planning, accessibility checking, and long-term maintenance.

Option 1: Link Out to a Stable Publisher or Repository

This is the lowest-lift option. Instead of copying or rebuilding the resource, you link students directly to the version hosted by the original publisher, repository, or platform.

Examples include:

1. Linking to an OpenStax textbook.
2. Linking to an Open Textbook Library record.
3. Linking to a LibreTexts chapter.
4. Linking to a PhET simulation.
5. Linking to a public domain text in Project Gutenberg.

OpenStax provides free, peer-reviewed textbooks and makes them available online for students and instructors (OpenStax, n.d.). The Open Textbook Library provides a searchable collection of open textbooks that are free to use and adapt, with licenses and book records available to users (University of Minnesota Libraries, n.d.).

Best For

1. Using a resource as-is.
2. Reducing maintenance work.
3. Keeping students connected to the most current version.
4. Avoiding unnecessary copying or file management.

Benefits

1. Low effort.
2. Easy to update links if needed.
3. Students may access the most current version.
4. Less responsibility for maintaining the content itself.

Risks

1. The link may change or break.
2. The original platform controls the resource.
3. You may have limited ability to customize.
4. Students may leave your course space to access the material.
5. The resource could change without you noticing.

Good Practice

Keep a backup citation and record of the title, author, URL, license, and date accessed or last checked. If the resource is essential to the course, check the link before each semester.

Option 2: Organize Links and Resources Inside the Learning Management System

The learning management system, such as Canvas, Blackboard, Brightspace, or Moodle, is often the easiest place for enrolled students to find course materials. This can be a practical choice when the resource is course-specific or still being tested.

Examples include:

1. A weekly module with OER links.
2. A “Start Here” page with textbook access instructions.
3. A course resource library organized by topic.
4. Embedded videos, readings, and activities.

Best For

1. Course-specific materials.
2. Private or pilot use.
3. Organizing resources around weekly modules.
4. Keeping everything in one familiar student pathway.

Benefits

1. Familiar to students.
2. Easy to connect to assignments and due dates.
3. Works well for course navigation.
4. Good for testing before public sharing.

Risks

1. Usually not public.
2. May be difficult to share beyond one course or semester.
3. Content can become trapped in a course shell.
4. Future instructors may not know what changed or why.
5. Students may lose access after the course ends.

Good Practice

If you organize OER inside the learning management system, keep an exportable version somewhere else too, such as a Word document, Google Doc, Pressbooks draft, repository record, or spreadsheet. The LMS can be the student-facing pathway without being the only place the resource exists.

Option 3: Create a Guide or Institutional Webpage

A library guide, web guide, or institutional webpage can be a useful home for curated resources, guides, reading lists, or public-facing support materials. This option works especially well when the goal is discovery, navigation, or sharing a collection rather than publishing a full textbook.

Examples include:

1. A course resource guide.
2. A department OER guide.
3. A collection of open textbooks by subject.
4. A student-facing guide to free learning tools.
5. A faculty guide to OER repositories.

Best For

1. Curated lists.

2. Resource guides.
3. Department or program collections.
4. Public-facing support materials.
5. Materials maintained by a library, unit, program, or organization.

Benefits

1. Public or institutionally visible.
2. Easier to maintain than a full textbook.
3. Helpful for organizing links and short descriptions.
4. Often supported by library staff, web editors, or communication teams.

Risks

1. Not ideal for long-form textbook publishing.
2. May have limited formatting or export options.
3. May depend on institutional web policies.
4. Can become outdated if no one owns maintenance.

Good Practice

Name a maintainer and review schedule. A guide that no one updates can quickly become a collection of broken links.

Option 4: Draft in Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or Shared Folders

Many OER projects begin in familiar tools. Google Docs, Microsoft Word, OneDrive, SharePoint, or shared folders can be useful for drafting, commenting, and early collaboration.

Examples include:

1. Drafting a module in Google Docs.
2. Collecting chapter drafts in a shared folder.
3. Co-writing an assignment bank in Word.
4. Using comments to gather peer feedback.

Best For

1. Early drafting.
2. Collaboration.
3. Feedback.
4. Low-stakes pilots.
5. Materials that are not ready for public publishing.

Benefits

1. Familiar and easy to start.
2. Supports collaboration and comments.
3. Low technical barrier.
4. Can often export to other formats.

Risks

1. Sharing permissions can be confusing.
2. Version control can get messy.
3. Long-term ownership may depend on a personal or institutional account.
4. Documents may not be easy for the public to discover.
5. Accessibility still needs to be checked.

Good Practice

Use clear file names and version labels. For example:

Module 1 Climate Justice OER Draft v1.0 Spring 2026

Keep a simple change log if multiple people are editing.

Option 5: Publish in Pressbooks or a Similar Open Publishing Platform

Pressbooks is a publishing platform commonly used for open textbooks, guides, and course materials. It is built for webbooks and can support multiple export formats, depending on the network and settings. The Pressbooks Directory also helps users discover open books published across Pressbooks networks (Pressbooks, n.d.).

Examples include:

1. An open textbook.
2. A course workbook.
3. A faculty guide.
4. A student handbook.
5. A multi-author edited collection.

Best For

1. Book-length resources.
2. Public OER.
3. Resources that need chapters and navigation.
4. Projects that may need PDF, EPUB, or web versions.
5. Resources that will be updated over time.

Benefits

1. Public-facing and readable online.
2. Good structure for chapters and sections.
3. Can support exportable formats.
4. Clear place for license, attribution, and version notes.
5. Useful for institutional publishing programs.

Risks

1. Requires setup and maintenance.
2. Authors may need training.
3. Accessibility still requires attention.
4. Design and formatting choices take time.
5. Long-term hosting depends on the Pressbooks network or institution.

Good Practice

Use Pressbooks when the resource needs to live as a public, structured book or guide. Before publishing, decide who can edit it, how updates will be made, and where version notes will live.

Option 6: Use LibreTexts or Another Remix-Friendly OER Platform

LibreTexts supports the creation, customization, remixing, and sharing of OER textbooks and related learning materials. It describes itself as an adaptable OER platform for creating and customizing accessible, interactive textbooks and ancillary materials (LibreTexts, n.d.).

Examples include:

1. Adapting chapters from an existing LibreTexts book.
2. Building a custom textbook from multiple sources.
3. Using platform tools to assemble course-specific materials.
4. Integrating textbook content with homework or interactive tools.

Best For

1. Remixing textbook content.
2. STEM and other discipline-specific course materials.
3. Instructors who want a customizable textbook structure.
4. Projects that benefit from platform-supported construction tools.

Benefits

1. Supports remixing and customization.
2. Strong discipline-based libraries.
3. Useful for building custom textbook pathways.
4. May include interactive or ancillary features.

Risks

1. Platform-specific learning curve.
2. Licenses may vary by resource.
3. Users must check each page or book for permissions.
4. Long-term maintenance still needs a plan.

Good Practice

Use LibreTexts when you want to customize from existing materials, but always check the license on the specific content you plan to reuse or adapt.

Option 7: Publish or Preserve in an Institutional Repository

An institutional repository can provide a stable place to preserve and share completed resources. Repositories are often managed by libraries and may support metadata, persistent links, discoverability, and long-term access.

Examples include:

1. Depositing a completed open textbook PDF.
2. Sharing a faculty-created workbook.
3. Preserving a final report or guide.
4. Archiving a completed OER project.
5. Storing supplementary teaching materials.

Best For

1. Finished or stable versions.
2. Preservation.
3. Discoverability.
4. Institutional recordkeeping.
5. Grant-funded outputs.

Benefits

1. Stable institutional home.
2. Metadata and discoverability.
3. Long-term preservation support.
4. May provide persistent URLs or DOIs.
5. Often supported by library staff.

Risks

1. May not be ideal for frequent editing.
2. May require deposit review.

3. May support files better than interactive resources.
4. Updates may require new versions or new records.

Good Practice

Use a repository when you need a stable, citable version. If the resource will change often, pair the repository record with an editable working version elsewhere.

Comparing Hosting Options

The platform is where the resource lives. The format is how the resource is delivered.

Hosting Option	Best For	Main Strength	Main Caution
Link to stable resource	Using existing OER as-is	Low maintenance	Link or platform may change
LMS or course module	Course-specific use	Easy for enrolled students	Limited public reuse
Guide or webpage	Curated collections	Public navigation and discovery	Needs regular link checking
Google Docs or Word	Drafting and collaboration	Easy to start and revise	Version control can get messy
Pressbooks	Public books and guides	Structured, shareable, exportable	Requires setup and maintenance
LibreTexts	Remixing textbook content	Customization and discipline libraries	Check page-level licenses

Institutional repository	Preservation and citation	Stable long-term access	Not ideal for frequent editing

A Practical Hosting Ladder

You do not need to build the final version on day one. Use a laddered approach.

Stage 1: Link

Start by linking to an existing resource in your course. This is low-risk and lets you test whether the resource works for students.

Stage 2: Curate

Organize several resources into a module, guide, reading list, or collection. Add short notes explaining why each resource is included.

Stage 3: Adapt

Make small changes, such as revising examples, adding local context, or creating new activities. Check the license before adapting.

Stage 4: Publish

Move the resource to a public platform such as Pressbooks, LibreTexts, an institutional site, or a repository.

Stage 5: Maintain

Create a plan for updates, accessibility checks, version notes, broken links, and future ownership.

Choosing a Home: A Short Decision Guide

Use these statements to narrow your options.

If you mainly want students to access a resource this semester, use a stable link, LMS module, or course page.

If you want to organize resources for a department or group, use a guide, institutional webpage, shared collection, or repository list.

If you are still drafting, use Google Docs, Word, OneDrive, SharePoint, or another collaborative tool, but keep version control clear.

If you are building a public textbook or guide, consider Pressbooks, LibreTexts, or another open publishing platform.

If you have a finished version that should be preserved, use an institutional repository or another stable archive.

If you want others to adapt the work, choose a platform that supports clear licensing, editable formats, export options, and public access.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You do not have to make the largest hosting decision first. You can begin with a low-risk option, test it with students, and then decide whether the resource needs a more public or editable home.

For example, you might start by linking to an open textbook in your course. After one semester, you may decide to adapt selected chapters and move the revised version into Pressbooks.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Where a resource lives affects how easily you can find it, use it, and return to it later.

For example, a reading linked only inside a course may disappear after the course ends, while a public webbook or repository record may remain available after the semester.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help people choose a hosting option that matches the actual stage of the project.

For example, if someone is still drafting, a shared document may be enough. If the resource is ready for public use, Pressbooks or an institutional repository may be more appropriate.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Shared hosting decisions can reduce confusion and make materials easier to sustain across courses and personnel changes.

For example, a department might decide that common course materials should have a stable public home, a backup copy, and a named maintainer rather than living only in individual course shells.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Hosting is part of infrastructure. If institutions want OER to last, they need places where resources can be published, preserved, found, and updated.

For example, supporting a publishing platform, repository, or library-led OER workflow can help faculty-created resources stay available beyond one grant cycle or one instructor.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A good home for a resource is one that matches its purpose.

A draft needs a place to grow. A course reading needs a stable student pathway. A finished OER needs a public home, a clear license, and a maintenance plan.

Practice: Use the Hosting Ladder

Choose one resource or project. It can be something you already use, something you found, or something you want to create.

Answer:

1. What stage is this project in: link, curate, adapt, publish, or maintain?
2. Who needs access to it?
3. Does it need to be public?
4. Does it need to be editable?
5. Does it need to be preserved?
6. Who will maintain it?
7. What hosting option fits best right now?
8. What hosting option might fit later?

Use this template:

- Resource or project:
- Current stage:
- Audience:
- Best home for now:
- Why:
- Future home, if needed:
- Maintenance concerns:
- Next step:

2.4 Maintenance, Versioning, and Keeping It Alive

Publishing or sharing an OER is not the end of the work. Open resources need care over time.

Links break. Examples age. Data changes. Accessibility standards and needs become clearer. Platforms shift. A resource that worked beautifully one semester may need updates before it serves the next group of learners well.

This does not mean every OER needs constant attention. It means every OER benefits from a realistic maintenance plan. Even a very simple plan can help keep a resource usable, trustworthy, and easier to update later.

Creative Commons recommends noting when changes are made to adapted works, both to support attribution and to help future users understand what has been modified (Creative Commons, n.d.). Accessibility guidance also reminds us that usable resources depend on ongoing attention to structure, images, links, tables, multimedia, and other design choices that affect whether students can actually use the material (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Why Maintenance Matters

OER are often described as flexible because they can be revised, remixed, and shared. That flexibility is powerful, but it also creates responsibility. If a resource is going to keep being used, someone needs to know what changed, what needs review, and who is responsible for updates.

Maintenance matters because it helps:

1. Students access accurate and current materials.
2. Instructors trust the resource.
3. Accessibility issues get identified and improved.
4. Attribution and licensing stay clear.
5. Future users understand which version they are using.
6. Collaborators avoid duplicating work.
7. Broken links and outdated examples get fixed.

A resource does not have to be perfect to be useful. But if people rely on it, they need to know whether it is being maintained and how to report problems.

What Needs Maintenance?

Maintenance is not only about updating content. It includes anything that affects whether the resource remains findable, usable, accurate, and reusable.

Content

Content maintenance includes checking whether the information is still accurate, relevant, and aligned with the course or project goals.

Examples include:

1. Updating statistics.

2. Replacing outdated examples.
3. Correcting errors.
4. Adding new research or policy changes.
5. Revising language for clarity.
6. Removing content that no longer fits.

Links and Media

Links and embedded media often need regular checking. A video may be removed. A website may change. A database link may stop working. An embedded tool may no longer load.

Examples include:

1. Checking external links.
2. Replacing broken videos.
3. Updating image sources.
4. Removing inaccessible media.
5. Confirming that linked resources are still openly available.

Accessibility

Accessibility maintenance means checking whether students can use the resource across devices, formats, and assistive technologies. The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides guidance for accessible open textbooks, including images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Examples include:

1. Adding or improving alt text.
2. Checking heading structure.
3. Adding captions or transcripts.
4. Improving link text.
5. Simplifying complex tables.
6. Checking color contrast.
7. Confirming reading order in PDFs.

Licensing and Attribution

Licensing and attribution should stay clear as the resource changes. If you add new content, images, excerpts, or media, make sure each item has appropriate attribution and that the licenses are compatible with your intended use.

Examples include:

1. Updating attribution statements.
2. Noting adapted content.

3. Checking license compatibility.
4. Marking third-party content clearly.
5. Adding “except where otherwise noted” when needed.

Creative Commons recommends keeping attribution information connected to the works being reused and noting modifications when changes are made (Creative Commons, n.d.).

Platform and Access

A resource also needs a stable home. If the platform changes, access settings shift, or ownership of the account changes, the resource may become harder to find or maintain.

Examples include:

1. Checking public access settings.
2. Confirming download options.
3. Updating repository records.
4. Exporting backups.
5. Confirming that the resource still appears in search results.
6. Making sure a future maintainer can access the platform.

Versioning: Helping People Know What They Are Using

Versioning is the practice of labeling and tracking changes over time. It helps users understand whether they are using the current version, an older version, or a draft.

Versioning does not have to be complicated. For most teaching materials, a simple version label and short revision note are enough.

Simple Version Labels

You can use labels such as:

1. Version 1.0.
2. Version 1.1.
3. Spring 2026 edition.
4. Updated May 2026.
5. Draft version.
6. Pilot version.
7. Revised edition.

When to Change the Version Number

A simple approach:

1. Version 1.0: first public or course-ready version.

2. Version 1.1: small corrections, link updates, or minor accessibility improvements.
3. Version 2.0: major revision, new structure, new chapters, or significant content changes.

You do not need a formal software-style versioning system unless it helps your project. The point is to make changes visible enough that future users are not confused.

Revision Notes and Change Logs

A short change log can make an OER much easier to maintain. It does not need to be fancy. A simple table on an About, Version History, or Credits page is enough.

Date	Version	What Changed	Updated By
January 2026	1.0	First public version published	[Name]
March 2026	1.1	Fixed broken links and added alt text to Chapter 2 images	[Name]
August 2026	2.0	Added two new modules and updated examples throughout	[Name]

A change log helps future users see that the resource is alive, cared for, and still usable.

Adaptation Statements

If you adapt an existing OER, include a clear adaptation statement. This helps readers understand what came from the original source and what you changed.

This is especially helpful when someone else wants to reuse or adapt your version later.

Example Adaptation Statement

This textbook is adapted from [Original Title] by [Author], licensed under CC BY 4.0. Adaptations by [Your Name] include updated 2026 examples, added local case studies, reordered Chapters 3-5, and improved image alt text. This adapted version is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

An adaptation statement does four useful things:

1. Credits the original creator.
2. Identifies the original license.
3. Names what changed.
4. Clarifies the license for the adapted version.

Building a Realistic Maintenance Plan

A maintenance plan does not need to be long. It just needs to answer a few practical questions.

Who Owns Maintenance?

Name the person, role, or team responsible for updates.

Examples include:

1. Course instructor.
2. Department curriculum lead.
3. OER project team.
4. Library publishing team.
5. Graduate assistant.
6. Faculty working group.
7. Program coordinator.

If no one is named, maintenance is less likely to happen.

What Will Be Reviewed?

List what needs to be checked.

Examples include:

1. Links.
2. Examples.
3. Statistics.
4. Citations.
5. Accessibility.
6. License statements.
7. Downloadable files.
8. Embedded media.

How Often Will It Be Reviewed?

Choose a realistic schedule.

Examples include:

1. Before each semester.
2. Once per academic year.
3. After each major course revision.
4. When a user reports an error.
5. Before a new edition is released.

Where Will Updates Be Tracked?

Choose one place to record changes.

Examples include:

1. Version history page.
2. Spreadsheet.
3. GitHub issue log.
4. Pressbooks About this Book page.
5. Shared project notes.
6. Repository record.
7. README file.

How Can Users Report Problems?

Make it easy for people to tell you when something is broken or outdated.

Examples include:

1. Contact email.
2. Feedback form.
3. Issue tracker.
4. Link in the resource.
5. Note in the About page.

Minimum Viable Maintenance Plan

If you do not have capacity for a full maintenance workflow, start here:

1. Name the current maintainer.
2. Add a “last updated” date.
3. Keep a backup copy.
4. Check links once per semester.
5. Add a short version note when you make changes.
6. Provide one way for users to report errors.

This is enough to prevent the most common problems.

Common Maintenance Scenarios

Scenario 1: The Textbook Is Mostly Working, but a Few Links Are Broken

Update the links, note the date, and label the change as a minor update.

Example:

Version 1.1: Updated external links in Chapters 2 and 4.

Scenario 2: The Examples Are Outdated

Replace examples with current ones and note the change.

Example:

Updated 2026 examples in the labor market section.

Scenario 3: Students Report Accessibility Barriers

Fix what you can, document the update, and identify anything that needs more support.

Example:

Added alt text to images in Module 3 and simplified tables in Module 4.

Scenario 4: A New Instructor Takes Over the Course

Provide the new instructor with the editable files, license information, version history, and maintenance notes.

Example:

Resource folder includes editable Word files, PDF exports, attribution list, and version history.

Scenario 5: You Are No Longer Maintaining the Resource

Make that clear.

Example:

This resource is no longer actively maintained. It remains available for reuse under its current license.

This kind of statement helps users make informed decisions.

Where Maintenance Information Can Live

Maintenance information can appear in several places:

1. About page.
2. Copyright page.
3. Version history page.
4. Credits page.
5. Repository record.
6. README file.
7. Course resource guide.
8. Shared project folder.
9. Pressbooks front matter.
10. LMS instructor notes.

Choose the location users are most likely to see and future maintainers are most likely to update.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Maintenance helps your resource remain useful after the first semester.

For example, if you adapt an open textbook, add a version history page where you note updates, broken-link fixes, new examples, and accessibility improvements.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Maintenance affects whether the materials you rely on are accurate, accessible, and easy to use.

For example, if you find a broken link or inaccessible image in an OER, reporting it can help improve the resource for future learners.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help make OER projects more sustainable by building maintenance into the workflow early.

For example, when supporting a faculty-created resource, you might recommend a version history page, accessibility checklist, backup file, and contact form before publication.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Maintenance should be recognized as real labor. If departments rely on shared OER, they need a plan for keeping those resources current.

For example, a department using a shared open course shell might assign one faculty lead each year to review links, update examples, and coordinate revisions.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

OER sustainability depends on infrastructure and support, not just individual enthusiasm.

For example, institutions can support long-term OER use by providing publishing platforms, repository support, accessibility guidance, and recognition for maintenance labor.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A good resource is not only something that gets published. It is something people can continue to use, understand, and improve.

Before sharing a guide, workbook, or public resource, add a date, license, contact point, and backup copy. Those small steps make the resource easier to trust and reuse.

Practice: Create a Minimum Viable Maintenance Plan

Choose one OER, open guide, course resource, collection, or draft project.

Complete the following:

- Resource title:
- Current location:
- Current version or date:
- Current maintainer:
- Backup location:
- What needs regular review:
- Review schedule:
- Where updates will be tracked:
- How users can report problems:
- Next maintenance step:

Practice: Write a Change Log Entry

Imagine you made one update to a resource. Write a change log entry.

Use this structure:

Date	Version	What Changed	Updated By
[Date]	[Version]	[Brief description of change]	[Name or role]

Reflection: Keeping It Alive

Consider:

1. What kinds of resources need the most maintenance?
2. What kinds of resources can be maintained lightly?
3. Who usually does maintenance labor?
4. How can maintenance labor be recognized?
5. What happens when no one owns the maintenance plan?
6. What is one small step that would make your resource or collection more sustainable?

2.5 Organizing and Managing Your OER Collection

Once you start finding OER, you need a system to keep track of them. Otherwise, useful resources can disappear into browser tabs, email threads, course modules, screenshots, and “I know I saw that somewhere” territory.

Organizing OER is not just about being tidy. It helps you make better decisions. A good organization system lets you see what you found, where it came from, how it is licensed, whether it is accessible, how it might fit your course, and whether it is worth returning to later.

Your system does not need to be complicated. It just needs to help you answer a few practical questions:

1. What did I find?
2. Where did I find it?
3. Who created it?
4. What license does it use?
5. Can I adopt, adapt, remix, or only link to it?
6. What course, module, or learning outcome might it support?
7. What do I still need to check?

Why Organizing Matters

OER searching can get messy quickly. One search may lead to ten possible textbooks, three simulations, two videos, a public domain reading, and a promising image collection. Without a system, it becomes difficult to compare resources or explain why you chose one option over another.

Organizing your OER collection helps you:

1. Avoid repeating the same searches.
2. Document your decision-making.
3. Compare resource quality and fit.
4. Track licenses and reuse permissions.
5. Identify accessibility concerns.
6. Collect citations and attribution details.
7. Share promising resources with colleagues.
8. Build a stronger evidence trail for grants, reports, landscape briefs, or planning documents.

This is especially important when you are working toward a larger OER project. Your collection becomes more than a list of links. It becomes the evidence behind your recommendation.

Organization Strategies

Strategy 1: Use a Citation or Reference Manager

Citation managers can help you save sources, organize them into folders, add notes, and generate citations. Zotero is one popular option because it is free, open source, and designed to help users collect, organize, annotate, cite, and share research materials (Zotero, n.d.).

Zotero can be useful for OER work because it lets you:

1. Save web pages, articles, reports, books, and PDFs.
2. Organize resources into collections.
3. Add tags.
4. Write notes.
5. Attach files.
6. Generate citations.
7. Export bibliographies.
8. Sync your library across devices.
9. Share group libraries with collaborators.

Best For

1. Articles.
2. Reports.
3. Book records.
4. PDFs.
5. Research sources.
6. Resources that need formal citations.

Watch For

Zotero may not always capture OER metadata perfectly. After saving an item, check the title, author, date, publisher, URL, and license information. You may need to edit the record manually or add the license in a note.

Example

If you find an open textbook in the Open Textbook Library, you can save the record to Zotero, add tags such as “possible adoption,” “CC BY,” or the course topic, and write a note about how it might fit your course.

Strategy 2: Create Collections Inside OER Repositories

Some repositories allow you to save resources, create folders, build collections, or organize materials into personal libraries. OER Commons, for example, supports searching and filtering openly licensed and freely available teaching and learning materials, and its platform includes

ways to organize and evaluate resources using descriptive information such as subject, education level, material type, and conditions of use (Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, n.d.).

Repository collections can be helpful because they keep resources close to the place where you found them. This can make it easier to return later, share a collection, or continue searching within the same platform.

Best For

1. Collecting resources from the same repository.
2. Building topic-specific lists.
3. Sharing resources with collaborators.
4. Comparing resources within a platform.

Watch For

Repository collections may not export easily. If your collection is important, keep a backup list or spreadsheet with the title, URL, author, license, and notes.

Example

You might create an OER Commons collection for a course theme such as “Race, Class, and Inequality” and save possible readings, activities, and videos for later evaluation.

Strategy 3: Use a Spreadsheet or Tracker

A spreadsheet is one of the simplest and most flexible ways to manage an OER search. It works especially well when you are comparing multiple resources or documenting a search process for a badge, grant, project proposal, or landscape brief.

Your spreadsheet can include columns such as:

Column	Why It Helps
Resource title	Helps identify the item clearly
URL	Lets you return to the source

Author or organization	Supports citation and credibility checks
Platform or repository	Shows where you found it
License	Tells you what you can legally do
Resource type	Textbook, video, image, simulation, module, etc.
Subject or topic	Helps organize by course need
Course alignment	Connects the resource to outcomes or units
Format	Web, PDF, EPUB, video, interactive, etc.
Accessibility notes	Captions, alt text, readable tables, mobile use, etc.
Quality or fit notes	Your evaluation of usefulness
Use plan	Adopt, adapt, remix, link only, maybe, no
Last checked	Helps with maintenance
Next step	What you need to do next

Best For

1. Comparing multiple resources.
2. Documenting search evidence.
3. Tracking licenses.
4. Preparing landscape briefs.
5. Collaborating with others.
6. Making decisions visible.

Watch For

A spreadsheet is only useful if you actually use it. Keep the fields simple enough that you can maintain them.

Example

If you are searching for OER for a course, your tracker might include one row for each possible textbook, video, reading, image, simulation, or activity. Your Use Plan column might identify each item as “possible chapter,” “link-only,” “background source,” “adapt,” “remix,” or “not a fit.”

Strategy 4: Organize Materials in Your Learning Management System

If you are teaching a course, your learning management system may be the most familiar place to organize materials for students. You can create modules, pages, reading lists, or resource libraries inside Canvas, Blackboard, Brightspace, Moodle, or another LMS.

This can work well for course delivery, but it may not be the best long-term home for an OER collection because LMS content is often private, course-specific, and harder to share outside the course.

Best For

1. Student-facing weekly modules.
2. Course-specific readings.
3. Pilot testing resources.
4. Organizing materials around assignments.

Watch For

1. Students may lose access after the course ends.
2. Materials may not be visible to colleagues.
3. Resources may be difficult to reuse outside the course shell.
4. Attribution and license notes may get separated from the resource.
5. Links may break without a review process.

Example

You might create a course module called “Open Readings and Media” with pages organized by week. Each page can include links, short descriptions, and attributions. Keep a separate tracker outside the LMS so the collection can be reused later.

Strategy 5: Use Shared Folders or Collaborative Documents

Shared folders and collaborative documents can be useful when you are working with a team. Tools like Google Drive, OneDrive, SharePoint, or shared institutional folders can help collaborators collect drafts, links, notes, images, and planning documents.

Best For

1. Team projects.
2. Early-stage OER development.
3. Shared planning.
4. Collecting draft materials.
5. Storing backups.

Watch For

1. Unclear file naming.
2. Duplicate versions.
3. Permissions that are too open or too restricted.
4. Ownership tied to one person’s account.
5. Lack of citation or license information.

Example

A department might create a shared folder for “Open Course Materials” with subfolders for readings, images, assignments, citations, and final versions. A spreadsheet in the main folder can serve as the inventory.

Strategy 6: Build a Shared Department or Program Collection

If multiple people teach the same course or work in the same program, a shared collection can reduce duplication and strengthen collaboration. This could live in a guide, shared spreadsheet, institutional repository, repository hub, OER Commons collection, or department webpage.

Shared collections can help people:

1. Avoid repeating searches.
2. See what colleagues have already evaluated.
3. Identify common resources across sections.
4. Share notes about what worked with students.
5. Build continuity across course rotations.
6. Support adjunct or new faculty onboarding.

Best For

1. Departments.
2. Programs.
3. Multi-section courses.
4. Curriculum committees.
5. Faculty learning communities.
6. OER grant teams.

Watch For

Shared collections need ownership. Decide who can add resources, who reviews them, and how often the list will be updated.

Example

A department might create a shared “OER by Course” spreadsheet with tabs for each course. Each tab could list possible textbooks, readings, media, and assignments with license notes and faculty comments.

Strategy 7: Use Tags and Status Labels

Whether you use Zotero, a spreadsheet, or a repository collection, tags can help you find things again. Tags are especially useful when one resource fits multiple topics or courses.

Useful tags might include:

1. Course number or course name.
2. Topic or unit.
3. Resource type.
4. License.
5. Accessibility status.
6. Adoption status.
7. Language.
8. Reading level.
9. Needs review.
10. Strong candidate.
11. Link only.
12. Adaptable.
13. Not a fit.

Status labels can also help you move from searching to decision-making.

Label	Meaning
Strong candidate	Worth deeper review
Partial fit	Useful in pieces
Link only	Useful, but not remixable or not worth adapting
Needs accessibility check	Promising but requires review
Needs license check	License unclear or compatibility needs review
Not a fit	Reviewed and rejected
Adopt	Use as-is
Adapt	Revise for your context
Remix	Combine with other resources
Create	Gap exists; new material may be needed

These labels can help you avoid revisiting the same resource over and over without making a decision.

What to Track for Each Resource

If you are building toward an OER landscape brief, reuse-revise-remix action plan, course redesign, grant proposal, or shared collection, these details will save time later.

At minimum, track these five things:

1. Title.
2. URL.
3. Creator or organization.
4. License.
5. Use notes.

A stronger tracker includes:

1. Format.
2. Subject.
3. Source platform.
4. Accessibility notes.
5. Quality notes.
6. Course alignment.
7. Status label.
8. Last checked date.
9. Attribution draft.
10. Next step.

Simple OER Collection Template

Use this as a starting point:

Title	URL	Creator	License	Type	Course/ Topic Fit	Accessibility Notes	Use Plan	Last Checked	Next Step
							Adopt / Adapt / Remix / Link Only / Maybe / No		

Start small. You can always add columns later.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Saving Only the Link

A link by itself is fragile. If you do not capture the title, creator, license, and notes, you may not remember why you saved it or whether you can use it.

Forgetting the License

The license determines what you can do. Always track it, even if the resource looks clearly open.

Mixing Up Source and Platform

The place where you found the resource may not be the original source. When possible, track both the platform and the original creator or publisher.

Not Recording Why You Rejected Something

A “not a fit” note is still useful. It prevents you from reopening the same resource later and wondering why you did not choose it.

Keeping the Collection Private Forever

If your collection could help colleagues or other learners, consider sharing it. Even a simple curated list can reduce duplication and support others.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

A collection system helps you turn searching into planning. Instead of ending with a pile of links, you end with a record of what you found, what is promising, and what you might do next.

For example, if you are redesigning a course, a spreadsheet can help you compare textbooks, modules, videos, and assignments by topic, license, accessibility, and fit.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Organizing open resources can help you build your own learning library.

For example, if you find helpful open textbooks, videos, and study guides, you can organize them by course or topic so you can return to them later.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

A shared tracker can make support work more consistent and transparent.

For example, if you help faculty search for OER, you can use a standard tracker to document resource title, URL, license, format, accessibility notes, and possible use.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Shared collections can reduce duplication and preserve institutional knowledge.

For example, if multiple instructors teach the same course, a shared OER collection can help new instructors see what has already been reviewed and which resources colleagues recommend.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Organized OER collections make institutional impact easier to see.

For example, if OER projects use shared tracking fields, the institution can better understand which platforms are being used, what licenses are common, where gaps exist, and what support is needed.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A good collection system helps future you.

Even if you only save five resources, write down why you saved them. Your future self will thank you when you are not trying to decode a mystery tab from three months ago.

Practice: Build a Starter OER Collection

Choose one topic, course, unit, or learning goal. Find three to five possible OER or open resources.

For each one, track:

1. Title.
2. URL.
3. Creator.
4. Platform or repository.
5. License.
6. Resource type.
7. Accessibility notes.
8. Quality or fit notes.
9. Use plan.
10. Next step.

Use one of these formats:

1. Spreadsheet.
2. Zotero collection.
3. Shared document.
4. Repository collection.
5. Notes document.
6. Table in a course planning file.

Practice: Add Tags and Status Labels

Review your starter collection. Add at least one tag and one status label to each item.

Possible tags:

1. Unit 1.
2. Background reading.
3. Video.
4. Assessment.
5. Accessible.
6. Needs review.
7. Spanish language.
8. Case study.
9. Data.
10. Student-facing.

Possible status labels:

1. Strong candidate.
2. Partial fit.
3. Link only.
4. Needs accessibility check.
5. Needs license check.
6. Not a fit.
7. Adopt.
8. Adapt.
9. Remix.
10. Create.

Reflection: From Searching to Planning

Consider:

1. What kind of system would you actually keep using?
2. What fields are essential for your context?
3. What fields would become too much work?
4. How will you track licenses?

5. How will you track accessibility concerns?
6. How will you remember why something was or was not a good fit?
7. Who else might benefit from your collection?
8. What would make your collection easier to maintain over time?

Topic 2 Closing Reflection

You have now explored where OER can live, how platform and format decisions affect access, how hosting choices shape reuse and sustainability, why maintenance matters, and how to organize resources so that searching becomes planning.

Take a few moments to reflect:

1. Which OER platforms or repositories seem most useful for your context?
2. What platform or format tradeoff surprised you?
3. What hosting option feels most realistic for a current or future project?
4. What maintenance practice would make your work easier to trust and reuse?
5. What collection system would help you avoid losing useful resources?
6. What is one small action you can take now: bookmark a platform, compare formats, create a tracker, write a version note, or organize a starter collection?

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Topic 3: Licensing and Copyright

Topic Overview

Open education depends on copyright literacy. Before educators, learners, and institutions can confidently adopt, adapt, remix, publish, or share Open Educational Resources, or OER, they need to understand what copyright protects, what Creative Commons licenses allow, how attribution works, when licenses can be combined, and when legal exceptions such as fair use may apply.

This topic introduces practical copyright and licensing concepts for open education. It is not legal advice. Instead, it is a working guide for making more informed, careful, and confident decisions about using, adapting, attributing, remixing, and licensing educational materials.

By the end of this topic, learners should be able to:

1. Explain what copyright protects and what it does not protect.
2. Describe basic rights granted to copyright holders.
3. Identify issues related to work-for-hire, student work, public domain materials, and government works.
4. Explain what Creative Commons licenses are and how the major license elements work.
5. Interpret the six main Creative Commons licenses.
6. Use the TASL method to create clear attribution statements.
7. Distinguish between a collection and an adaptation or remix.
8. Check basic Creative Commons license compatibility before remixing materials.
9. Explain how fair use differs from open licensing.
10. Choose and apply a Creative Commons license to original work.
11. Practice using OER legally by decoding licenses, matching permissions to the 5Rs, and documenting decisions.

3.1 What Is Copyright? What You Own and What You Do Not

Copyright is a form of legal protection for original works of authorship that are fixed in a tangible medium. A work is protected when it is original and fixed, meaning it was independently created and exists in a form that can be perceived, reproduced, or communicated for more than a short time (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-a).

This means copyright protection generally begins automatically when a work is both original and fixed.

Original

Original means you created the work yourself and did not copy it from someone else.

Originality does not require the work to be brilliant, polished, published, or unique in the entire world. It means the work contains at least a minimal amount of creative expression and was independently created.

Fixed

Fixed means the work exists in a stable form.

Examples include:

1. A document.
2. A recording.
3. An image.
4. A slide deck.
5. A video.
6. A saved file.
7. A website.
8. A digital project.
9. A piece of music.
10. A photograph.
11. A handout.
12. A course module.

Automatic

You do not need to register a work or add a copyright symbol for copyright to exist. Registration can provide additional legal benefits in the United States, but copyright protection itself begins automatically once the work is original and fixed (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-a).

What Rights Does Copyright Grant?

The U.S. Copyright Office explains that copyright owners have exclusive rights to reproduce the work, prepare derivative works, distribute copies, publicly perform or display the work, and authorize others to exercise those rights (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-a).

When you hold copyright, you generally have the exclusive right to:

Reproduce the Work

This means making copies of the work.

Examples include photocopying, downloading, scanning, duplicating, recording, or saving copies.

Distribute the Work

This means selling, lending, giving away, uploading, emailing, or otherwise sharing copies.

Display or Perform the Work

This means showing or performing the work in public contexts.

Examples include displaying images, showing slides, performing a play, screening a video, or playing music in a public or instructional setting.

Create Derivative Works

This means adapting, translating, revising, remixing, transforming, or building on the original work.

Examples include translating a chapter, adapting a short story into a script, remixing a video, updating an infographic, or revising a module.

Authorize Others to Use the Work

This means giving others permission through a license or agreement.

Creative Commons licenses are one way copyright holders can authorize others to use their work in advance.

For sound recordings, copyright law also includes the right to perform the work publicly by means of digital audio transmission. No one else can legally exercise these rights unless they have permission, a license, or a legal exception applies, such as fair use (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-a).

How Long Does Copyright Last?

For works created today in the United States, copyright duration depends on the type of authorship.

For individual creators, copyright generally lasts for the life of the author plus 70 years. For works made for hire, anonymous works, and pseudonymous works, copyright lasts 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever is shorter (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-b).

After copyright expires, works enter the public domain, meaning they can generally be used by anyone for any purpose without permission. As of 2026, works published in the United States before January 1, 1931, are generally in the public domain because their copyright term has expired (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-b).

What About Work Made for Hire?

If you create something as part of your job responsibilities, your employer may own the copyright instead of you. This is called work made for hire. Under U.S. copyright law, works created by employees within the scope of employment may be owned by the employer. Certain specially commissioned works may also qualify as works made for hire if they meet specific legal requirements (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-c).

The details may depend on:

1. Your employment contract.
2. Your institution's intellectual property policy.
3. Whether the work was created within the scope of your job duties.
4. Whether institutional resources, funding, or release time were involved.
5. Whether the work was specially commissioned.
6. Whether you signed an agreement.

Many institutions allow faculty to retain copyright in their teaching materials, but policies vary. Check your institution's intellectual property policy before openly licensing course materials, lecture notes, videos, slide decks, or other resources you created as part of your job.

What About Student Work?

Students create copyrighted work, too.

When a student writes an essay, designs a presentation, records a video, makes artwork, creates a website, builds a project, or produces another original work for school, the student generally owns the copyright to that work as soon as it is created and fixed in a tangible form, such as a document, recording, file, or digital project (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-a).

This applies to both high school and college students. In most cases, submitting work for a class does not mean students give up copyright. An instructor, school, or university can usually grade the work and provide feedback, but they should not assume they can publish, reuse, remix, or openly license student work without permission.

The details may depend on:

1. School or institutional policies.
2. Whether the student signed a media release, consent form, publication agreement, or platform terms of use.
3. Whether the project was created as part of a paid job, internship, assistantship, or commissioned role.
4. Whether the student collaborated with others.
5. Whether school-owned materials, data, logos, images, or restricted resources were used.
6. Whether copyrighted third-party content was included in the project.

For Students

Your schoolwork usually belongs to you unless a policy, agreement, employment arrangement, or other legal condition says otherwise. If an instructor wants to share your work publicly, include it in future course materials, post it online, or apply an open license to it, they should ask for your permission first.

You also have the right to decide whether you want to share your own work openly, keep it private, or license it in a specific way.

For Educators

Student work should be treated with care. Before using student-created work as an example, adding it to an OER, posting it publicly, or asking students to openly license their work, provide clear options, explain what sharing means, and allow students to opt out without penalty.

Open pedagogy works best when students have real choice, informed consent, and privacy protections.

What Is Not Protected by Copyright?

Copyright protects expression, not ideas. The U.S. Copyright Office explains that copyright does not protect ideas, procedures, methods, systems, processes, concepts, principles, or discoveries (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-d).

Copyright does not protect:

Ideas, Concepts, or Theories

Copyright can protect the specific way someone explains an idea, but not the idea itself.

For example, someone can copyright a written article explaining a theory, but they cannot own the theory itself.

Facts or Data

Facts are not created by an author, so they are not protected by copyright.

A single statistic, historical date, measurement, or data point can be reused. However, a creative chart, explanation, database arrangement, or original presentation of data may be protected.

Titles, Names, Short Phrases, or Slogans

A book title, course name, hashtag, short phrase, or slogan usually does not have enough original authorship to qualify for copyright protection.

Some names or slogans may be protected by trademark, but that is different from copyright.

Procedures, Systems, or Methods

Copyright does not protect instructions, processes, systems, methods of operation, or formulas.

For example, a cookbook's creative writing and photos may be protected, but the basic ingredient list or cooking method is not.

Works Whose Copyright Has Expired

When a copyright term ends, the work enters the public domain. In the United States, works published before January 1, 1931, are currently in the public domain because their copyright protection has expired (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-b).

Many Works Created by the U.S. Federal Government

Works created by federal government employees as part of their official duties are generally not protected by U.S. copyright law. However, this does not always apply to state or local government works, contractors' works, or third-party materials included in federal publications (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-d).

Works Dedicated to the Public Domain

Creators can also choose to give up copyright restrictions by using tools such as Creative Commons Zero, or CC0. CC0 allows creators to dedicate their work to the public domain as fully as legally possible so others can use it without asking permission (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

The Practical Rule

You can use facts, ideas, and concepts, but you cannot copy the specific copyrighted expression of those ideas unless you have permission, an open license, a legal exception, or the work is in the public domain.

Copyright Myth Busting

Copyright confusion is common. Here are several myths worth correcting.

Myth: “I found it online, so it is free to use.”

Reality: Most content online is copyrighted. Access does not equal permission.

Myth: “I gave credit, so it is okay.”

Reality: Attribution is important, but credit alone does not replace permission, licensing, public domain status, or a legal exception.

Myth: “It is for education, so it is automatically fair use.”

Reality: Educational purpose can support fair use, but it does not automatically make a use fair. Fair use depends on context and the four factors.

Myth: “There is no copyright symbol, so it is not copyrighted.”

Reality: Copyright exists automatically when an original work is fixed. A copyright symbol is not required.

Myth: “If I change it a little, it becomes mine.”

Reality: Adapting someone else’s copyrighted expression may create a derivative work, and derivative works usually require permission unless an open license or legal exception applies.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You likely create copyrighted works regularly, including syllabi, lecture notes, exams, slides, videos, assignments, and course modules. Understanding copyright helps you make informed decisions about what you own, what you can share, and what you may openly license.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Your essays, presentations, videos, artwork, research projects, and other creative works are usually copyrighted to you the moment you create and fix them. If you want to share them openly, you may choose to do so.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Understanding copyright helps you guide others toward materials they can legally use, adapt, and share.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Institutional intellectual property policies can either support or complicate OER adoption and creation. Clear policies can help faculty and staff understand what they can share.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Faculty-friendly intellectual property policies can signal support for innovation, collaboration, affordability, and open education.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

You own copyright to your own creative work. That means you get to decide how it is shared: openly, restrictively, or not at all. Understanding copyright empowers you to make informed choices.

Practice: What Do You Own?

Choose one thing you have created recently, such as a handout, presentation, assignment prompt, infographic, video, essay, worksheet, guide, or module.

Answer:

1. Did you create this work yourself?
2. Is it original?
3. Is it fixed in a tangible medium?
4. Was it created as part of your job, contract, grant, internship, assistantship, or coursework?
5. Does an institutional, employer, publisher, or funder policy affect ownership?
6. Does it include images, text, charts, music, video, or other content created by someone else?
7. Are there parts you own and parts you do not own?
8. Could you legally apply an open license to the whole work?
9. Would you need to mark any exceptions?

Use this sentence frame:

I believe I own copyright in [work title or description] because [reason]. Before openly licensing it, I need to check [policy, third-party content, collaborator rights, or other issue].

3.2 Meet the Commons: Creative Commons Licenses Explained

Creative Commons licenses are legal tools that let creators share their work with specific permissions already granted. They provide a standardized way to grant permission in advance so creators can communicate how their work may be used without negotiating individual permissions every time.

Creative Commons explains that CC licenses provide a “some rights reserved” option and a standardized way to grant permission in advance (Creative Commons, n.d.-b).

What Is Creative Commons?

Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that provides free, easy-to-use copyright licenses.

Established in 2002, Creative Commons licenses are now used across education, science, culture, art, and other fields, with tens of billions of CC-licensed works available across the internet (Creative Commons, n.d.-b).

A Creative Commons license tells the world:

1. What others can do with your work.
2. What conditions apply.
3. How to give you credit.

The Four License Elements

Creative Commons licenses are built from four basic elements. These elements can be combined to create the six main Creative Commons licenses.

BY: Attribution

BY means users must give credit to the creator.

This is the only element present in every Creative Commons license. Everyone must credit the original author or creator.

SA: ShareAlike

SA means adaptations must be shared under the same or a compatible license.

If you modify the work, you must share your version under the same license or a compatible license. This keeps modified versions as open as the original.

NC: NonCommercial

NC means the work may only be used for noncommercial purposes.

Creative Commons defines NonCommercial as use that is not primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or monetary compensation (Creative Commons, n.d.-c). What counts as commercial can be context-specific.

When a use involves a paid platform, publishing arrangement, fee-based program, revenue-generating activity, printing service, or commercial partner, it is worth checking with copyright or legal support.

ND: NoDerivatives

ND means users may share the work, but they may not remix, revise, translate, edit, or adapt it.

You can share it unchanged when the license allows, but you cannot distribute a modified version. This limits one of the 5Rs, revise, and makes the resource much less useful for OER adaptation.

The Six Creative Commons Licenses

The four license elements combine into six Creative Commons licenses. Creative Commons lists these licenses from most to least permissive, beginning with CC BY and ending with CC BY-NC-ND (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

Do not assume every resource from the same platform uses the same license. Always check the specific item's license statement.

CC BY: Attribution

With CC BY, others may use, share, adapt, remix, and build on the work, including for commercial purposes, as long as they give appropriate credit to the creator.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else's Work

You can use it fairly freely. You may copy it, share it, revise it, remix it, include it in your own materials, and use it in commercial or noncommercial contexts. You must give proper attribution and indicate if you made changes.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY maximizes reuse and impact. It is a strong fit for creators who want their work to be widely used, adapted, translated, remixed, and shared with as few barriers as possible.

Example

An open textbook listed in the Open Textbook Library with “Conditions of Use: CC BY” can usually be copied, shared, revised, remixed, and built into new materials, including for commercial purposes, as long as users give credit to the creator.

CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

With CC BY-SA, others may use, share, adapt, and remix the work, but if they create an adapted version, they must license their adaptation under the same or a compatible license.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else’s Work

You can use, share, and adapt it, but if you remix or revise it, your new version must also use CC BY-SA or a compatible license. This is useful for open collaboration, but it means you need to check license compatibility before combining it with other materials.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY-SA helps keep adaptations open. It is a good fit for creators who want others to build on their work but also want future versions to remain part of the commons.

Example

Wikipedia text is licensed CC BY-SA. You can reuse and adapt the text, but if you share your adapted version, you need to use the same or a compatible license (Wikimedia Foundation, n.d.).

CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial

With CC BY-NC, others may use, share, adapt, and remix the work for noncommercial purposes only. They must give appropriate credit to the creator.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else’s Work

You can use, share, and adapt it as long as your use is noncommercial and you give credit. Be thoughtful here: “noncommercial” can be context-dependent, especially if the material will be used on a platform, in a publication, in a paid program, or in a project connected to revenue.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY-NC is a fit for creators who want to allow educational and community reuse but do not want others using their work primarily for commercial advantage or monetary compensation.

Example

xkcd comics are licensed CC BY-NC. They may be reused noncommercially with attribution and a link back, which can make them useful for classroom examples, slides, or informal teaching

materials. The NC condition means they should not be used for commercial advantage or monetary compensation without permission (Munroe, n.d.).

CC BY-ND: Attribution-NoDerivatives

With CC BY-ND, others may copy and share the work, including commercially, but only in its original, unchanged form. They must give appropriate credit to the creator.

This is a Creative Commons license, but materials with this license are not remixable. For open education purposes, ND materials are often better understood as free resources rather than fully adaptable OER.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else's Work

You can share it as-is with attribution, but you cannot change it. That means no remixing, revising, translating, editing, cutting it into pieces, or adapting it into a new resource.

For OER work, ND materials are usually better treated as link-only or use-as-is resources rather than remix ingredients.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY-ND is a fit for creators who want their work to circulate widely but do not want others changing, remixing, translating, or adapting it.

CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike

With CC BY-NC-SA, others may use, share, adapt, and remix the work for noncommercial purposes, but adapted versions must be licensed under the same or a compatible license.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else's Work

You can use, share, and adapt it for noncommercial purposes, but your adaptation must also be shared under CC BY-NC-SA or a compatible license. This license gives you room to adapt, but it is more restrictive, so check carefully before mixing it with materials under other licenses.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY-NC-SA is a fit for creators who want to allow adaptation but also want adaptations to stay noncommercial and remain openly shared under similar terms.

Example

Many MIT OpenCourseWare materials use CC BY-NC-SA. Users may share and adapt those materials for noncommercial purposes, but adapted versions must use the same license terms (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2022).

CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives

With CC BY-NC-ND, others may copy and share the work only in its original, unchanged form and only for noncommercial purposes. They must give appropriate credit to the creator.

This is the most restrictive Creative Commons license. It allows access and sharing, but not adaptation.

What It Means When You See It on Someone Else's Work

You can share it as-is for noncommercial purposes with attribution, but you cannot change it or use it commercially. In OER projects, treat it as a resource you can point students to or cite, not something you can revise, remix, translate, or incorporate into an adapted open textbook.

Why Choose It for Your Work

CC BY-NC-ND is a fit for creators who want to allow some sharing but want to keep the most control. It allows people to access and circulate the work, but not to use it commercially or create adapted versions.

Example

TED Talks are generally shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives license. This means users can share a talk noncommercially with attribution, but they cannot edit, remix, translate, or adapt it without additional permission (TED, n.d.).

Are NC and ND Really "Open"?

This is one of the big conversations in open education.

NC and ND licenses can still make materials easier to access and share than traditional "all rights reserved" copyright. That matters. A free-to-access resource with a CC BY-NC-ND license may still be useful to students and educators.

At the same time, NC and ND restrictions can limit what educators and learners are allowed to do. ND is especially limiting because it blocks adaptation, which means users cannot translate, revise, localize, or remix the work. NC can also create uncertainty when a project involves institutional partners, platforms, printing, publishing, or other uses that may have a commercial dimension (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

For OER, the most reusable licenses are usually CC BY and CC BY-SA because they allow the core open education practices of revising, remixing, and redistributing with fewer restrictions. Wiley's 5Rs framework emphasizes that openness depends not only on access, but also on permissions to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute materials (Wiley, 2023).

A practical way to think about it:

1. CC BY is easiest to reuse and adapt.
2. CC BY-SA is reusable and adaptable, but adaptations must stay open under the same or compatible terms.
3. NC licenses are useful but more limited and sometimes harder to combine with other works.
4. ND licenses are shareable but not adaptable, so they are usually better for linking to or using as-is than for remixing into new OER.

How to Read a Creative Commons License

Every Creative Commons license has three layers: legal code, the Commons deed, and machine-readable metadata (Creative Commons, n.d.-d).

Layer 1: Legal Code

The legal code is the full legal license text. This is the official, enforceable version of the license.

This layer is written for legal precision, so it is longer and more technical than the summary page. You do not need to memorize it, but it is the version that matters if there is ever a legal question.

When you click a Creative Commons license link, you usually land on the plain-language license page, also called the Commons deed. From there, look for a link that says something like “Legal Code” or “View Legal Code.”

Layer 2: Commons Deed

The Commons deed is the human-readable summary of the license. This is the layer most people use day to day.

It explains the license in plain language, including what you are free to do and what conditions you must follow. For example, it may say that you are free to share and adapt the material, but you must provide attribution and indicate if changes were made.

When a resource links to a license such as CC BY 4.0, that link usually takes you to the Commons deed first.

Layer 3: Machine-Readable Metadata

The machine-readable metadata is code that helps search engines, repositories, and platforms identify the license. This layer is not really meant for human reading. It helps computers recognize that a page or resource has a Creative Commons license.

This is what allows tools and platforms to filter or identify openly licensed content. For example, a repository or search engine may be able to detect that a work is licensed CC BY because the license information is included in the page’s HTML metadata.

Quick Tip

When you see a Creative Commons license on a resource, start with the Commons deed. It gives you the fastest answer to practical questions:

1. Can I share this?
2. Can I adapt this?
3. Can I use it commercially?
4. Do I need to use the same license on my adaptation?
5. What kind of attribution do I need to provide?

Then, if you need the official legal terms, open the legal code from the deed page. The machine-readable layer mostly helps platforms, repositories, and search tools, but it is still important because it helps openly licensed works be found.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Creative Commons licenses help you decide how you want others to use the teaching materials you create. If you develop a syllabus, slide deck, assignment, video, tutorial, or course module, you can choose whether others may only view it, share it, revise it, remix it, or build on it.

For example, if you create a set of lecture slides and license them CC BY, another instructor can adapt them for their course, translate examples, add local case studies, and share the revised version as long as they credit you. If you license the same slides CC BY-ND, they can share them as-is, but they cannot legally revise or remix them.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Creative Commons licenses help you understand what you can do with materials you find online and what choices you have when sharing your own work. Your essays, presentations, videos, artwork, research projects, infographics, and other creative works are usually copyrighted to you when you create them and fix them in a tangible form.

For example, if you create an infographic for a class project, you can keep it private, share it with “all rights reserved,” or apply a Creative Commons license. If you choose CC BY-NC, other students could share or adapt it for noncommercial learning purposes, but they would need to credit you and could not use it commercially without permission.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Creative Commons licenses can help you guide faculty, students, and colleagues toward materials they can legally use, adapt, and share. This is especially useful when supporting course design, accessibility, library services, student success, communications, or professional development.

For example, if a faculty member wants images for an open textbook, you can help them look for images with licenses that allow adaptation and reuse. A CC BY image may be easier to include and adapt than a CC BY-NC-ND image, which cannot be changed and cannot be used commercially.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Creative Commons licenses can support departmental goals around affordability, access, collaboration, and curriculum consistency. When faculty understand licensing, departments can make better decisions about shared course materials, common readings, templates, assessments, and program-level resources.

For example, a department might create a shared open course packet for multiple sections of an introductory course. Choosing a license such as CC BY or CC BY-SA allows future instructors to update examples, add new readings, and adapt the packet for different student populations while still giving credit to the original creators.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Creative Commons licensing can help institutions turn innovation into shared infrastructure. When faculty and staff can openly license appropriate materials, the institution can reduce duplication, support affordability, increase visibility, and encourage collaboration across programs.

For example, an OER grant program might encourage grantees to license completed materials CC BY or CC BY-SA so other instructors can adopt and adapt them.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Creative Commons licenses give you a practical way to decide how open you want your own work to be. You do not have to give up all control to share generously. You can choose a license that matches your comfort level and goals.

For example, if you write a guide, record a tutorial, create a zine, or design a resource you want others to use, you could choose CC BY if you want maximum reuse, CC BY-NC if you want to limit commercial use, or CC BY-ND if you want people to share it but not change it.

Practice: Decode Three Creative Commons Licenses

Find three different Creative Commons licenses on real resources. You might use OpenStax, OER Commons, the Open Textbook Library, MERLOT, LibreTexts, Wikimedia Commons, MIT OpenCourseWare, or another repository.

For each resource, identify:

1. Title.

2. Creator or organization.
3. Creative Commons license.
4. Which elements appear in the license: BY, SA, NC, ND.
5. Whether you can retain it.
6. Whether you can reuse it.
7. Whether you can revise or remix it.
8. Whether you can redistribute it.
9. Whether you can use it commercially.
10. Whether you would feel comfortable using it in your own teaching, learning, or project context.

This quick check builds the habit that matters most: do not just look for whether something is free. Look for what the license actually allows you to do.

3.3 The TASL Method: How to Give Attribution

Whenever you use someone else's openly licensed work, you almost always need to give attribution, which means giving credit to the original creator.

Creative Commons licenses require attribution, and Creative Commons recommends using the TASL method to make sure the key pieces of information are included: Title, Author, Source, and License (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

Attribution is not just a legal box to check. It is also a care practice. It helps future users find the original work, understand how it is licensed, and see whose labor and creativity shaped the resource.

What TASL Stands For

T: Title

What is the name of the work?

If the work has a title, include it. If no title is provided, you can still attribute the work using the other available information or a short descriptive label.

A: Author

Who created the work?

This might be an individual, organization, project team, institution, or collective. Use the name the creator provides.

S: Source

Where did you find the work?

Include a link when possible so others can locate the original resource. Creative Commons recommends using the original source URL rather than a shortened link when possible (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

L: License

Which Creative Commons license applies?

Name the license and link to the license deed. For example, write CC BY 4.0 and link it to the license page.

Tool Suggestion: Open Washington Attribution Builder

The Open Washington Attribution Builder walks users through the TASL elements and generates a copy/paste-ready attribution (Open Washington, n.d.).

This tool is especially helpful when you are new to Creative Commons attribution or when you want to make sure you are not forgetting one of the key pieces.

Basic Attribution Example

A basic attribution includes the title, author, source, and license.

Example:

Keepin' Up with Popular Culture by David Arditi is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

A stronger version includes a link to the source:

Keepin' Up with Popular Culture by David Arditi is available from its open book page and is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

This works because it includes:

1. Title: *Keepin' Up with Popular Culture*.
2. Author: David Arditi.
3. Source: The open book page.
4. License: CC BY-NC 4.0.

If You Adapted the Work

When you modify, translate, remix, localize, or otherwise adapt an openly licensed work, say so in your attribution. Creative Commons recommends noting when changes were made so future users can tell what came from the original and what was changed (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

This tells readers:

1. Where the original came from.
2. Who created the original.
3. What license applies.
4. What you changed.

That last part matters. It protects the original creator from being blamed for your edits and helps future users understand the new version.

Example Adaptation Attribution

This chapter is adapted from *Keepin' Up with Popular Culture* by David Arditi, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Adaptations include added local case studies, updated examples, and revised reflection questions.

If You Are Combining Multiple Sources

Sometimes you are not using just one resource. You might create a chapter, slide deck, video, or module that draws from several openly licensed works.

In that case, make it clear which sources were used and which license applies to each one. Creative Commons recommends keeping attribution information connected to the specific work it belongs to, especially when multiple sources are used (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

Example Multiple-Source Attribution

This module draws on:

1. [Resource Title 1] by [Creator], licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.
2. [Resource Title 2] by [Creator], licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
3. Original content by [Your Name], licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

If you are combining sources with different licenses, pause and check compatibility before remixing them. Attribution is one part of using open materials responsibly, but license compatibility matters too.

Where to Place Attribution

Attribution should be placed somewhere people can reasonably find it. Creative Commons notes that attribution can vary by medium, as long as it is reasonable for the format and context (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

In Textbooks or Course Packets

Use a copyright, credits, or acknowledgments page. You can also include attribution at the bottom of adapted chapters or sections.

In Presentations

Place attribution on the slide where the content appears or on a final credits slide. If you use many images, a credits slide may be cleaner.

On Websites

Place attribution near the resource, such as under an image, beside an embedded video, or on a dedicated credits page.

In Videos

Include attribution in the video description, end credits, or both.

In Podcasts or Audio Projects

Include attribution in the episode description or credits. If practical, you can also mention the attribution in the recording.

In Images or Infographics

Include attribution in a caption, footer, credits section, or accompanying description.

Avoid putting full attribution only in alt text, because alt text is meant to describe the image for accessibility, not carry licensing information (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

Use Suggested Attribution When It Is Provided

Many OER include a “suggested attribution,” “suggested citation,” or “how to cite this resource” statement on the title page, copyright page, or About page. Use it when available.

Suggested attribution is helpful because it tells you how the creator or publisher prefers to be credited. You may still need to adjust the format depending on where you are using the resource, but it gives you a strong starting point.

Accessibility Note: Use Descriptive Links

When you include attribution links, use descriptive link text rather than vague phrases like “click here” or “available here.” Descriptive links help all users understand where a link goes, including people using screen readers.

Instead of:

License available here.

Use:

View the CC BY 4.0 license.

Quick Check: Does Your Attribution Include TASL?

Before you publish, submit, or share your work, ask:

1. Did I include the title?
2. Did I name the author or creator?
3. Did I link to the source?

4. Did I name and link the license?
5. If I changed the work, did I say what I changed?
6. If I used multiple sources, is it clear which attribution belongs to which source?

Attribution does not need to be perfect in one rigid format. It needs to be reasonable, useful, and clear enough that someone else can find the original work and understand how it can be used (Creative Commons, n.d.-e).

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Attribution helps you model ethical reuse for students while also protecting your own work as an educator. When you use openly licensed readings, images, slides, videos, or textbook chapters, TASL gives you a simple way to show where the material came from, who created it, and what license applies.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Attribution helps you use open materials responsibly in projects, presentations, videos, infographics, and portfolios. It also helps you show your research trail so others can find the original sources you used.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

TASL gives you a practical framework for helping faculty, students, and colleagues reuse materials correctly. It is especially helpful when supporting course design, accessibility work, library services, communications, or OER publishing.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Clear attribution practices make shared teaching materials easier to maintain and reuse across courses, sections, and programs. They also help departments avoid confusion about where materials came from and what others are allowed to do with them.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Attribution is part of building a sustainable open education culture. When institutional OER projects include clear attribution, they are easier to publish, preserve, update, and share beyond one course or one semester.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Attribution is how you give credit while still participating in sharing culture. It is not about making reuse scary. It is about leaving a clear trail so others know who made something, where it came from, and how they can use it too.

Practice: Build a TASL Attribution

Choose one openly licensed resource.

Complete the following:

1. Title:
2. Author or creator:
3. Source link:
4. License name:
5. License link:
6. Did you make changes?
7. If yes, what changed?

Then write a complete attribution:

[Title] by [Author] is available at [Source] and licensed under [License]. [If adapted: Adaptations include…]

Practice: Attribution Cleanup

Find a slide, handout, document, or project where you used an image, reading, video, or other external resource.

Ask:

1. Is attribution present?
2. Does it include TASL?
3. Is the license linked?
4. Is the source linked?
5. Is it clear whether the work was adapted?
6. Is the attribution placed somewhere users can reasonably find it?
7. Are links descriptive?

Revise the attribution if needed.

3.4 Mixing and Matching Licenses: Compatibility Rules

Not all Creative Commons licenses can be mixed together in the same way. License compatibility helps you determine whether you can combine content from different sources into a new work, and if so, what license your new work needs to use.

This matters because Creative Commons licenses do not all grant the same permissions. Some allow adaptation. Some do not. Some allow commercial use. Some do not. Some require adaptations to be shared under the same license.

Before you remix openly licensed materials, you need to check whether the licenses work together. Small differences in licensing can have major implications for what you are allowed to reuse, revise, or share.

Creative Commons explains that ShareAlike licenses have specific compatibility rules, and adaptations of CC BY-SA 4.0 works generally need to be licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 or another license Creative Commons has identified as compatible (Creative Commons, n.d.-f).

Why Compatibility Matters

When people first learn about Creative Commons licenses, it can be tempting to think, “Great, this is openly licensed, so I can use it.”

That is often true, but it is not the whole story. The specific license still matters, especially when you want to remix materials.

In open education, remixing means taking pieces from one or more existing works and combining, revising, translating, reorganizing, or building on them to create something new.

For example, remixing might look like:

1. Combining chapters from two open textbooks into one new course module.
2. Translating part of an open resource into another language.
3. Updating examples in an open textbook for your local community or discipline.
4. Adding new discussion questions, images, or activities to an existing chapter.
5. Blending several openly licensed readings into one student-facing guide.

This is different from simply linking to a resource or placing several unchanged readings in a course module. If you link to three separate resources, each one usually keeps its own license. But if you combine and revise them into one new resource, the licenses need to be compatible because your new work has to follow the terms of all the materials you used.

Compatibility matters because Creative Commons licenses carry conditions. Some licenses say, “You can adapt this, but you must use the same license.” Others say, “You can use this, but not commercially.” Others say, “You can share this, but you cannot change it.”

When those conditions do not fit together, you may not be able to legally remix the materials into one new work.

Example: Combining Three Sources

Imagine you want to create a new OER textbook by combining:

1. Source A: Chapter 3, licensed CC BY.
2. Source B: Chapter 7, licensed CC BY-SA.
3. Source C: Your own original content.

Can you do this? Yes, most likely. But because one chapter uses CC BY-SA, your adapted textbook would need to use CC BY-SA or a compatible license. You could not take CC BY-SA content, remix it into your textbook, and then release the whole adapted work as CC BY only, because that would ignore the ShareAlike requirement (Creative Commons, n.d.-f).

This is why license compatibility matters before you start building.

It helps you answer:

1. Am I just using separate resources, or am I creating something new from them?
2. Can these materials legally be remixed?
3. What license does my new work need?
4. Are any materials better used as links, citations, or unchanged resources?
5. Do I need to choose different sources before I invest time adapting the material?

A helpful way to think about it:

Attribution gives credit, but compatibility determines whether the pieces can legally fit together in a new work.

Collection or Adaptation?

Before checking compatibility, ask what kind of use you are creating.

Collection

A collection brings separate works together without changing them or blending them into one new work.

For example, a course reading list that links to three different openly licensed articles is usually a collection.

In a collection, each item can keep its own license. You do not usually need one new license for the entire set, though you should still provide clear attribution and license information for each item.

Adaptation or Remix

An adaptation or remix changes a work or combines works into something new.

For example, translating a chapter, revising examples, combining sections from two textbooks into one new chapter, or editing multiple works into a single module may create an adaptation.

Adaptations are where compatibility matters most. If the licenses conflict, you may need to choose different sources, link to a source instead of remixing it, or ask the copyright holder for permission.

Four Basic Compatibility Rules

1. CC BY Is Flexible, but Not Magic

CC BY is one of the easiest licenses to reuse because it allows sharing, adaptation, remixing, and commercial use with attribution.

You can usually combine CC BY content with more restrictive CC-licensed works, but the final license must still honor the restrictions of the other materials.

For example, if you combine CC BY content with CC BY-NC content, the adapted work needs to stay noncommercial. If you combine CC BY content with CC BY-SA content, the adapted work needs to follow the ShareAlike requirement.

2. ShareAlike Must Stay ShareAlike

SA, or ShareAlike, means adapted versions must use the same or a compatible license.

If you adapt or remix CC BY-SA content, your new adapted work generally needs to be licensed CC BY-SA or another license Creative Commons recognizes as compatible (Creative Commons, n.d.-f).

This is why you cannot usually take CC BY-SA content and release your adapted version under CC BY only. CC BY does not carry forward the ShareAlike condition.

3. NoDerivatives Means No Remixing

ND, or NoDerivatives, means you may share the work as-is, but you may not distribute an adapted version.

That means you cannot revise it, translate it, remix it, edit it into a new resource, or combine it into a new adapted work without additional permission from the copyright holder.

ND materials can still be useful. You can link to them, cite them, or share them unchanged when the license allows. But for OER creation, treat ND materials as link-only or use-as-is resources, not remix ingredients.

4. NonCommercial Must Stay NonCommercial

NC, or NonCommercial, means the work may not be used in ways primarily intended for commercial advantage or monetary compensation (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

If you use NC content in an adaptation, the new work must also stay noncommercial.

NC can be context-dependent, especially when projects involve paid platforms, printing, bookstores, publishers, professional development programs, or institutional partnerships. When the situation is complicated, it is smart to check with your library, copyright office, or legal support.

Common Compatibility Scenarios

This table focuses on remixing or adapting materials into one new work. If you are only linking to separate resources or placing unchanged works side by side in a collection, the rules may be different.

Source 1	Source 2	Can you remix them into one adapted work?	Likely license for the adapted work
CC BY	CC BY	Yes	CC BY, or another license you choose
CC BY	CC BY-SA	Yes	CC BY-SA, or compatible license
CC BY-SA	CC BY-SA	Yes	CC BY-SA
CC BY	CC BY-NC	Yes	CC BY-NC, or another noncommercial-compatible license
CC BY-NC	CC BY-NC	Yes	CC BY-NC, or another license that keeps the use noncommercial

CC BY-NC	CC BY-NC-SA	Yes	CC BY-NC-SA
CC BY-SA	CC BY-NC	Usually no for remixing	Generally incompatible for a single adapted work
CC BY	CC BY-ND	No, not for remixing	ND content cannot be adapted
CC BY-NC	CC BY-ND	No, not for remixing	ND content cannot be adapted
CC BY-NC-SA	CC BY-NC-ND	No, not for remixing	ND content cannot be adapted

Important Note: CC BY-SA and CC BY-NC

You may see people assume that CC BY-SA and CC BY-NC can be combined into CC BY-NC-SA, but that is generally not the safe rule for remixing.

Why? CC BY-SA requires adaptations to use CC BY-SA or a compatible license. CC BY-NC requires the adapted work to stay noncommercial. Adding NC to a BY-SA adaptation adds a restriction that BY-SA does not allow. So for a single remixed or adapted work, CC BY-SA and CC BY-NC are generally incompatible unless you get additional permission or Creative Commons has identified a compatible license that applies to that situation (Creative Commons, n.d.-f).

A practical workaround is to keep them separate in a collection. For example, you might link to one CC BY-SA reading and one CC BY-NC reading in the same course module without remixing them into one new adapted work. Each reading keeps its own license.

What About Public Domain?

Public domain materials have no copyright restrictions, so they are generally compatible with everything. You can reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute public domain content without asking permission.

Creative Commons also offers CC0, a tool creators can use to dedicate their own work to the public domain as fully as legally possible (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

You can:

1. Mix public domain content with CC-licensed content.
2. Revise public domain content.
3. Use public domain content commercially or noncommercially.
4. Choose a license for your new contributions.

One caution: if you combine public domain content with Creative Commons licensed content, the Creative Commons license terms still apply to the CC-licensed portions. The public domain material stays public domain, but your adapted work may need to follow the license requirements of the CC materials you included.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

License compatibility helps you avoid building a module, textbook, or course packet around materials that cannot legally be remixed together.

For example, if you want to combine a CC BY chapter with a CC BY-SA chapter, you can likely do that, but your adapted version needs to follow the ShareAlike requirement. If you also want to include a CC BY-ND article, you should link to that article instead of editing it into your new chapter.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Compatibility matters when you create projects using images, videos, music, readings, or other media from multiple sources.

For example, if you make a video essay using three Creative Commons images, you need to check whether any of them are NC or ND. An ND image may be okay to show unchanged with attribution, but you should not edit or remix it into something new unless the license allows that use.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Compatibility rules can help you support faculty and students before they publish or share materials publicly.

For example, if a faculty member is building an OER module from several sources, you can help them identify which resources are remixable, which are noncommercial only, and which should be treated as link-only because they have ND licenses.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Shared materials are easier to maintain when the licenses are compatible from the start.

For example, if a department wants to create a shared open course shell, choosing mostly CC BY or CC BY-SA materials can make future updates easier than building around mixed NC, SA, and ND resources.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

License compatibility affects the sustainability of institutional OER investments.

For example, if an institution funds OER creation, encouraging grantees to use remix-friendly sources can make the final resources easier to update, translate, localize, and share across courses or institutions.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Compatibility is not about memorizing every legal detail. It is about checking the license terms before you remix, adapt, or publicly share a new work.

Before using a CC-licensed song, image, or article in something you plan to share, check the letters. BY means credit. NC means noncommercial. SA means share alike. ND means do not change it. Those four letters tell you what kind of sharing is actually allowed.

Practice: Collection or Remix?

For each scenario, decide whether it is a collection or an adaptation/remix.

1. You link to three separate open articles in a course module.
2. You translate a CC BY chapter into Spanish and share the translation.
3. You combine sections from two open textbooks into one new chapter.
4. You embed an unchanged CC BY-ND video in a course page with attribution.
5. You revise examples in an open textbook chapter and add new discussion questions.
6. You create a reading list where each item keeps its own link and license.

Then answer:

1. Which scenarios require license compatibility checks?
2. Which scenarios mainly require attribution?
3. Which scenarios should avoid ND materials?
4. Which scenarios might require a specific license on the new work?

Practice: License Compatibility Check

Choose two resources you might want to combine.

Complete:

- Resource 1 title:
- Resource 1 license:
- Resource 2 title:
- Resource 2 license:
- Are you linking to them separately or remixing them into one new work?
- Are the licenses compatible for your planned use?
- What license would the adapted work need?
- Is either source better treated as link-only?
- What is your next step?

3.5 Fair Use and When Licensing Does Not Apply

Open licensing is one way to legally use and share materials, but it is not the only way. Sometimes copyright law allows limited use of copyrighted materials without permission. One of the most important examples is fair use.

Fair use is a legal exception in U.S. copyright law that allows limited use of copyrighted materials without permission under certain circumstances. It is especially important in education, scholarship, criticism, commentary, news reporting, research, and parody. However, fair use is also often misunderstood. It is not automatic, and "I'm using it for education" does not automatically make a use fair (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-e).

What Is Fair Use?

Fair use allows people to use copyrighted material in limited ways without asking permission first.

U.S. copyright law specifically names purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research as examples of uses that may qualify for fair use (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-e).

Fair use may apply when you are using copyrighted material for purposes such as:

Criticism or Commentary

Using part of a work to discuss, evaluate, respond to, or comment on it.

For example, quoting a paragraph from an article so you can critique the author's argument.

News Reporting

Using copyrighted material to inform the public about current events or issues.

For example, showing a brief clip during a news story about that clip's impact.

Teaching or Scholarship

Using limited copyrighted material to support instruction, academic discussion, or scholarly work.

For example, sharing a short excerpt with students so they can analyze it in class.

Research

Using copyrighted material as part of inquiry, study, or evidence-gathering.

For example, examining a set of articles, images, or media clips to identify patterns or support a research question.

Parody

Using elements of an original work to make fun of or comment on that work.

A parody usually needs to borrow enough from the original for people to recognize what is being mocked or critiqued.

Analysis or Critique

Closely examining part of a work to explain how it functions, what it means, or why it matters.

For example, analyzing a scene from a film to discuss symbolism, framing, or representation.

Limited Quotation

Using a small portion of a work because that exact wording matters.

For example, quoting two sentences from a book and then explaining their significance.

Transformative Educational Use

Using a work in a new way that adds meaning, context, or instructional purpose rather than simply replacing the original.

For example, annotating a political cartoon to teach visual rhetoric.

The key word is may. Fair use is not blanket permission. It depends on the specific situation, including what you are using, how much you are using, why you are using it, and whether your use could affect the market for the original work.

The Four Fair Use Factors

Courts evaluate fair use using four factors. No single factor decides the outcome on its own. Instead, all four factors are weighed together (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.-e).

1. Purpose and Character of the Use

This factor asks why and how you are using the work.

Questions to consider:

1. Is the use nonprofit, educational, personal, or commercial?
2. Does the new use add new meaning, purpose, or message?
3. Is the use transformative, or is it simply copying the original?

4. Are you using the material in a way that supports teaching, critique, scholarship, or research?

Educational use can help support a fair use argument, but it is not enough by itself. A use is stronger when it is also transformative, meaning it adds new meaning, context, purpose, or insight rather than simply replacing the original.

2. Nature of the Copyrighted Work

This factor considers what kind of work you are using.

Questions to consider:

1. Is the original work factual or highly creative?
2. Has the work been published or is it unpublished?
3. Is the work more informational, like a report or data table, or more expressive, like a novel, song, film, or artwork?

Fair use is generally stronger when the original work is factual or informational. It can be harder to justify when the original work is highly creative, unpublished, or central to the creator's market.

3. Amount and Substantiality Used

This factor asks how much of the work you used and whether you used the most important part.

Questions to consider:

1. How much of the work did you use?
2. Did you use only what was necessary for your purpose?
3. Did you use the "heart" of the work, even if the portion was small?

There is no magic percentage that automatically makes a use fair. A short excerpt may still be too much if it captures the most important or marketable part of the work. A longer excerpt may be more defensible if the amount is necessary for the educational or critical purpose.

4. Effect on the Market

This factor considers whether your use could harm the market for the original work.

Questions to consider:

1. Could your use replace the need to purchase or license the original?
2. Does your use affect the creator's ability to sell, license, or distribute the work?
3. Is there a reasonable licensing market for the kind of use you are making?
4. Would widespread use of this kind reduce the market value of the original?

This factor is often very important. If your use substitutes for buying the original work, a course pack, a textbook, a streaming license, or another licensed resource, the fair use argument may be weaker.

Fair Use Is a Judgment, Not a Formula

Fair use is flexible on purpose. That flexibility is useful because it allows copyright law to support teaching, learning, scholarship, critique, and creativity. But it also means fair use is not a checklist where a certain number of "yes" answers guarantees safety.

A good fair use analysis asks:

Is this use reasonable, limited, and connected to a legitimate purpose?

It also asks whether the use respects the original creator's rights and market.

For educators and students, this means fair use can be powerful, but it should be used thoughtfully. When a use is large, public, repeated, commercial, or likely to replace purchasing the original, it deserves closer review.

Fair Use vs. Open Licensing

Fair use and open licensing are both important, but they work differently.

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal exception. It may allow limited use of copyrighted material without permission, but it depends on context. You may believe your use is fair, but if it is challenged, you may need to explain or defend your reasoning.

Open Licensing

Open licensing gives permission up front. If a work has a Creative Commons license, you do not have to rely on fair use for the permissions the license already grants. You just need to follow the license terms, such as giving attribution, keeping the use noncommercial if required, or not adapting the work if it has a NoDerivatives license.

A simple way to think about it:

Fair use asks, "Can I use this without permission in this specific situation?"

Open licensing asks, "What has the creator already given me permission to do?"

Example: Textbook Chapter

A faculty member might rely on fair use to share a limited excerpt from a copyrighted textbook with students for a specific instructional purpose. That use would need to be evaluated under the four fair use factors.

But fair use would not automatically allow the faculty member to revise the chapter, translate it, post it publicly, include it in a new open textbook, or keep redistributing it semester after semester.

An openly licensed textbook works differently. If the textbook is licensed CC BY, the faculty member can copy, share, revise, remix, translate, and redistribute it as long as they provide attribution.

That is why open licensing is often more useful than fair use for OER work: it gives clearer, broader, and more durable permissions.

When Licensing May Not Apply

Not every use depends on a Creative Commons license. Sometimes you may be able to use a work because copyright does not apply, because the work is in the public domain, because you own it, because you have direct permission, because a library or institutional license applies, or because an exception such as fair use applies.

Public Domain

The work may be in the public domain, which means copyright no longer restricts how it can be used. Public domain works can generally be copied, shared, adapted, and reused without asking permission.

Example: A novel whose copyright has expired may be used in a course, adapted into a new project, or included in an OER without needing a Creative Commons license.

Not Protected by Copyright

Some things are not protected by copyright in the first place. Copyright protects original expression, not basic facts, ideas, methods, systems, titles, names, or short phrases.

Example: You can use a historical date, a scientific fact, a recipe ingredient list, or a teaching method without needing permission. However, someone's specific written explanation, illustration, or arrangement of those things may still be protected.

Your Own Work

If you created the work yourself and own the copyright, you do not need permission from someone else to use it. You can decide whether to keep it all rights reserved, share it privately, or apply an open license.

Example: If you create your own lecture slides, handout, infographic, video, or assignment prompt, and your institution does not claim ownership through policy or employment terms, you may be able to license it openly.

Direct Permission

Sometimes you may have separate permission from the copyright holder. This permission might come through an email, written agreement, publication contract, signed release, or other license.

Example: An artist might email you permission to use one of their images in your course module. Keep a copy of that permission and follow any limits they include, such as “classroom use only” or “do not modify.”

Fair Use

Your use may qualify as fair use, which allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission in certain situations. Fair use depends on context and is evaluated using the four fair use factors.

Example: A student may quote a short passage from a novel in an essay analyzing the author’s use of symbolism. The quotation supports critique and analysis rather than replacing the original work.

Institutional or Library License

Your institution may already have a license that allows certain uses. Library databases, streaming media platforms, e-book collections, and image databases often come with terms that explain what students and faculty can do.

Example: A library database may allow students to read an article through a stable link, but not allow the PDF to be uploaded publicly. In that case, the permission comes from the library license, not fair use or Creative Commons.

The Permission Question

Copyright decisions often begin with a simple question:

What gives me permission to use this?

The answer might be:

1. A Creative Commons license.
2. Fair use.
3. Public domain status.
4. A library or institutional license.

5. Direct permission.
6. Your own ownership.
7. Another legal exception.

Questions to Ask Before Relying on Fair Use

Before relying on fair use, ask:

1. What is my purpose?
2. Am I using only what I need?
3. Is my use transformative, instructional, critical, or analytical?
4. Is the original work factual or creative?
5. Could my use replace purchasing or licensing the original?
6. Am I sharing it only with the people who need it, or publicly?
7. Is there an openly licensed or library-licensed alternative I could use instead?

If the answer feels uncertain, that does not always mean you cannot use the material. It means you may need to document your reasoning, limit the use, choose a different source, or ask for support from your library, copyright office, or legal counsel.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Fair use can support teaching, but it is not the same as open licensing. It may help you use limited copyrighted materials in a specific course context, but it usually does not give you broad permission to revise, remix, publish, or openly share those materials.

For example, you might use a short copyrighted excerpt for classroom discussion under fair use, but if you want to build a public module, adapt the material, or include it in an OER textbook, an openly licensed source is usually a stronger option.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Fair use may allow you to quote, critique, analyze, or incorporate limited copyrighted material in class projects, research papers, presentations, or media assignments. But you still need to think carefully about how much you use, why you are using it, and whether your project will be shared publicly.

For example, using a short clip from a film for analysis in a class presentation may be different from uploading a long clip publicly without commentary. The purpose, amount, audience, and market effect all matter.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Fair use is part of copyright support, but it often requires judgment. You can help others think through the four factors, look for licensed alternatives, and decide when a question needs additional review.

For example, if a faculty member wants to upload a full copyrighted textbook chapter into a course every semester, you might help them consider whether the library has licensed access, whether a smaller excerpt would meet the need, or whether an OER alternative is available.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Fair use can support instruction, but it should not be the only strategy for long-term course material access. Departments can reduce uncertainty by supporting library-licensed resources, OER adoption, and openly licensed materials.

For example, if multiple sections of a course rely on repeated fair use of copyrighted readings, the department might explore an OER replacement, library e-book license, course reserve option, or shared openly licensed course packet.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Fair use, library licensing, and open licensing all support access in different ways. A healthy copyright strategy helps faculty and students understand when each option applies.

Institutional investment in OER support, copyright guidance, and library licensing can reduce risk while expanding student access to course materials.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Fair use is not a loophole. It is a legitimate part of copyright law, but it depends on context.

If you want to use an image, song, article, video clip, or excerpt in something you plan to share, ask what gives you permission: fair use, an open license, public domain status, library access, direct permission, or something else.

Practice: What Gives You Permission?

Choose one resource you want to use, such as an image, article, video clip, book chapter, chart, song, poem, or excerpt.

Answer:

1. What is the resource?
2. Who created it?
3. Is it copyrighted?
4. Is it openly licensed?
5. Is it in the public domain?

6. Is it something not protected by copyright, such as a fact or idea?
7. Do you own it?
8. Do you have direct permission?
9. Does a library or institutional license apply?
10. Are you relying on fair use?
11. What is your reason for using it?
12. Are you using only what you need?
13. Will you share it privately, in a course, or publicly?
14. Is there an openly licensed alternative?

Use this sentence frame:

I can use [resource] because [permission basis]. I should still [give attribution, limit use, link instead of upload, check license terms, document fair use reasoning, or ask for support].

3.6 Applying Licenses to Your Own Work

You have created something: maybe a syllabus, tutorial video, slide deck, assignment, handout, course module, infographic, or full textbook. Now you want to share it openly.

Applying a Creative Commons license is how you tell others what they are allowed to do with your work. Instead of making people guess, email you for permission, or assume “all rights reserved,” the license gives clear permission up front.

Creative Commons licenses are designed to help creators share their work while keeping the rights and conditions they choose. Before applying a license, though, it is important to make sure you have the right to license the work and that you understand what the license will allow others to do (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

Step 1: Make Sure You Own It

Before you openly license a work, make sure you have the right to do so.

Ask yourself:

1. Did I create this work myself?
2. Do I own the copyright?
3. Was this created as part of my job, grant, assistantship, internship, or contract?
4. Does my institution, employer, publisher, or funder have a policy that affects ownership?
5. Did I use images, videos, readings, charts, music, or other materials created by someone else?
6. Are any parts of the work licensed differently or marked “all rights reserved”?

This is important because you can only apply a Creative Commons license to work you own or have authority to license. If your work includes third-party materials, you need to make sure those materials are openly licensed, in the public domain, covered by permission, or clearly marked as exceptions.

Example: If you create your own assignment prompt, you may be able to license it CC BY. But if the assignment includes a copyrighted image from a publisher’s textbook, you cannot automatically apply CC BY to that image unless you have permission or the image is already openly licensed.

A simple statement can help clarify this:

This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0, except where otherwise noted.

That phrase tells users that most of the work is openly licensed, but some parts may have different permissions.

Step 2: Choose the License That Matches Your Goals

Creative Commons licenses are not one-size-fits-all. The right license depends on what you want others to be able to do with your work.

Start with three questions.

Do I Want Others to Be Able to Modify and Adapt My Work?

If yes, do not use ND. NoDerivatives prevents others from revising, remixing, translating, or adapting your work.

If no, use an ND license, but know that this limits how open the work is for teaching and learning. ND materials can be shared, but they cannot be meaningfully adapted into new OER.

Do I Want Others to Be Able to Use My Work Commercially?

If yes, do not use NC. This allows both commercial and noncommercial reuse.

If no, use NC, but know that NonCommercial restrictions can limit reuse in ways that may be hard to predict. NC can affect printing, publishing, platforms, partnerships, and some institutional uses.

If Others Adapt My Work, Do I Want Them to Share Their Versions Under the Same License?

If yes, use SA. ShareAlike requires adapted versions to use the same or a compatible license.

If no, do not use SA. This gives future users more flexibility in how they license their own adaptations.

A Practical Way to Think About License Choice

1. CC BY: Maximum flexibility with attribution.
2. CC BY-SA: Flexible reuse, but adaptations must stay open under the same or compatible terms.
3. CC BY-NC: Allows adaptation, but only for noncommercial uses.
4. CC BY-NC-SA: Allows noncommercial adaptation, but adaptations must use the same license.
5. CC BY-ND: Allows sharing, but not adaptation.
6. CC BY-NC-ND: Allows noncommercial sharing only, with no adaptation.

For OER, many open education practitioners prefer CC BY or CC BY-SA because these licenses allow reuse, revision, remixing, and redistribution with fewer restrictions. This aligns with the 5Rs of open content: retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute (Wiley, 2023).

Step 3: Use the Creative Commons License Chooser

The Creative Commons License Chooser is one of the easiest ways to select and apply a license. It walks you through the major decisions and generates a license statement you can copy and paste into your work (Creative Commons, n.d.-g).

For a webpage, the chooser can also provide HTML that links the license properly. That link matters because it helps users find the license deed and understand the permissions.

The chooser asks you to make decisions such as:

1. Do you want to allow adaptations?
2. Do you want to allow commercial uses?
3. If you allow adaptations, do you want to require adaptations to use the same license?
4. What title, creator name, or source information do you want included?
5. Do you want HTML code for a website or a plain text license statement?

The chooser is helpful because it turns your answers into a clear license statement and gives you the correct license link.

Example License Statement

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. You are free to share and adapt this material as long as you provide attribution.

Step 4: Add the License Where People Can Find It

Once you choose a license, make it visible and clear.

Good places to include a license statement include:

1. On the title page.
2. In the footer.
3. On a copyright or credits page.
4. In the About page.
5. At the end of a handout.
6. In a slide deck's opening or closing slide.
7. In the description of a video.
8. In the metadata or description field for a repository upload.

Best practice is to include:

1. The title of the work.
2. The creator's name.
3. The license name.
4. A link to the license deed.
5. Any exceptions or third-party content notes.

Example:

Introduction to Campus Research by [Your Name] is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

You can also include the Creative Commons license badge or icon, but the badge should not be the only license information. A text statement and license link are still important.

Step 5: Apply the License Consistently

If your work includes images, videos, charts, readings, music, or other materials from outside sources, make sure the license statement does not accidentally claim ownership over things you did not create.

Use clear notes such as:

This textbook is licensed under CC BY 4.0, except where otherwise noted. Images in Chapter 3 are licensed separately and credited in the image captions.

Or:

Original content in this module is licensed under CC BY 4.0. Third-party materials are credited individually and may have different license terms.

This helps users understand what they can reuse and what they need to check separately.

It also protects you. If someone wants to adapt your module, they can see which parts are yours, which parts came from elsewhere, and which licenses apply.

Step 6: Understand That Creative Commons Licenses Are Irrevocable

Before you apply a Creative Commons license, pause for one important point:

Creative Commons licenses are generally irrevocable.

That means once you release a work under a Creative Commons license, you cannot take back the permissions for people who already received the work under that license, as long as they follow the license terms (Creative Commons, n.d.-d).

You can still:

1. Stop distributing the work yourself.
2. Remove it from your website or platform.
3. Release future versions under a different license.
4. Correct or update the work.
5. Choose a different license for a later edition.

But anyone who already accessed the original version under the Creative Commons license can continue using that version under those terms.

This protects users who rely on openly licensed materials. For example, if an instructor builds a course around your CC BY handout, they need to know that the permission will not disappear halfway through the semester.

What If You Change Your Mind?

Changing your mind is allowed, but it has limits.

If you release a work under a Creative Commons license and later decide you want to use a different license, you can apply a different license to future versions. However, you cannot revoke the original license from copies already shared under that license, as long as users follow the license terms (Creative Commons, n.d.-d).

Example:

You publish a handout under CC BY 4.0 in 2026. In 2027, you decide to publish a revised version under CC BY-NC 4.0. You can do that for the revised version, but people who downloaded or used the 2026 CC BY version can continue using that version under CC BY.

This is why it is worth choosing carefully at the beginning.

Step 7: Keep a Simple Record

This step is not required, but it is helpful.

Keep a record of:

1. The title of the work.
2. The date you applied the license.
3. The license you chose.
4. Where the work was shared.
5. Any third-party materials included.
6. Any exceptions or special notes.
7. Any later changes or new versions.

This is especially useful for OER projects, grant-funded materials, Pressbooks projects, departmental resources, and anything you may update later.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Applying a license helps you decide how your teaching materials can travel beyond your own course.

For example, if you create a study guide and license it CC BY, another instructor can adapt it for a different class, add local examples, and share the revised version with attribution. If you use CC BY-ND, they can share it as-is but cannot adapt it for their students.

What This Means for Students and Learners

You can choose how openly to share your own work, too. Your projects, videos, infographics, essays, portfolios, and creative work may be copyrightable when you create and fix them.

For example, if you create a class infographic and license it CC BY-NC, others can share and adapt it for noncommercial purposes with credit to you. If you do not want people changing it, you might choose a license with ND, but that will limit how others can build on it.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Understanding how to apply licenses helps you support others who want to share materials responsibly.

For example, if a faculty member is preparing an OER module, you can help them check whether they own the content, identify third-party materials, choose a license, and add a clear license statement.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Clear licensing practices make shared resources easier to maintain across programs and courses.

For example, if a department creates common course materials, applying a consistent license can help future instructors revise and update those materials without starting from scratch.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Licensing decisions shape how institutional investments in OER can be reused over time.

For example, if an institution funds OER creation, requiring clear license statements and third-party content notes can make the final materials easier to publish, preserve, update, and share.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A Creative Commons license lets you share your work on purpose.

If you create a guide, tutorial, zine, playlist, or resource you want others to use, the license lets you say clearly: “Here is what you can do with this, and here is how to credit me.”

Practice: Choose a License for Your Own Work

Choose one work you created or might create.

Answer:

1. What is the work?
2. Do you own it?
3. Are there any third-party materials?
4. Do you want people to adapt it?
5. Do you want to allow commercial use?
6. Do you want adaptations to use the same license?
7. Which Creative Commons license best matches your goals?
8. Where would you place the license statement?
9. What exceptions, if any, would you need to note?
10. What record would you keep?

Use this sentence frame:

[Title] by [Your Name] is licensed under [Creative Commons License], except where otherwise noted.

Practice: Using OER Legally

This practice section brings the topic together. It helps you interpret open licenses, understand the permissions they grant, and make informed decisions about revising, remixing, and sharing materials with proper attribution.

Step 1: Choose One Resource

Pick a resource you have already found, or choose a new one you are curious about.

It could be:

1. An open textbook.
2. A chapter.
3. A video.
4. An image.
5. A simulation.
6. A lesson plan.
7. A slide deck.
8. A worksheet.
9. A public domain text.
10. A course module.

Step 2: Identify the License

Locate and document the resource's license. If it is hard to find, mark it as "Unknown" and try again with a second resource.

Record:

1. Title.
2. Creator.
3. Source.
4. License.
5. Link to license.
6. Date checked.

Step 3: Match the Rights to the 5Rs

Use the license to ask:

1. Can I retain this?
2. Can I reuse this in my class, slides, learning materials, or project?
3. Can I revise it by changing or adapting the content?
4. Can I remix it with other materials?
5. Can I redistribute the original or my version?

License-to-5R Cheat Sheet

License or Status	**Retain**	**Reuse**	**Revise**	**Remix**	**Redistribute**
Public Domain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CC0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CC BY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

CC BY-NC	Yes	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, noncommercially
CC BY-SA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, with ShareAlike terms for adaptations
CC BY-NC-SA	Yes	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, noncommercially	Yes, with NC and SA terms
CC BY-ND	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes, unchanged
CC BY-NC-ND	Yes	Yes, noncommercially	No	No	Yes, unchanged and noncommercially

ND, or NoDerivatives, prevents revision and remixing. NC, or NonCommercial, limits use to noncommercial contexts.

Step 4: Add Notes to Your Tracker

In your OER tracker, notes document, or planning table, confirm:

1. The license you identified.
2. What the license allows.
3. What the license restricts.
4. Whether the resource is usable as-is.
5. Whether it is adaptable.
6. Whether it is remixable.
7. Whether it should be treated as link-only.
8. How you might apply it in your course, project, or learning context.
9. What attribution would be needed.
10. What questions remain.

Step 5: Write the Attribution

Use the TASL method:

1. Title.

2. Author.
3. Source.
4. License.

Draft your attribution:

[Title] by [Author] is available at [Source] and licensed under [License].

If you changed the work, add:

Adaptations include [brief description of changes].

Step 6: Decide What Kind of Openness You Need

Reflect:

1. Were you surprised by how much or how little you could do with the resource?
2. Did any license feel confusing or overly restrictive?
3. How important is it to be able to revise or remix this resource?
4. What kind of license would you apply to your own materials, and why?
5. How might the 5Rs help you design more flexible, student-centered learning?
6. Does this resource support the level of openness your project actually needs?

Topic 3 Closing Reflection

You have now explored the practical legal foundations of open education: copyright, Creative Commons licenses, attribution, license compatibility, fair use, and licensing your own work.

Take a few moments to reflect:

1. What did you previously assume about copyright that you now understand differently?
2. Which Creative Commons license feels most aligned with your values?
3. Which license feels most useful for OER work?
4. What is one attribution habit you want to practice?
5. What is one licensing mistake you now know how to avoid?
6. When would you rely on fair use, and when would you prefer an openly licensed source?
7. What is one resource you want to review more carefully before using or sharing?
8. What is one original work you might consider openly licensing?

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Topic 4: Adopting, Adapting, and Modifying OER

Topic Overview

Finding an open resource is exciting, but the next step is not always obvious. A resource might be almost perfect, useful in pieces, legally complicated, too much work to modify, or simply not the right fit. Sometimes the best choice is to adopt it as-is. Sometimes it needs light adaptation. Sometimes it can be remixed with other materials. Sometimes the search reveals a real gap, and creating something new may be the better path. And sometimes the wisest move is to pause, keep searching, or set a resource aside.

This topic helps you move from discovery to decision-making. You will learn how to evaluate whether an OER fits your goals, learners, and context; how to decide whether to adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause; how to scope minor, moderate, and major adaptations; how to remix responsibly; and how to prepare a resource for real use through piloting, feedback, revision, and sharing.

Open education is not about forcing every resource into your course, workshop, project, or learning environment. It is about making thoughtful choices based on fit, permissions, workload, accessibility, representation, and learner needs.

By the end of this topic, learners should be able to:

1. Distinguish between adopting, adapting, remixing, creating, and pausing.
2. Evaluate an OER for course alignment, quality, accessibility, representation, usability, licensing, and workload.
3. Identify when a resource is a strong fit, partial fit, link-only fit, not a fit, or still uncertain.
4. Describe minor, moderate, and major adaptations.
5. Scope adaptation work realistically.
6. Identify common OER ancillaries and support materials.
7. Track potential resources, licenses, customization notes, and adaptation decisions.
8. Remix OER responsibly by checking licenses, tracking sources, documenting changes, and writing clear attribution.
9. Prepare an OER for use through piloting, feedback, revision, versioning, and sharing.
10. Create a practical action plan for using, adapting, or improving an OER.

4.1 Adopt, Adapt, Remix, Create, or Pause

Finding an open resource is only the beginning. Once you have found something promising, the real question becomes:

What is the best action to take with this resource?

The goal is not to force every resource into use. The goal is to make a thoughtful decision based on fit, permissions, workload, and learner needs.

Copyright and open licensing shape these decisions. Copyright owners generally hold exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, display, perform, adapt, and authorize use of their work (U.S. Copyright Office, n.d.). Open licenses, especially Creative Commons licenses, can grant some of these permissions in advance, but the exact permissions depend on the specific license (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

This is where open education decision-making begins. Instead of asking only, “Did I find an OER?” ask:

What should I do with this resource now?

The Five Main Action Paths

When you find a possible OER, you usually have five broad options:

1. Adopt.
2. Adapt.
3. Remix.
4. Create.
5. Pause.

Each path is useful in different situations.

Adopt: Use the Resource As-Is

To adopt an OER means to use it mostly as it is. You are not making significant changes to the content, structure, examples, or learning activities. You may still add your own framing, connect it to assignments, or provide guidance for learners, but the resource itself stays largely intact.

Adopt When

Adoption may be the right path when:

1. The content aligns well with your learning outcomes.
2. The reading level and tone fit your learners.
3. The format is accessible and usable.

4. The examples and perspectives are appropriate for your context.
5. The license allows the kind of use you need.
6. The resource is current enough for your course or project.
7. The amount of setup work is realistic.
8. The resource includes enough support materials or ancillaries for your teaching needs.

Example

You find an open textbook chapter that covers the exact concept you teach in Week 3. The explanations are clear, the examples are useful, and the chapter includes review questions. You link to the chapter in your course site and add a short note explaining how learners should use it.

That is adoption.

Watch For

Adoption is not the same as “no work.” Even when you use a resource as-is, you may still need to:

1. Check the license.
2. Review accessibility.
3. Confirm links and downloads work.
4. Create instructions for learners.
5. Align the resource with assignments or activities.
6. Decide how learners should cite or use it.
7. Check whether ancillaries are available.
8. Confirm whether the resource can be used beyond one course, semester, or platform.

Adoption is usually the lowest-lift and most sustainable path, but it still requires review.

Adapt: Make Changes for Your Context

To adapt an OER means to change it so it better fits your learners, course, discipline, community, or teaching approach. Adaptation is one of the main strengths of OER because open licenses often allow educators and learners to revise, update, localize, translate, improve, or expand materials.

David Wiley’s 5Rs framework explains that open content is not only about access. It is also about permissions to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute materials (Wiley, 2023). Adaptation depends especially on the permission to revise.

Adapt When

Adaptation may be the right path when:

1. The resource is useful but not quite aligned.
2. The examples need updating.
3. The reading level needs adjustment.
4. The resource needs accessibility improvements.
5. The language, tone, or structure needs revision.
6. The content needs local, disciplinary, cultural, or professional context.
7. The resource is missing activities, reflection questions, practice opportunities, or assessments.
8. The license allows adaptation.

Example

You find an open textbook chapter that explains the core concept well, but all the examples are from another region. You keep the main structure but replace the examples with locally relevant case studies and add two reflection questions.

That is adaptation.

Watch For

Before adapting, check the license. Materials with NoDerivatives, or ND, licenses cannot be adapted and redistributed without additional permission. Creative Commons explains that ND licenses allow sharing but do not allow distribution of adapted material (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

You should also document your changes. A short adaptation statement helps future users understand what came from the original and what you changed.

Remix: Combine Multiple Sources Into Something New

To remix means to combine parts of multiple resources into a new work. Remixing can be powerful because it lets you build something that better fits your course or project than any one resource does alone.

Remixing might involve taking a chapter from one OER, an activity from another, a public domain image, and your own original explanation, then combining them into a new module.

Remix When

Remixing may be the right path when:

1. No single resource fully fits your course or project.
2. Several resources each have useful pieces.
3. You want to build a new module, unit, reader, workbook, guide, or textbook chapter.
4. You need to combine different perspectives or formats.
5. You have time to organize the material into a coherent whole.

6. The licenses are compatible.
7. You can provide clear attribution for each source.

Example

You are creating a course module on climate communication. You use one openly licensed reading as background, a public domain government chart, an openly licensed video, and your own discussion questions. You organize them into one student-facing module with clear attribution and a license statement.

That is remixing.

Watch For

Remixing requires more planning than adoption or light adaptation. You need to check:

1. License compatibility.
2. Attribution for each source.
3. Whether any material has ND restrictions.
4. Whether any material has NC restrictions.
5. Whether ShareAlike applies.
6. Whether the final work has a clear structure.
7. Whether learners can tell what to do with each part.
8. Whether the final resource remains accessible across formats.

Attribution gives credit, but compatibility determines whether the sources can legally fit together in one new adapted work. Creative Commons provides compatibility guidance for ShareAlike licenses and explains that adaptations of ShareAlike works must use the same or a compatible license (Creative Commons, n.d.-b).

Create: Build Something New

To create means to develop your own original resource because existing materials do not meet your needs. Creation may be the right path when there is a clear gap in the available OER landscape.

Creation does not always mean writing a full textbook. It might mean creating:

1. A short module.
2. An assignment bank.
3. A glossary.
4. A workbook.
5. A guide.
6. A video series.
7. A case study collection.
8. A set of practice problems.

9. A lab guide.
10. A student-facing tutorial.
11. An instructor guide.
12. A multimedia learning object.

Create When

Creation may be the right path when:

1. You cannot find a resource that fits the course or project.
2. Existing resources are outdated, inaccessible, or too limited.
3. Your discipline, community, or learner population is not well represented.
4. You need a very specific structure or approach.
5. You have expertise, lived context, or professional knowledge that is missing from existing materials.
6. You have enough time, support, and scope control to do the work.
7. You want the final resource to be openly shared.

Example

You teach a course where existing OER only cover pieces of what you need. None of them combine the content, examples, activities, and learning sequence in the way your course requires. You decide to create two pilot modules first, then expand over time.

That is creation.

Watch For

Creation can be meaningful, but it is also labor-intensive. Before deciding to create from scratch, ask:

1. What is the smallest useful version I can create first?
2. Can I start with one module instead of a full textbook?
3. Can I adapt or remix existing pieces instead of writing everything new?
4. Who will review the content?
5. Who will check accessibility?
6. Where will the resource live?
7. How will it be maintained?
8. What ancillaries or support materials will learners or instructors need?
9. What is realistic for the time and support available?

A realistic creation plan is usually stronger than an ambitious plan that is too large to finish.

Pause: Wait, Search More, or Set It Aside

Sometimes the best decision is not to move forward yet. Pausing is not failure. It is part of good open education practice.

You may need to pause when a resource is promising but raises unanswered questions about licensing, accessibility, quality, workload, or alignment. You may also pause when the project scope is too large for the time and support available.

Pause When

Pausing may be the right path when:

1. The license is unclear.
2. The resource has an ND license, but you need to adapt it.
3. The quality or accuracy needs more review.
4. The accessibility barriers are significant.
5. The resource only partly fits and would require too much revision.
6. You do not have time to do the work well right now.
7. You need input from students, colleagues, librarians, instructional designers, or accessibility support.
8. A better resource may exist, but you need more searching time.
9. The workload is bigger than the value the resource would add.
10. The resource depends on missing ancillaries you do not have time to create.

Example

You find a useful article with a Creative Commons license, but it uses CC BY-NC-ND. You wanted to revise and include parts of it in an open module. Because ND does not allow adaptation, you decide not to remix it. Instead, you link to it as an optional reading and keep searching for remixable sources.

That is pausing and redirecting.

Watch For

Pausing is most useful when you write down why. A short note, such as “license does not allow adaptation” or “strong content, but accessibility review needed,” prevents you from repeating the same evaluation later.

Quick OER Next Step Decision Guide

Use this guide when you are looking at a possible OER.

If the Resource…	Consider This Action
Fits your course well and needs little change	Adopt
Mostly fits but needs updates, local examples, or accessibility improvements	Adapt
Has useful pieces but needs to be combined with other sources	Remix
Does not exist in the form your learners need	Create
Raises unresolved questions about license, quality, access, or workload	Pause

Questions to Ask Before Choosing a Path

Fit

Ask:

1. Does this align with my course outcomes or project goals?
2. Does the level match my learners?
3. Does the tone fit the learning context?
4. Does it include examples learners can understand or connect with?

Access

Ask:

1. Can learners access it for free?

2. Does it work on different devices?
3. Can it be downloaded or printed if needed?
4. Does it require an account or special software?

Accessibility

Ask:

1. Are headings structured clearly?
2. Do images have alt text when needed?
3. Are videos captioned?
4. Are tables readable and simple?
5. Would learners using assistive technology be able to use it?

Licensing

Ask:

1. What license does it use?
2. Does the license allow adaptation?
3. Does the license allow remixing?
4. Does the license include NC, ND, or SA restrictions?
5. Can I combine it with other sources?

Workload

Ask:

1. How much work would it take to use this well?
2. Do I need to create activities or assessments?
3. Do I need to update examples or data?
4. Do I need support from a librarian, instructional designer, or accessibility specialist?
5. Is this realistic for the time I have?

Good Enough Is Often the Right Goal

Open education work can get stuck when we wait for the perfect resource. In practice, “good enough to pilot” may be the right next step.

A resource may be worth using if it:

1. Meets the most important learning outcomes.
2. Removes a cost or access barrier.
3. Can be made accessible with reasonable effort.
4. Can be improved over time.
5. Has a license that supports your intended use.

6. Fits the time and support available.

This does not mean lowering standards. It means choosing a realistic path forward and improving from there.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You do not have to choose between “perfect textbook” and “start from scratch.” Many OER decisions fall somewhere in the middle.

For example, you might adopt three chapters as-is, adapt two chapters with local examples, and create one original assignment to connect the materials to your course outcomes.

What This Means for Students and Learners

The materials used in a course may be selected, adapted, or created with your learning context in mind.

For example, if an instructor replaces generic examples with local or culturally relevant examples, that is an adaptation meant to help the material connect more directly to your experience.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help others move from a general interest in OER to a specific action plan.

For example, if a faculty member finds a promising textbook, you might help them decide whether to adopt it as-is, adapt selected chapters, or use it only as a reference while continuing the search.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

OER decisions can support program-level consistency while still leaving room for instructor flexibility.

For example, a department might adopt a shared open textbook for core content while allowing instructors to adapt examples, activities, or assignments for their sections.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Supporting OER does not always mean funding full textbook creation. Adoption, adaptation, and remixing can also produce meaningful impact.

For example, a small grant might support faculty in adapting existing OER for local relevance, accessibility, or alignment instead of creating a full resource from scratch.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

When you find an open resource, you do not have to decide immediately. Start by naming what kind of fit it is.

For example, a resource might be useful as-is, useful with changes, useful only as a link, or not useful right now. Naming the fit helps you decide your next step.

Practice: Choose the Best Action Path

Choose one OER or open resource you have found.

Complete the following:

1. Resource title:
2. Link:
3. License:
4. Intended use:
5. Does it fit your learning goal?
6. Does it need changes?
7. Can it be adapted?
8. Can it be remixed?
9. Does it include useful ancillaries?
10. What workload would be required?
11. Best action path: adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause.
12. Why this path makes sense:

Use this sentence frame:

For this resource, the best next step is to [adopt/adapt/remix/create/pause] because [reason]. Before moving forward, I need to check [license/accessibility/quality/ancillaries/workload/support].

4.2 Evaluating Fit: Course Alignment, Quality, Accessibility, and Representation

A resource can be open and still not be the right fit.

It might be accurate, but too advanced. It might be engaging, but inaccessible. It might be free, but not openly licensed. It might cover the right topic, but use examples that do not reflect your learners' discipline, region, community, or learning goals.

Evaluating fit helps you move beyond "Is this resource good?" to a more useful question:

Is this resource good for this purpose, these learners, and this context?

That distinction matters. OER evaluation is not only about judging quality. It is about determining whether a resource can support your course, your students, your learning outcomes, and your capacity to use or adapt it well.

Start With the Learning Goal

Before evaluating a resource, name what you need it to help learners do.

A resource might be interesting, polished, or popular, but if it does not support your learning goals, it may not be the right choice. Alignment helps you decide whether the resource belongs in the course and what role it should play.

Ask:

1. What learning outcome could this resource support?
2. What concept, skill, practice, or question does it address?
3. Where would it fit in the course or project?
4. Would learners use it before class, during class, after class, or as a reference?
5. Would it replace an existing material or supplement it?

A resource does not need to do everything. Sometimes a resource is valuable because it supports one specific activity, discussion, skill, or moment of practice.

Evaluate Course Alignment

Course alignment means the resource supports the purpose, level, and structure of your course or project.

A strong-fit resource usually aligns clearly with your outcomes, assignments, learner needs, and learning sequence. A partial-fit resource may still be useful, but it may need framing, adaptation, or supplementation.

Look for Alignment With

1. Learning outcomes.
2. Course level.
3. Learner preparation.
4. Assignment expectations.
5. Disciplinary methods.
6. Weekly topics or modules.
7. Assessment plans.
8. Time available for learners to use the resource.

Questions to Ask

1. Does this resource support one or more course outcomes?
2. Is the level appropriate for my learners?
3. Does it assume background knowledge learners may not have?
4. Does it match the type of thinking or practice I want learners to do?
5. Does it fit the time I have available?
6. Would I need to create additional explanation, activities, or assessments?

Example

You find an open textbook chapter on climate change. It is accurate and well-written, but your course focuses on environmental justice. The chapter may still be useful, but only as background. To make it fit better, you may need to add local case studies, discussion questions, or readings on policy, race, and community impact.

That is a partial fit, not a failure.

Evaluate Content Quality

Quality does not simply mean “looks professional.” A well-designed resource can still be inaccurate, outdated, too narrow, or poorly aligned. A plain-looking resource can still be useful, accurate, and thoughtful.

When evaluating quality, look at the substance.

Quality Indicators May Include

1. Clear authorship or organizational responsibility.
2. Author expertise or relevant experience.
3. Evidence, citations, or source transparency.
4. Current information where currency matters.
5. Accurate explanation of key concepts.
6. Appropriate depth for the intended audience.
7. Logical organization.
8. Clear examples.
9. Transparent review or revision history.

10. Faculty reviews or peer feedback, when available.

The Open Textbook Library is one example of a platform that helps with quality review by displaying faculty reviews for many open textbooks. These reviews can help educators see how others have evaluated a resource's comprehensiveness, accuracy, relevance, clarity, and consistency before adopting or adapting it (University of Minnesota Libraries, n.d.).

Questions to Ask

1. Who created this resource?
2. What expertise or experience do they bring?
3. Is the content accurate?
4. Are claims supported with evidence or citations?
5. When was it last updated?
6. Does the resource explain concepts clearly?
7. Does it include errors, gaps, or outdated examples?
8. Has it been reviewed by other educators?

Example

You find an open textbook with strong reviews, but the statistics are several years old. That does not mean you need to reject the resource. It may mean you adopt the core explanation but update the data or add a more current supplemental source.

Evaluate Accessibility

Accessibility is part of quality. A resource is not truly usable if some learners cannot access it.

The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides guidance for creating accessible open textbooks and learning materials, including attention to images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018). Web accessibility guidance such as WCAG also emphasizes that digital content should be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for users with different access needs and technologies (W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, n.d.).

Look For

1. Clear heading structure.
2. Descriptive link text.
3. Alt text for meaningful images.
4. Captions for videos.
5. Transcripts for audio or video.
6. Readable tables.
7. Sufficient color contrast.
8. Keyboard navigation.
9. Screen reader compatibility.

10. Downloadable or alternative formats.
11. Readable layout on mobile devices.

Questions to Ask

1. Can learners using assistive technology use this resource?
2. Are images described when they carry meaning?
3. Are videos captioned accurately?
4. Are links descriptive, or do they just say “click here”?
5. Are headings used in a logical order?
6. Are tables simple enough to read with a screen reader?
7. Can learners adjust text size or use the resource on different devices?
8. Is there an accessibility statement or known accessibility review?

Example

You find a PDF textbook that fits your course well, but it is a scanned image file with no selectable text. Learners using screen readers may not be able to access it. You may need a different format, an accessible version, or a different resource.

Evaluate Representation and Relevance

Representation matters because course materials shape whose knowledge appears central, whose experiences are visible, and whose examples are treated as “normal.”

A resource may be technically accurate but still feel distant from learners’ lives, communities, languages, identities, or professional goals. This does not always mean rejecting the resource. Sometimes it means adapting examples, adding perspectives, or pairing the resource with other materials.

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of connecting academic content to students’ cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and ways of understanding the world (Gay, 2018). OER can support this work because, when the license allows, educators can revise, localize, and expand materials for their own learners.

Look For

1. Whose voices are represented.
2. Whose perspectives are missing.
3. Whether examples reflect diverse communities.
4. Whether language is inclusive and respectful.
5. Whether the resource relies on stereotypes or narrow assumptions.
6. Whether local, regional, or disciplinary context is needed.
7. Whether learners can see their communities, questions, or futures in the material.

Questions to Ask

1. Who is centered in this resource?
2. Who is missing or minimized?
3. Are examples culturally relevant for my learners?
4. Does the resource include multiple perspectives where appropriate?
5. Does it reflect current language and respectful terminology?
6. Would learners need additional context to connect with it?
7. Could this resource be adapted to better reflect the learners in my course?

Example

You find an open sociology textbook that explains a concept clearly, but all the examples are generic or drawn from contexts far from your learners' communities. You might keep the core explanation and add local examples, student-generated case studies, or data from your region.

Evaluate Format and Usability

A resource can be accurate, relevant, and accessible in theory, but still difficult to use in practice. Format and usability affect whether learners can actually engage with the material.

Look For

1. Readable layout.
2. Clear navigation.
3. Short sections or manageable chunks.
4. Search functionality.
5. Download options.
6. Mobile-friendly design.
7. Clear instructions.
8. Consistent organization.
9. Reasonable file sizes.
10. Stable links.

Questions to Ask

1. Is it easy to find the assigned section?
2. Can learners tell what to read, watch, or do?
3. Can learners use it on a phone or tablet?
4. Can they download it for offline access?
5. Does it require special software?
6. Are there too many clicks, files, or confusing pathways?

Example

A webbook may be easier for learners to navigate than a long PDF. But if the webbook requires constant internet access and learners have unreliable connectivity, a downloadable option may also be needed.

Evaluate Licensing and Permissions

A resource may be useful, but the license determines what you can do with it.

Before deciding whether to adopt, adapt, or remix a resource, check the license. Creative Commons licenses vary in what they allow. Some allow adaptation and commercial use. Some restrict commercial use. Some require adaptations to use the same license. Some do not allow adaptations at all (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

Look For

1. License name.
2. License link.
3. Whether adaptations are allowed.
4. Whether commercial use is allowed.
5. Whether ShareAlike applies.
6. Whether third-party materials have different licenses.
7. Whether the license applies to the full resource or only parts of it.

Questions to Ask

1. What license does this resource use?
2. Can I revise or adapt it?
3. Can I remix it with other materials?
4. Are there NC, ND, or SA restrictions?
5. Are images, videos, or figures licensed separately?
6. Does the license fit my intended use?

Example

A CC BY-NC-ND resource may be useful as a reading, but it cannot be adapted, translated, or remixed into your own OER without additional permission. You might link to it, cite it, or use it as-is, but not build from it.

Evaluate Ancillaries and Hidden Workload

Ancillaries are support materials that come with a resource, such as slides, test banks, homework questions, instructor manuals, quizzes, activities, rubrics, datasets, or lab guides.

A textbook may look like a strong fit until you realize it does not include the support materials you need. That does not mean you cannot use it. It means you need to account for the work of creating or adapting those pieces.

Common Types of Ancillaries

Ancillaries may include:

1. Slide decks.
2. Test banks.
3. Instructor guides.
4. Lab manuals.
5. Homework sets.
6. Practice questions.
7. Quizzes.
8. Discussion prompts.
9. Assignments.
10. Activities.
11. Rubrics.
12. Datasets.
13. Image banks.
14. Case studies.
15. Interactive simulations.
16. Student worksheets.
17. Answer keys.
18. Accessibility documentation.
19. Editable source files.

Where to Look for Ancillaries

Useful places to search may include:

1. OER Commons.
2. Open Textbook Library.
3. OpenStax and related instructor hubs.
4. PhET Interactive Simulations.
5. MyOpenMath.
6. Pressbooks Directory.
7. LibreTexts.
8. MERLOT.
9. Canvas Commons.
10. Textbook publisher or project companion sites.
11. Instructor resource pages connected to an OER.
12. Repository records linked from the textbook or resource.

Always check whether the ancillary materials are openly licensed too. A textbook may be open while some instructor resources, test banks, slides, or external tools have different permissions.

Look For

1. Slides.
2. Test banks.
3. Practice questions.

4. Homework sets.
5. Instructor guides.
6. Activities or labs.
7. Rubrics.
8. Datasets.
9. Image banks.
10. Accessibility documentation.
11. Editable source files.

Questions to Ask

1. What support materials are included?
2. Are ancillaries openly licensed too?
3. Are they current and accurate?
4. Can I edit them?
5. Do they match my teaching approach?
6. What would I need to create myself?
7. Is the missing work realistic?
8. Are there editable formats, or is everything locked in PDF?
9. Would these supports help learners practice, apply, or assess their learning?

Example

You find a strong open textbook, but it has no quiz bank or discussion activities. If your course relies heavily on weekly practice, the textbook may still be useful, but your adoption plan should include time to create or find those supports.

A Fit Rating System

Use a simple rating system to avoid getting stuck in endless review.

Strong Fit

The resource aligns well with your outcomes, learners, format needs, and intended use. It may need only light framing or minor updates.

Partial Fit

The resource has useful pieces but needs adaptation, supplementation, or clearer alignment before use.

Link-Only Fit

The resource is useful but should not be adapted or remixed. This may be because of license restrictions, format limitations, or the nature of the resource.

Not a Fit

The resource does not meet the course need, creates too many barriers, or would require more work than it is worth.

Unsure

The resource needs more review. The license, accessibility, quality, or alignment may not be clear yet.

Evaluation Snapshot

Use this quick snapshot when reviewing a resource.

Evaluation Area	Strong Signs	Watch For
Course alignment	Supports outcomes and assignments	Interesting but off-topic
Quality	Accurate, current, clear, reviewed	Outdated, unsupported, unclear
Accessibility	Structured, captioned, readable, usable	Scanned PDFs, missing captions, poor contrast
Representation	Inclusive, relevant, multiple perspectives	Narrow examples, missing voices, stereotypes
Format	Easy to navigate, download, and use	Confusing layout, large files, weak mobile experience

Licensing	Clear license supports intended use	Unclear license, ND restrictions, incompatible licenses
Workload	Realistic to use or adapt	Missing ancillaries, high revision burden

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Evaluation helps you decide whether a resource is ready for your course or needs changes first.

For example, a textbook might be strong in content quality but weak in representation. You may decide to use it while adding local case studies, additional authors, or student-generated examples.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Evaluation affects whether course materials feel usable, relevant, and accessible.

For example, if a resource includes clear navigation, multiple formats, and examples that connect to your context, it may be easier to engage with and apply.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Evaluation gives you a shared language for supporting faculty and students.

For example, instead of saying “this resource is good” or “not good,” you can say, “This is a strong content fit, but it needs an accessibility review and a license check before adoption.”

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Evaluation can support consistency across courses and programs.

For example, a department might use shared criteria to review OER for common courses, including quality, accessibility, representation, licensing, and available ancillaries.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Evaluation practices help institutions support OER quality without treating OER as one-size-fits-all.

For example, an institution might provide an OER review checklist or grant rubric that helps faculty evaluate course alignment, accessibility, and sustainability before implementation.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A good resource is not just good in general. It is good for a particular purpose.

Before saving or sharing a resource, ask what it helps someone do, who it serves well, and what still needs checking.

Practice: Evaluate One OER for Fit

Choose one OER or open resource.

Complete this snapshot:

1. Resource title:
2. Link:
3. Creator:
4. License:
5. Learning goal it might support:
6. Course alignment rating: strong fit, partial fit, link-only fit, not a fit, or unsure.
7. Content quality notes:
8. Accessibility notes:
9. Representation and relevance notes:
10. Format and usability notes:
11. Licensing notes:
12. Ancillaries available:
13. Hidden workload:
14. Decision: adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause.
15. Next step:

Practice: Explore and Track Ancillary Materials

Dig into your search results and begin evaluating specific OER materials, especially ancillaries or support tools. This is where you start moving from discovery into actual selection and customization.

Step 1: Choose a Repository or Platform

Choose one repository or platform and begin exploring individual resources. Look for:

1. Slide decks.
2. Test banks.
3. Instructor guides.
4. Lab manuals.
5. Assignments.
6. Interactive activities.

7. Homework sets.
8. Rubrics.
9. Case studies.
10. Editable files.

Step 2: Add at Least One Resource to Your Tracker

When you find something promising:

1. Paste the title and link into your OER tracker.
2. Record your initial thoughts.
3. Note what parts seem useful.
4. Note what could be customized.
5. Identify any specific chapters, sections, activities, or ancillaries that stand out.
6. Record the license. If it is hard to find within about two minutes, mark it “Unknown” and return to it later.

Step 3: Make a Customization Note

In your notes or customization column, answer one of these:

1. What would you change to make this more relevant to your learners?
2. What could you combine this with?
3. Could you remix or revise this resource with others you have found?
4. What support material would you still need to create?
5. Would this resource be easier to use if it were in a different format?

Tip: Start with materials that align with one course module, workshop section, or lesson you teach frequently. That makes the process more concrete.

Reflection: Customization Possibilities

Consider:

1. What kinds of support materials, such as test banks, slides, assignments, labs, or rubrics, are most helpful to you right now, and why?
2. Did you find a resource you almost loved but needed to tweak?
3. What would you change?
4. How do those customization options compare to the limits of traditional publisher materials?
5. Can you envision a small remix or adaptation project you would feel comfortable trying?
6. What would it involve?
7. What feels exciting about customizing OER?
8. What feels overwhelming or challenging?

4.3 Making Adaptations: Minor, Moderate, and Major Changes

One of the most useful things about OER is that many open licenses allow you to make changes. You are not limited to using a resource exactly as you found it. When the license allows, you can revise examples, improve accessibility, reorder content, add activities, translate sections, or combine materials in ways that better support your learners.

David Wiley's 5Rs framework describes open content as content that gives users permissions to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute materials. Adaptation depends especially on permission to revise, which means you can modify the content itself (Wiley, 2023).

But adaptation is also work. Some changes are simple. Others require time, review, design support, accessibility checking, or collaboration. Before you begin adapting, it helps to name the size of the change.

This section organizes adaptation into three levels:

1. Minor adaptations.
2. Moderate adaptations.
3. Major adaptations.

These levels are not rigid categories. They are planning tools. Their purpose is to help you scope the work before you commit to it.

Before You Adapt: Check the License

Before making changes, check the license. Not all Creative Commons licenses allow adaptation.

Creative Commons explains that licenses with the NoDerivatives, or ND, element do not allow users to share adapted material without additional permission from the copyright holder (Creative Commons, n.d.-a). That means if a work is licensed CC BY-ND or CC BY-NC-ND, you may be able to share it as-is, but you cannot revise, remix, translate, or distribute an adapted version without permission.

If the license allows adaptation, you still need to follow the license terms. For example, you may need to give attribution, keep the use noncommercial, or share your adaptation under the same license.

Adaptation-friendly licenses usually include:

1. CC BY.
2. CC BY-SA.
3. CC BY-NC.
4. CC BY-NC-SA.

Licenses that do not allow adaptation include:

1. CC BY-ND.
2. CC BY-NC-ND.

Minor Adaptations: Small Changes That Improve Fit

Minor adaptations are small changes that make a resource easier to use in your course or project. They do not usually change the overall structure, argument, or teaching approach of the resource.

Minor adaptations are often a good starting point because they can make a meaningful difference without requiring a full redesign.

Examples of Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations may include:

1. Fixing typos.
2. Updating broken links.
3. Replacing an outdated statistic.
4. Adding a local example.
5. Changing the order of assigned sections.
6. Removing an irrelevant section.
7. Adding a short instructor note.
8. Adding a glossary definition.
9. Adding alt text to an image.
10. Reformatting headings for clarity.
11. Adding a brief reflection question.
12. Adding a short note explaining how learners should use the resource.

When Minor Adaptation Is a Good Fit

Minor adaptation may be right when:

1. The resource is mostly aligned.
2. Learners can use it with little support.
3. The content is current enough.
4. The structure works well.
5. Only small changes would improve usability.
6. You have limited time or support.

Example

You are using an open chapter on media literacy. The chapter is clear and useful, but one example references an outdated social media platform. You replace that example with a current one and add a short discussion question that connects to your learners' context.

That is a minor adaptation.

Documentation Needed

For minor changes, a short note is usually enough. Creative Commons recommends noting modifications when you adapt a CC-licensed work so users can understand what changed and who made those changes (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

Example adaptation note:

This chapter is adapted from [Original Title] by [Author], licensed under CC BY 4.0. Adaptations include updated examples and added reflection questions.

Moderate Adaptations: Meaningful Changes to Support Your Learners

Moderate adaptations involve more substantial changes. You may still be using the original structure or core content, but you are adding, revising, or reorganizing enough that the resource begins to feel more tailored to your course.

Moderate adaptations often take more planning because they may affect alignment, accessibility, attribution, and learner experience.

Examples of Moderate Adaptations

Moderate adaptations may include:

1. Rewriting sections for clarity or tone.
2. Adding new activities or assessments.
3. Creating discussion questions.
4. Adding case studies.
5. Replacing examples throughout a chapter.
6. Integrating multimedia.
7. Adding captions or transcripts.
8. Combining selected sections from multiple chapters in the same resource.
9. Creating an instructor guide.
10. Reorganizing a unit around your learning outcomes.
11. Adding accessibility improvements across several sections.
12. Creating a supporting slide deck or activity guide.

When Moderate Adaptation Is a Good Fit

Moderate adaptation may be right when:

1. The resource is useful but not course-ready.
2. The content needs stronger alignment with your learning outcomes.
3. Learners need additional scaffolding.
4. Examples or perspectives need meaningful revision.
5. The resource lacks activities or assessments.
6. Accessibility improvements are needed.
7. You have time to pilot and revise.

Example

You find an open textbook chapter that explains core concepts well, but the reading is too dense for your learners. You break the chapter into shorter sections, add guiding questions, include a brief glossary, and create a short applied activity for each section.

That is a moderate adaptation.

Documentation Needed

Moderate adaptations should include a clearer adaptation statement and, when possible, a revision note.

Example adaptation statement:

This module is adapted from [Original Title] by [Author], licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Adaptations include reorganized sections, revised explanations, added glossary terms, and new applied activities. This adapted version is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

If multiple people contributed, include contributor names or roles where appropriate.

Major Adaptations: Significant Redesign or New Versions

Major adaptations involve substantial changes to the content, structure, language, format, or pedagogical approach. At this point, you may be creating something clearly based on one or more existing resources, but significantly transformed for a new context.

Major adaptations can be powerful, but they require careful planning.

Examples of Major Adaptations

Major adaptations may include:

1. Translating a resource into another language.
2. Rewriting significant portions.
3. Creating new chapters or units.
4. Changing the pedagogical approach.
5. Combining multiple OER into a new textbook.

6. Building a new workbook from existing content.
7. Restructuring a textbook around different learning outcomes.
8. Converting a lecture-based resource into a problem-based learning module.
9. Creating a culturally responsive version for a specific community.
10. Developing a full course shell from open materials.
11. Building a new thematic unit from multiple sources.
12. Creating a full set of ancillaries around an existing OER.

When Major Adaptation Is a Good Fit

Major adaptation may be right when:

1. No single resource fits your course well enough.
2. The existing resource has strong foundations but needs major restructuring.
3. Your learners need a different approach, language, or format.
4. The discipline or community is underrepresented in existing materials.
5. You have enough time, support, and review capacity.
6. The licenses allow the changes you want to make.
7. You have a plan for hosting, accessibility, attribution, and maintenance.

Example

You find several open resources related to your course theme, but none of them fit your course structure. You combine selected readings, write new connective explanations, add thematic units, create activities, and include local or contemporary examples.

That is a major adaptation or remix project.

Documentation Needed

Major adaptations need clear documentation because future users need to understand the relationship between your version and the original sources.

Include:

1. Original source information.
2. Author or creator names.
3. Original licenses.
4. Your adaptation statement.
5. Summary of major changes.
6. License for your adapted version.
7. Attribution for third-party materials.
8. Version history or update notes.
9. Contributor names or roles.
10. Accessibility review notes, where appropriate.

This documentation helps users trust, reuse, and build on the resource responsibly.

Adaptation Scope: Planning Table

Use this table to estimate the level of work involved.

Adaptation Level	What It Usually Means	Examples	Planning Needs
Minor	Small edits or updates	Fixing links, adding one example, correcting typos	Light documentation and attribution
Moderate	Meaningful revision or added support	Adding activities, revising sections, improving accessibility	Adaptation statement, review, and possible pilot
Major	Significant redesign or new version	Translating, restructuring, remixing multiple sources	Project plan, license review, accessibility review, versioning, maintenance

Common Adaptation Goals

Adaptation usually starts with a problem you are trying to solve. Naming the problem helps you choose the right level of change.

Local Relevance

You may want the resource to reflect your city, region, institution, profession, or community.

Example: Replacing generic examples with regional case studies, local policy examples, or community data.

Student Connection

You may want learners to see their experiences, languages, questions, or communities reflected in the material.

Example: Adding examples that reflect learners' cultural backgrounds, professional goals, or lived experiences.

Course Alignment

You may need the resource to match your learning outcomes, assignments, or weekly structure.

Example: Reordering chapters to match your syllabus or adding practice questions tied to your course outcomes.

Accessibility

You may need to make the resource more usable for all learners.

Example: Adding alt text, captions, transcripts, structured headings, descriptive links, or simplified tables.

Currency

You may need to update outdated data, terminology, examples, or research.

Example: Replacing old statistics with current data or revising terminology to match current disciplinary practice.

Pedagogical Approach

You may want the resource to support a different teaching method.

Example: Turning a reading-heavy chapter into an inquiry-based module with guiding questions, activities, and reflection prompts.

Instructor Presence

You may want to make the resource feel more connected to your voice, teaching style, or course community.

Example: Adding instructor notes, short introduction videos, audio clips, annotations, reflection prompts, or guiding questions.

Streamlining

You may need to reduce overload for learners.

Example: Removing nonessential content, breaking long sections into smaller chunks, or clarifying what is required versus optional.

Hidden Workload: What Adaptation Really Involves

Adaptation can look simple from the outside, but even small changes can create related tasks.

Before adapting, consider whether you also need to:

1. Check license compatibility.
2. Write or update attribution.
3. Revise the table of contents.
4. Update internal links.
5. Check accessibility.
6. Create new activities.
7. Revise assessments.
8. Update slides or handouts.
9. Review for accuracy.
10. Ask someone else to review the changes.
11. Export new formats.
12. Update version notes.
13. Tell learners or colleagues what changed.
14. Create or revise ancillaries.
15. Track what you changed.
16. Share your version with others.
17. Revisit your edits later without guessing.

This does not mean you should avoid adaptation. It means you should scope it honestly.

A Simple Adaptation Workflow

Use this workflow for minor, moderate, or major adaptations.

Step 1: Name the Need

What problem are you trying to solve?

Example: “The resource is strong, but the examples are not relevant to my learners.”

Step 2: Check the License

Does the license allow adaptation? Are there NC, SA, or ND restrictions?

Step 3: Choose the Adaptation Level

Is this minor, moderate, or major?

Step 4: Make the Changes

Revise only what supports your learning goal. Avoid changing things just because you can.

Step 5: Document What Changed

Add an adaptation statement and update attribution.

Step 6: Check Accessibility

Review headings, images, links, captions, tables, and file formats.

Step 7: Pilot and Revise

Use the adapted version with learners or colleagues and revise based on feedback.

Step 8: Share When Ready

If appropriate, share the adapted version so others can benefit from the work.

Adaptation Statement Template

Use or revise this template:

This resource is adapted from [Original Title] by [Author/Creator], licensed under [License]. Adaptations by [Your Name/Team] include [brief summary of changes]. This adapted version is licensed under [License].

Example

This module is adapted from *Introduction to Sociology 3e* by Tonja R. Conerly, Kathleen Holmes, and Asha Lal Tamang, licensed under CC BY 4.0. Adaptations by [Your Name] include added regional case studies, updated demographic examples, and new reflection questions. This adapted version is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Adaptation lets you make open materials fit your course instead of forcing your course to fit the material.

For example, you might keep the core explanation from an open textbook but add local examples, revise the discussion questions, and create a short applied assignment.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Adaptation can make materials more relevant, accessible, and understandable.

For example, if an instructor updates examples or adds guiding questions, the material may feel more connected to your learning experience.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help others see adaptation as a scoped process, not an endless project.

For example, if a faculty member wants to “fix the whole textbook,” you might help them start with one chapter, one accessibility improvement, or one missing activity.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Adaptation can support shared curriculum while allowing instructors to respond to local needs.

For example, a department might adopt a shared open textbook but allow faculty to adapt examples, assignments, or supplemental modules for their sections.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Supporting adaptation can be a high-impact use of OER funding because it builds from existing resources rather than starting from scratch.

For example, a small grant might support faculty in adapting existing OER for accessibility, representation, local relevance, or course alignment.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Adaptation is one reason open materials are powerful. You are not limited to “take it or leave it.”

If a resource is useful but imperfect, the right question may be: “What small change would make this more usable?”

Practice: Scope an Adaptation

Choose one resource that is useful but not perfect.

Complete:

1. Resource title:
2. License:
3. What works well:
4. What does not fit:
5. Adaptation goal:
6. Adaptation level: minor, moderate, or major.
7. Changes needed:
8. Support materials or ancillaries needed:
9. Accessibility checks needed:
10. Attribution or adaptation statement needed:
11. Who should review it:

12. What is realistic before first use:
13. What can wait until later:

Practice: Make a Customization Note

Choose one potential OER or ancillary. Write a short customization note for your tracker.

Use one of these prompts:

1. I would change this by…
2. I could combine this with…
3. This would better support learners if…
4. This resource is useful, but it needs…
5. I would treat this as link-only because…
6. This might become a small remix if…

4.4 Remixing Responsibly: Combining Sources, Tracking Changes, and Attribution

Remixing is one of the most powerful possibilities in open education. Instead of choosing one resource and accepting everything about it, you can combine pieces from multiple sources to create something that better fits your course, learners, discipline, community, or project.

A remix might combine:

1. A chapter from one open textbook.
2. An activity from another OER.
3. A public domain image.
4. A dataset from a government source.
5. An instructor-created explanation.
6. A reflection prompt written for your learners.
7. A video or simulation linked from another platform.
8. An openly licensed slide deck.
9. A student-facing worksheet.
10. A case study or applied example.

When done well, remixing can make materials more relevant, accessible, flexible, and aligned with your learning goals. But remixing also requires care. You need to check licenses, keep attribution connected to each source, document what changed, and make sure the final resource is coherent for learners.

Remixing depends on the open permissions to revise, remix, and redistribute. Wiley's 5Rs framework describes these permissions as central to open content and OER (Wiley, 2023).

Creative Commons licenses can support remixing, but only when the specific license terms allow it (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

What Remixing Is

To remix means to combine parts of one or more existing works into a new work. In OER, remixing is often used to build a more course-aligned resource from several partial-fit materials.

Examples of remixing include:

1. Combining two textbook chapters into one course module.
2. Adding your own case study to an open textbook chapter.
3. Blending an open reading, public domain image, and original activity into a lesson.
4. Creating a course reader from several openly licensed essays.
5. Building a workbook using open explanations, practice questions, and new reflection prompts.
6. Translating and reorganizing selected content for a new audience.
7. Combining multiple OER into a new thematic unit.
8. Adapting an openly licensed infographic, article excerpt, and discussion prompt into an interactive class activity.
9. Remixing open lecture slides, short videos, and your own quiz questions into a weekly learning module.

Remixing is different from simply linking to multiple resources. If you link to three separate readings in a course site, each resource remains separate. If you copy, revise, and blend parts of those readings into a new handout or chapter, you are likely creating a remix.

Why Remixing Requires Care

Remixing requires care because each source brings its own permissions, conditions, and context.

A resource may be free to access but not remixable. A resource may be openly licensed but include third-party images with different terms. A resource may allow adaptation but require ShareAlike. Another may allow reuse only for noncommercial purposes.

Before remixing, ask:

1. Does each source allow adaptation?
2. Are any sources marked NoDerivatives, or ND?
3. Are the licenses compatible with one another?
4. Do any sources require ShareAlike?
5. Do any sources restrict commercial use?
6. Can I clearly attribute each source?
7. Can future users tell what came from where?

8. Will the final resource feel coherent to learners?

The legal and ethical goal is not just to “give credit somewhere.” It is to preserve the permissions trail so future users can understand the source, license, and changes made.

Steps to Remixing

Step 1: Identify Your Source Materials

Start by listing every source you plan to use. Do this before you begin copying or combining content.

For each source, record:

1. Title.
2. Author or creator.
3. Source URL.
4. License.
5. License link.
6. Format.
7. Which part you plan to use.
8. Whether you will use it as-is, adapt it, or link to it.
9. Any third-party content or exceptions.

This does not need to be fancy. A spreadsheet or simple table is enough.

Resource Tracking Example

Source	Creator	License	Part Used	Use Plan	Notes
Resource Title	Author	CC BY 4.0	Chapter 2	Adapt	Update examples
Resource Title	Author	CC BY-NC-SA 4.0	Activity	Remix	Must keep NC-SA terms
Resource Title	Author	CC BY-ND 4.0	Full article	Link only	Do not adapt

Tracking sources early prevents problems later.

Step 2: Check Whether Each Source Allows Remixing

Not every Creative Commons license allows remixing. Licenses with the NoDerivatives, or ND, element do not allow users to distribute adapted material without permission from the copyright holder (Creative Commons, n.d.-a).

ND resources can still be useful. You can link to them, cite them, or share them unchanged when the license allows. But do not copy and revise ND content into your new resource unless you have additional permission.

Remix-friendly licenses usually include:

1. CC BY.
2. CC BY-SA.
3. CC BY-NC.
4. CC BY-NC-SA.

Licenses that do not allow remixing include:

1. CC BY-ND.
2. CC BY-NC-ND.

Step 3: Check License Compatibility

Even if each source allows adaptation, the licenses still need to work together. License compatibility determines whether different materials can be combined into one adapted work and what license the new work must use.

Creative Commons explains that ShareAlike licenses have specific compatibility requirements. Adaptations of CC BY-SA 4.0 works generally must be licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 or another license Creative Commons has identified as compatible (Creative Commons, n.d.-b).

Common Compatibility Reminders

1. CC BY is flexible and usually easy to combine with other licenses.
2. CC BY-SA requires adaptations to use the same or a compatible license.
3. CC BY-NC requires the new work to remain noncommercial.
4. CC BY-NC-SA requires noncommercial use and ShareAlike licensing.
5. CC BY-ND and CC BY-NC-ND should not be remixed.
6. CC BY-SA and CC BY-NC are generally incompatible for a single adapted work.

If licenses do not fit together, you have options:

1. Keep the sources separate as a collection.
2. Link to one source instead of remixing it.

3. Choose a different source.
4. Ask the copyright holder for permission.
5. Create your own replacement content.

Step 4: Plan the Structure Before You Build

A remix should not feel like a pile of unrelated pieces. Learners need a coherent learning path.

Before building, decide:

1. What the new resource is supposed to help learners do.
2. Which source supports each learning goal.
3. What order the pieces should appear in.
4. Where you need transitions or explanations.
5. What you need to add yourself.
6. What you should remove or simplify.
7. Where activities, examples, or reflection questions belong.

Example Structure Plan

Section	Source Material	What I'll Do With It
Introduction	Original content	Explain the purpose of the module
Background concept	Open textbook chapter	Adapt and shorten
Example	Public domain dataset	Add local analysis question
Activity	OER worksheet	Revise for course outcomes
Reflection	Original content	Add student-facing prompt

A structure plan helps the remix become a real learning resource, not just a collection of copied pieces.

Step 5: Track What You Changed

When you remix or adapt materials, document your changes. Creative Commons recommends noting modifications so users can tell what was changed and so original creators are not incorrectly associated with later edits (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

You do not need to list every tiny typo correction, but you should name meaningful changes.

Examples of changes to document include:

1. Added local case studies.
2. Updated statistics or examples.
3. Reordered sections.
4. Translated content.
5. Shortened or simplified explanations.
6. Added activities or assessments.
7. Combined content from multiple sources.
8. Removed sections.
9. Improved accessibility.
10. Added alt text, captions, or transcripts.

Example change note:

Adaptations include updated 2026 examples, added local case studies, revised discussion questions, and improved image alt text.

This kind of note helps future users understand both the source and your contribution.

Step 6: Write Clear Attribution

Attribution should stay connected to each source. This is especially important in a remix because different pieces may come from different works with different licenses.

The TASL method can help: Title, Author, Source, License. Creative Commons recommends including the title, creator, source link, and license link when available and noting whether changes were made (Creative Commons, n.d.-c).

Basic Remix Attribution Example

This module draws on [Title 1] by [Author], licensed under CC BY 4.0, and [Title 2] by [Author], licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Adaptations include revised examples, added reflection questions, and reordered sections. Original content by [Your Name] is licensed under [License].

More Detailed Attribution Table

Section	Source	License	Changes Made

Background explanation	Title 1 by Author	CC BY 4.0	Shortened and reorganized
Activity	Title 2 by Author	CC BY-NC-SA 4.0	Revised prompts
Reflection questions	Original content	CC BY-NC-SA 4.0	New content

Attribution tables are especially useful for textbooks, modules, and larger remixes.

Step 7: Choose a License for the New Remix

Your remix needs a license too, but you cannot always choose any license you want. The license for the new work must respect the terms of the source materials.

Examples:

1. If you only use CC BY sources, you may have broad flexibility.
2. If you include CC BY-SA content, your adaptation likely needs CC BY-SA or a compatible license.
3. If you include CC BY-NC content, your adaptation must remain noncommercial.
4. If you include CC BY-NC-SA content, your adaptation likely needs CC BY-NC-SA.
5. If a source has ND, do not remix it unless you have permission.

If you are unsure what license your remix can use, pause and ask for support from your library, copyright office, or legal support.

Step 8: Review the Learner Experience

A remix may be legally correct and still confusing. After you build the draft, review it from the learner's perspective.

Ask:

1. Can learners tell what the resource is for?
2. Does the sequence make sense?
3. Are transitions clear?
4. Are instructions visible?
5. Are activities connected to the readings or media?

6. Are sources and attributions clear without distracting from learning?
7. Is the format accessible and usable?
8. Does the resource feel like one coherent module or chapter?

If possible, ask a colleague, student worker, peer reviewer, or learner to look at the resource before you use it widely.

Remixing Example: Building a Thematic Module

Imagine you are building a module on cultural identity and media representation.

You find:

1. A CC BY textbook section on media literacy.
2. A CC BY-NC-SA activity on analyzing representation.
3. A public domain image collection.
4. A short article with CC BY-ND that you want learners to read.
5. Your own original reflection questions.

You might:

1. Adapt the CC BY textbook section.
2. Revise the CC BY-NC-SA activity.
3. Use the public domain images in the module.
4. Link to the CC BY-ND article instead of adapting it.
5. Write original reflection questions.
6. License the final adapted module as CC BY-NC-SA to respect the ShareAlike and NonCommercial requirements.

This approach lets you use each resource responsibly according to its license.

Remix Planning Template

Use this template before building a remix.

Question	Notes
What am I creating?	
Who is the audience?	

What learning goal does this support?	
Which sources will I use?	
What is each source's license?	
Are any sources ND?	
Are any sources NC?	
Are any sources SA?	
Can these licenses work together?	
What will I adapt, link to, or leave unchanged?	
What original content do I need to create?	
What license can the final remix use?	
Where will attribution appear?	
How will I document changes?	

Common Remix Mistakes to Avoid

Treating All Creative Commons Licenses as the Same

A CC license tells you what you can do, but each license is different. Always check the specific license.

Forgetting About ND

ND means NoDerivatives. If you need to adapt, revise, translate, or combine the work into a new resource, ND is a barrier unless you get additional permission.

Mixing Incompatible Licenses

Some licenses cannot be combined into one adapted work. Check compatibility before you build.

Losing Attribution Information

Attribution is much easier to track at the beginning than to reconstruct later.

Creating a Resource That Feels Stitched Together

A remix needs transitions, structure, and a clear learning purpose. Learners should not feel like they are jumping between unrelated fragments.

Ignoring Accessibility During Remixing

When you combine materials, accessibility needs to be checked across the whole resource. Do not assume that accessible pieces automatically create an accessible final product.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Remixing lets you build something closer to your course than a single textbook may provide.

For example, you might combine an open chapter, local case study, public domain image, and original assignment into one module that better supports your learning outcomes.

What This Means for Students and Learners

A remix can make materials more coherent and relevant when it is done well.

For example, instead of reading three disconnected sources, you might receive one module that explains why each piece matters and how they connect.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help others remix responsibly by encouraging source tracking early.

For example, before a faculty member starts copying content into a new document, you might help them create a source table with title, author, URL, license, and use plan.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Remixing can help programs build shared materials from multiple sources while still allowing local flexibility.

For example, a department might create a shared core module from openly licensed materials, then allow instructors to add examples or activities for their own sections.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Remix projects benefit from infrastructure and support.

For example, faculty who remix OER may need help with licensing, attribution, accessibility, platform choice, and versioning. Institutional support can make the final resource more sustainable.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Remixing is not just copying and pasting. It is building something new from existing pieces with care.

Before combining an image, reading, and activity into one handout, check whether each source allows adaptation and write down where each piece came from.

Practice: Build a Remix Plan

Choose a possible module, lesson, chapter, guide, or activity you might remix.

Complete:

1. What am I creating?
2. Who is the audience?
3. What learning goal does this support?
4. Source 1:
5. Source 1 license:
6. Source 1 use plan:
7. Source 2:
8. Source 2 license:
9. Source 2 use plan:
10. Source 3:
11. Source 3 license:

12. Source 3 use plan:
13. Are any sources ND?
14. Are any sources NC?
15. Are any sources SA?
16. Can these licenses work together?
17. What original content do I need to create?
18. What license can the final remix use?
19. Where will attribution appear?
20. How will I document changes?
21. What accessibility checks are needed?
22. What would make the final remix coherent for learners?

4.5 Preparing Your OER for Use: Pilot, Feedback, Revision, and Sharing

Once you have adopted, adapted, remixed, or created an OER, the next step is preparing it for real use. This is where the resource moves from “promising” to “ready enough to try.”

Ready does not mean perfect. It means the resource has been reviewed enough to support learners, has clear access instructions, includes appropriate attribution and licensing information, and has a plan for feedback and revision.

A good OER workflow includes testing, listening, revising, and deciding how widely to share. This is especially important when the resource has been adapted or remixed, because changes can affect accessibility, navigation, attribution, licensing, and learner experience.

Creative Commons recommends noting modifications when an openly licensed work has been adapted so future users can understand what changed and how the new version relates to the original (Creative Commons, n.d.-c). Accessibility guidance also emphasizes that accessible materials require attention to structure, images, links, tables, multimedia, and other design choices that shape how learners use a resource (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Start With a Pilot Mindset

A pilot is a small, intentional test of a resource before treating it as final. It gives you a chance to see how the resource works with real learners, in a real course, workshop, or project context.

A pilot can be formal or informal. It might involve one class meeting, one module, one assignment, one chapter, or one semester.

The purpose of a pilot is to learn:

1. What works well.
2. Where learners get confused.
3. What access or accessibility barriers appear.
4. What instructions need clarification.
5. What examples need updating.
6. What activities need stronger alignment.
7. What support materials are missing.
8. What should be revised before wider use.

A pilot helps you avoid the pressure of “this has to be finished forever.” Instead, you are saying: “This is ready to try, and I am prepared to learn from the experience.”

Decide What You Are Piloting

Do not pilot everything at once if you do not need to. Choose a manageable unit of use.

You might pilot:

1. One chapter.
2. One module.
3. One week of readings.
4. One assignment.
5. One activity.
6. One lab.
7. One video or tutorial.
8. One student-facing guide.
9. One thematic unit.
10. One adapted section of a larger resource.
11. One set of ancillary materials.

Smaller pilots are easier to evaluate and revise. They also make it easier to identify what needs attention.

Example

Instead of piloting a full open textbook, you might pilot two chapters and one assignment in one section of a course. That gives you enough information to learn how learners use the material without requiring a full-course redesign.

Prepare the Resource for Learner Use

Before learners use the resource, make sure the basics are in place.

Check Access

Ask:

1. Can learners open the resource without paying?
2. Can learners access it on the first day they need it?
3. Does the link work outside your own account?
4. Does it require a login, download, or special software?
5. Is there an offline option if learners need one?
6. Can learners access it on mobile devices?

Check Instructions

Learners should know what the resource is, why they are using it, and what they should do with it.

Add simple guidance such as:

1. Read this before class.
2. Use this as a reference while completing the assignment.
3. Focus on sections 2.1 through 2.3.

4. Skip the optional case study unless you want more examples.
5. Use the reflection questions to prepare for discussion.
6. Download the PDF if you need offline access.

Check Accessibility

Before piloting, review the most important accessibility features.

Look for:

1. Clear heading structure.
2. Descriptive links.
3. Alt text for meaningful images.
4. Captions for videos.
5. Transcripts for audio or video.
6. Readable tables.
7. Sufficient color contrast.
8. Screen-reader friendly files.
9. Mobile-friendly layout.
10. Downloadable or alternative formats.

The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit provides practical guidance for accessible OER, including images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Check Licensing and Attribution

Make sure the resource clearly shows:

1. The license for the overall work.
2. Attribution for adapted or remixed sources.
3. A note about what changed, if adapted.
4. Any third-party content exceptions.
5. Links to license deeds.
6. A clear “except where otherwise noted” statement, if needed.

This helps learners, colleagues, and future users understand what they can reuse and what they need to check separately.

Collect Feedback That You Can Actually Use

Feedback is most helpful when it is specific. Instead of asking, “Did you like the resource?” ask questions that connect to access, clarity, usefulness, and learning.

Student or Learner Feedback Questions

You might ask:

1. Could you access the resource easily?
2. Did the resource work on the device you used?
3. Were any parts hard to navigate?
4. Which section helped you most?
5. Which part was confusing?
6. Did the examples help you understand the concept?
7. Did you notice any broken links or missing media?
8. Did the format support the way you study?
9. What would make this resource easier to use next time?

Instructor or Facilitator Reflection Questions

After using the resource, ask yourself:

1. Did learners come prepared?
2. Did the resource support the assignment or discussion?
3. Where did learners need extra explanation?
4. What questions came up repeatedly?
5. Did the resource save time, create time, or shift time?
6. What would I revise before using it again?
7. What additional support materials are needed?

Peer or Colleague Review Questions

If a colleague reviews the resource, ask:

1. Does the resource align with the stated learning goal?
2. Are the instructions clear?
3. Is the content accurate and current?
4. Are the examples appropriate for the audience?
5. Are attribution and licensing clear?
6. Are there accessibility concerns to address?
7. Would you use or adapt this resource? Why or why not?

Feedback does not need to be long. A short form, quick reflection, or small group conversation can be enough.

Revise With Purpose

After the pilot, sort feedback into categories. This helps you decide what to fix now, what to improve later, and what may not need action.

Category	What It Means	Example
Fix now	Necessary before using again	Broken link, unclear instructions, missing caption
Improve soon	Important but not urgent	Add examples, revise activity, improve navigation
Consider later	Useful idea, but outside current scope	Add a new chapter, create a full instructor guide
No action	Feedback noted, but no change needed	Preference that does not affect access or learning

This keeps revision manageable. You do not need to respond to every piece of feedback immediately.

Revision Examples

1. If learners could not find the reading, add clearer instructions and a direct link.
2. If learners found the chapter too long, add reading guidance or assign selected sections.
3. If learners wanted examples, add one local or applied example.
4. If a video lacked captions, add a captioned alternative or replace the video.
5. If an activity did not match the learning outcome, revise the prompt or choose a different activity.
6. If the license statement was unclear, add a clearer license and attribution section.
7. If learners needed practice, add or adapt ancillaries such as questions, worksheets, or quizzes.

Decide Whether to Share More Widely

After revising, decide whether the resource is ready to share beyond your course or immediate project.

Not every OER needs to be public immediately. Sometimes the right next step is another pilot. Sometimes it is ready for a department, repository, public webbook, institutional collection, or professional community.

Share More Widely When

Consider sharing more widely when:

1. The resource has been reviewed for accuracy.
2. Learners or colleagues have tested it.
3. Accessibility basics have been addressed.
4. Licensing and attribution are clear.
5. Third-party materials are marked.
6. The resource has a stable home.
7. There is a maintenance plan.
8. You are comfortable with others reusing it.

Keep It Limited for Now When

Keep the resource limited for now when:

1. It still has unresolved accessibility issues.
2. Licensing or attribution needs review.
3. The content needs more testing.
4. The format is not stable.
5. You are still revising major sections.
6. You need department, coauthor, funder, publisher, or institutional approval.
7. You are still resolving student consent or privacy questions.

Sharing is not all-or-nothing. You might share a pilot version with colleagues, a polished version with your department, or a final version through a public platform.

Add a Version and Maintenance Note

Before sharing more widely, add a simple version note. This helps people understand what they are using and whether it may change.

Example Version Note

Version 1.0, published Spring 2026. This resource was piloted in [Course Name] and revised based on student feedback.

Example Maintenance Note

This resource is maintained by [Name/Department/Team]. To report errors, broken links, or accessibility issues, contact [Email/Form]. Future updates will be noted on this page.

A version note does not have to be elaborate. It simply helps future users understand the status of the resource.

Prepare a Sharing Package

If you want others to reuse your OER, give them enough information to understand and use it.

A simple sharing package might include:

1. Title.
2. Creator or contributors.
3. Brief description.
4. Intended audience.
5. Learning goals.
6. License.
7. Suggested attribution.
8. Format options.
9. Accessibility notes.
10. Version or date.
11. Maintenance contact.
12. Recommended use.
13. Known limitations.
14. Links to editable files, if available.
15. Links to ancillary materials, if available.
16. Citation or reference information.

This makes your resource easier to adopt, adapt, or recommend.

Example Sharing Description

This module introduces learners to media representation and cultural identity. It was designed for an introductory undergraduate course and includes a short reading, discussion activity, reflection prompt, and optional extension activity. The module is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0, except where otherwise noted.

Make Student Contributions Ethical and Optional

If students helped create, revise, test, or contribute to the resource, make sure their rights and privacy are respected. Student work is generally copyrighted to the student unless an agreement, employment arrangement, or institutional policy says otherwise.

If you want to include student-created work in a public OER, use informed consent and offer meaningful alternatives. Students should understand what will be shared, where it will appear, what license may apply, and whether they can choose not to participate.

This is especially important when a project connects to open pedagogy or co-creation.

Good practices include:

1. Explaining the purpose of public sharing.
2. Asking permission before using student work.
3. Offering an opt-out or private alternative.
4. Avoiding grades tied to public sharing.
5. Letting students choose how they are credited.
6. Discussing licensing in plain language.
7. Protecting student privacy.
8. Avoiding public sharing of sensitive personal information.

A Simple Pilot-to-Public Workflow

Use this workflow when preparing an OER for use.

Step 1: Prepare

Check access, instructions, accessibility, attribution, and licensing.

Step 2: Pilot

Use the resource in a limited way with learners, colleagues, or a small audience.

Step 3: Gather Feedback

Ask specific questions about access, clarity, usefulness, and learning.

Step 4: Revise

Fix urgent issues first, then improve structure, examples, accessibility, and support materials.

Step 5: Document

Add version notes, adaptation statements, attribution, and maintenance information.

Step 6: Share

Decide whether to share in the course, department, repository, webbook, institutional platform, or public collection.

Step 7: Maintain

Set a review schedule and a way for users to report issues.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Piloting helps you improve OER before making a long-term commitment.

For example, you might test one adapted module in one section, ask learners where they got confused, revise the instructions, and then decide whether to use it across all sections.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Your experience with a resource matters. Feedback can help improve materials for future learners.

For example, if a reading is hard to navigate or an example does not make sense, that feedback can help the instructor revise the material.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help others move from “finished draft” to “usable resource” by encouraging review, documentation, and revision.

For example, before a faculty member publishes an adapted guide, you might help them check attribution, version notes, accessibility basics, and maintenance information.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Piloting can reduce risk before a resource is adopted across multiple sections or programs.

For example, a department might test an open module in two sections, gather student and instructor feedback, revise it, and then decide whether to recommend it more broadly.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

OER implementation is stronger when institutions support testing and revision, not just creation.

For example, a grant program might include time for piloting, accessibility review, student feedback, and revision before a resource is considered complete.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

A resource does not have to be perfect before it is useful. It needs to be ready enough to try and supported by a plan to learn from use.

If you create a guide or learning activity, share it with a small audience first, ask what worked, revise it, and then decide whether it is ready for wider sharing.

Practice: Create a Pilot Plan

Choose one OER, adapted resource, remix, or ancillary set you might test.

Complete:

1. Resource title:
2. Type of resource:
3. What will be piloted:
4. Audience:
5. Learning goal:
6. Access checks needed:
7. Accessibility checks needed:
8. Attribution and license checks needed:
9. Instructions learners will need:
10. Feedback questions:
11. Who will review it:
12. What would count as success:
13. What would need fixing before wider use:
14. Where revision notes will be kept:
15. When you will decide whether to share more widely:

Practice: Prepare a Sharing Package

Create a short sharing package for a resource.

Include:

1. Title:
2. Creator or contributors:
3. Description:
4. Intended audience:
5. Learning goals:
6. License:
7. Suggested attribution:
8. Format options:
9. Accessibility notes:
10. Version or date:
11. Maintenance contact:
12. Recommended use:
13. Known limitations:
14. Editable files or ancillary links, if available:

Topic 4 Closing Reflection

You have now explored how to move from finding OER to using OER thoughtfully. You considered when to adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause; how to evaluate fit; how to scope adaptations; how to account for ancillaries and hidden workload; how to remix responsibly; and how to prepare a resource for real use through piloting, feedback, revision, and sharing.

Take a few moments to reflect:

1. Which action path feels most realistic for your current context: adopt, adapt, remix, create, or pause?
2. What kind of resource would be “good enough to pilot”?
3. What evaluation criteria matter most for your learners?
4. What kinds of ancillaries or support materials would make adoption easier?
5. What is one small adaptation you could try?
6. What would you need to track before remixing responsibly?
7. What feedback would help you revise a resource after first use?
8. What support would make this work more sustainable?

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Topic 5: Open Pedagogy and Co-Creation

Topic Overview

Open education is not only about using open materials. It is also about rethinking how learning happens, who gets to participate in knowledge-making, and how student work might become more purposeful, collaborative, and useful beyond a single grade.

In many courses, students create a great deal of work: discussion posts, essays, presentations, annotated bibliographies, quiz responses, reflections, research summaries, lab reports, study guides, and projects. Much of that work demonstrates learning, but it often has a short life. A student completes the assignment, submits it, receives a grade, and then the work disappears into a learning management system, folder, or file no one sees again.

Open pedagogy asks a different question:

Could some student work become useful beyond the grade?

This does not mean every assignment should be public. It does not mean every student should be asked to publish online. It means educators can design some learning activities so that students create something with purpose, audience, and possible future use.

Open pedagogy can invite students to become co-creators, not just consumers. It can support engagement, agency, critical thinking, information literacy, collaboration, public communication, and contribution to a learning community. But it also requires care. When students are asked to create, revise, share, or publish work beyond the instructor, issues of consent, privacy, power, attribution, accessibility, cultural safety, and student choice become central.

By the end of this topic, learners should be able to:

1. Explain the difference between disposable and renewable assignments.
2. Describe open pedagogy as a set of practices that invite learners into knowledge-making.
3. Identify principles of open pedagogy, including agency, participation, reuse, revision, authentic audience, attribution, consent, and care.
4. Distinguish between private-renewable, campus-renewable, and public-renewable assignments.
5. Design authentic student work without requiring public sharing.
6. Identify practical tools and formats for co-creation.
7. Choose tools based on audience, privacy, accessibility, maintenance, and learner experience.
8. Explain why consent, attribution, student ownership, privacy, accessibility, and harm reduction matter in co-creation.
9. Plan a small, realistic collaborative OER or open pedagogy activity.

10. Create a care-centered design plan for a renewable or co-created assignment.

5.1 From Consumption to Creation: Disposable vs. Renewable Assignments

In many courses, students create work that demonstrates learning but has little future use. They submit it, receive feedback or a grade, and then the work disappears.

That work is not meaningless. Students need private spaces to practice, reflect, draft, fail, revise, and learn. Some assignments should remain temporary. Some should stay private. Some are valuable precisely because they are low-stakes and not meant for an audience beyond the student and instructor.

But open pedagogy asks us to pause and consider another possibility:

Where might student work have more life, usefulness, or audience if designed differently?

Wiley and Hilton (2018) describe OER-enabled pedagogy as teaching and learning practices that are possible or practical because of the permissions that come with OER, especially the ability to revise, remix, and redistribute materials. DeRosa and Robison (2017) describe open pedagogy as a shift from simply using OER toward learning practices that invite participation, collaboration, and shared knowledge-building.

The key shift is from student work as something consumed by the instructor for grading to student work as something that can contribute to learning, community, or the knowledge commons.

Disposable Assignments

A disposable assignment is work created mainly for assessment. It helps the instructor see whether learning has occurred, but it usually has little use beyond the course.

Disposable assignments often have:

1. A single audience: usually the instructor.
2. A short lifespan: usually ending after grading.
3. A private destination: usually submitted in the learning management system.
4. A limited purpose: usually demonstrating learning for a grade.
5. Little future use: rarely revised, reused, or shared.

Examples of disposable assignments include:

1. A discussion post only the instructor and classmates see for one week.
2. A reflection submitted privately and never revisited.
3. A quiz answer that disappears after grading.
4. An annotated bibliography only used for one assignment.

5. A presentation no one sees after class.
6. A study guide created by one student and never shared.
7. A lab report submitted only for evaluation.
8. A research summary that is never revised or used again.

Disposable does not mean worthless. Many disposable assignments serve important purposes. The problem is not that disposable assignments exist. The problem is when every assignment disappears, even when students are producing work that could help someone else learn.

The better question is not, “How do we eliminate disposable assignments?”

The better question is:

Which assignments could become more useful, purposeful, or reusable with a small design shift?

Renewable Assignments

A renewable assignment asks students to create something that can be useful beyond the original submission. The work may help future students, classmates, community partners, a department, a public audience, or the broader knowledge commons.

Renewable assignments are often associated with open pedagogy because they invite students to participate in knowledge creation rather than only consume course materials.

Renewable assignments often have:

1. A real audience: future students, peers, a community, a department, or the public.
2. A longer lifespan: the work can be reused, revised, or built upon.
3. A clear purpose: the artifact helps someone learn, understand, access, or apply knowledge.
4. Student agency: students have meaningful choices about topic, format, audience, attribution, or sharing.
5. A revision process: the work can improve over time.
6. Consent and care: students understand how their work may be used and have options.

Examples of renewable assignments include:

1. A class glossary of key terms and examples.
2. A student-created study guide for future learners.
3. A bank of practice questions with explanations.
4. An annotated resource list for a course topic.
5. A troubleshooting guide for a common assignment.
6. A mini case study collection using local examples.
7. An accessibility improvement project, such as alt text or captions.
8. A public-facing explainer, tutorial, or infographic.

9. A revised open textbook section, when licensing and support allow.
10. A common misconceptions guide.
11. A student-created FAQ.
12. A resource map for a community or campus audience.
13. A set of student-created examples connected to course concepts.
14. A peer-reviewed collection of short tutorials or worked examples.

A renewable assignment does not have to be public. It only needs to have potential value beyond one student submitting work to one instructor one time.

Disposable vs. Renewable: A Simple Comparison

Feature	Disposable Assignment	Renewable Assignment
Primary purpose	Demonstrate learning for a grade	Demonstrate learning by creating something useful
Main audience	Instructor	Future students, classmates, community, department, or public audience
Lifespan	Usually ends after grading	Can be reused, revised, or shared
Student role	Completer of assigned work	Contributor to a learning resource or knowledge community
Typical location	LMS submission, private document, gradebook	Course space, shared class resource, department guide, public platform, or repository
Risk level	Usually lower because work stays private	Varies depending on audience, consent, and publicness

Key design need	Clear expectations and assessment criteria	Clear audience, consent, attribution, revision, and care

Renewable Does Not Have to Mean Public

This is one of the most important points in open pedagogy.

A renewable assignment can be private-renewable, campus-renewable, or public-renewable.

Private-Renewable

The work stays inside the course but helps the class or future students.

Example: Students create a shared exam review guide that future students can use in later semesters.

Campus-Renewable

The work is shared within a program, department, library, center, student organization, or institution.

Example: Students create an annotated list of resources for a campus office, student organization, or department guide.

Public-Renewable

The work is shared openly outside the course, usually with clear consent, attribution, and licensing.

Example: Students contribute to an openly licensed guide, public website, Wikipedia page, or OER project.

Public sharing can be meaningful, but it is not required. Open pedagogy should expand student agency, not create pressure for public exposure.

What Changes When an Assignment Becomes Renewable?

Turning a disposable assignment into a renewable one does not always mean adding more work. Often, it means changing the purpose, audience, or final form of work students already do.

Instead of “Submit a Reflection”

Students might create a short “What I wish I understood earlier” note for future students.

Instead of “Post Once and Reply Twice”

Students might contribute one useful question, example, or resource to a shared class knowledge base.

Instead of “Write an Annotated Bibliography”

Students might build an annotated resource guide that future students can use as a starting point.

Instead of “Take a Quiz”

Students might write practice questions with answer explanations for peer review.

Instead of “Give a Presentation”

Students might create a short tutorial, explainer, or visual guide that can be reused.

The learning work is still there. The difference is that the product has a clearer purpose and possible life beyond the grade.

Benefits of Renewable Assignments

Renewable assignments can support learning in several ways.

They Give Work a Real Purpose

Students may be more invested when their work helps someone beyond the instructor.

Example: A student-created FAQ for future students can feel more meaningful than a private reflection that disappears after grading.

They Support Deeper Learning

Creating something for others often requires students to explain, organize, evaluate, and revise their understanding.

Example: Writing a practice question with a clear answer explanation requires a student to understand the concept well enough to teach it.

They Build Transferable Skills

Renewable assignments can support communication, collaboration, information literacy, digital literacy, accessibility awareness, and ethical reuse.

Example: An annotated resource guide can require students to evaluate sources, write for an audience, use attribution, and organize information clearly.

They Can Improve the Course Over Time

Student contributions can help build a living resource that grows across semesters.

Example: Each class adds examples, questions, or resource notes to a course glossary, making it stronger for future learners.

They Can Make Knowledge More Participatory

Renewable assignments can help students see themselves as contributors to knowledge, not only consumers of information.

Example: Students can add local examples, lived context, disciplinary applications, or community questions that a textbook may not include.

Risks and Responsibilities

Renewable assignments also require care. If a student's work may be reused, shared, or seen by others, the assignment needs thoughtful design.

Questions to ask:

1. Who will see the work?
2. Will students have a choice about sharing?
3. Can students opt out without penalty?
4. How will students be credited?
5. Can students use a pseudonym or remain anonymous?
6. What happens if a student does not want future classes to see their work?
7. Does the assignment ask students to disclose personal experiences?
8. Is the assignment accessible to students with different needs, tools, and time constraints?
9. Who maintains or revises the artifact after the course ends?

Renewable assignments should never require students to be publicly vulnerable in order to succeed. Care, consent, and choice are part of the design.

A Low-Risk Way to Start

If you are new to renewable assignments, start small. Choose one existing assignment and adjust the audience or output slightly.

Low-risk options include:

1. A shared class glossary.
2. A private course FAQ.
3. A study guide for future students.
4. A practice question bank.
5. A resource list with short annotations.
6. A troubleshooting guide for a difficult assignment.
7. A common misconceptions guide.
8. A collective notes document.
9. A set of student-written examples.

These options can stay inside the course or department. They do not require public posting, open licensing, or a major technology platform to be valuable.

Example: Turning a Disposable Assignment Renewable

Original Disposable Assignment

Students write a short reflection after completing a reading. The instructor grades it, and the reflection stays in the learning management system.

Renewable Redesign

Students write a short “reading guide note” for future students. Each note explains one confusing concept, gives an example, and offers one study question. Students can choose whether their note remains private, is shared anonymously with future students, or is included in a class-created study guide.

What Changed?

1. The audience expanded from instructor-only to future learners.
2. The purpose shifted from proving completion to helping others learn.
3. The student gained choice about sharing.
4. The work became reusable without requiring public exposure.

This is a small change, but it creates a different learning experience.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Renewable assignments can help students create useful materials without requiring a full course redesign.

For example, you might turn a weekly discussion post into a shared “course concepts in plain language” glossary that future students can use for review.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Renewable assignments can give your work a clearer purpose and audience.

For example, instead of writing only for a grade, you might create a resource that helps classmates, future students, or a community understand a concept more easily.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help instructors think through audience, privacy, access, and sustainability before student work is shared.

For example, if an instructor wants students to create a public resource, you might help them design opt-in consent, alternative options, attribution practices, and a private version.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Renewable assignments can support shared learning resources across courses and programs.

For example, a department might invite students across multiple sections to contribute to a shared study guide, glossary, or resource map that supports future learners.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Renewable assignments can connect learning, student agency, and institutional goals around access, engagement, and public impact.

For example, an institution might support renewable assignments through open pedagogy grants, library publishing support, student privacy guidance, and recognition for faculty who design these learning experiences.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Renewable assignments are about usefulness, not publicity.

A resource can stay inside a class and still be renewable if it helps future students or can be revised and reused over time.

Practice: Redesign One Disposable Assignment

Choose one assignment, discussion, quiz, presentation, reflection, or project that currently has a short life.

Complete:

1. Current assignment:
2. What students currently produce:

3. Who sees it:
4. What happens after grading:
5. Possible future audience:
6. How the work could help someone else:
7. Renewable version:
8. Student choices:
9. Privacy or consent needs:
10. Attribution or credit options:
11. How the work could be reviewed:
12. Where the final artifact could live:
13. What would make this low-risk enough to try:

5.2 Principles of Open Pedagogy: What It Is and What It Is Not

Open pedagogy can be difficult to define because people use the phrase in different ways. Some use it to describe teaching with OER. Some use it to describe student-created resources. Some connect it to public scholarship, participatory learning, open licensing, or social justice.

For this curriculum, we will keep the definition practical:

Open pedagogy is a set of teaching practices that invite learners to participate in knowledge-making, often by creating, revising, sharing, or improving materials that can benefit others.

In other words, open pedagogy asks students to do more than consume information.

It asks:

1. What can learners help build?
2. What can they question, revise, contribute to, or make more useful?
3. How can learning become more participatory, purposeful, and connected?

DeRosa and Robison (2017) describe open pedagogy as a move from simply using OER toward teaching practices that use openness to support collaboration, participation, and shared knowledge creation. Wiley and Hilton (2018) use the term OER-enabled pedagogy to describe teaching and learning practices that are possible or practical because of the 5R permissions associated with OER: retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute.

Both perspectives matter. Open pedagogy is not only about the resource. It is also about the learning relationship.

A Working Definition

Open pedagogy is teaching and learning that uses openness to support:

1. Student agency.
2. Knowledge creation.
3. Collaboration.
4. Revision and remixing.
5. Authentic audience.
6. Attribution and credit.
7. Consent and choice.
8. Contribution to a learning community or knowledge commons.
9. Care and harm reduction.

This does not mean every assignment must include all of these elements. A small open pedagogy move might focus on student agency and reuse. A larger project might include public sharing, open licensing, collaboration, and contribution to an existing OER.

The question is not:

“Is this perfectly open?”

The better question is:

How does this design give learners more agency, purpose, or participation than a traditional disposable assignment?

Principle 1: Agency

Open pedagogy should give students meaningful choices. Agency means students have some ability to shape the work, not only complete it.

Student agency might include choices about:

1. Topic.
2. Format.
3. Audience.
4. Role.
5. Examples.
6. Tools.
7. Whether work is shared publicly.
8. Whether work is attributed by name, pseudonym, group name, or anonymously.

Agency does not mean students make every decision. It means the assignment includes real choices that matter.

Example

Instead of requiring every student to write the same kind of essay, students might choose between creating a plain-language explainer, annotated resource guide, short tutorial, infographic, or discussion guide, all connected to the same learning outcome.

Principle 2: Participation

Open pedagogy treats students as participants in learning, not just recipients of course content.

Participation can happen inside a class, across a department, with community partners, or in public spaces. It may involve students helping create examples, improve resources, ask better questions, build study tools, revise instructions, or contribute to a shared class knowledge base.

Example

Students contribute examples and common misconceptions to a shared course glossary. Future students can use the glossary, and the next class can revise and improve it.

This is participation even if the glossary never becomes public.

Principle 3: Reuse and Revision

Open pedagogy often uses the permissions of OER to support reuse and revision. When materials are openly licensed, students and instructors may be able to revise, remix, update, translate, or redistribute them, depending on the license (Wiley & Hilton, 2018).

Reuse and revision can help students see knowledge as something that can be questioned and improved, not only memorized.

Example

Students review an openly licensed guide and suggest improvements for clarity, examples, accessibility, or representation. With consent and appropriate review, some revisions may be incorporated into a future version.

Principle 4: Authentic Audience

An authentic audience gives student work a purpose beyond “the instructor will grade this.” The audience might be classmates, future students, a department, a community organization, a professional group, or the public.

Authentic does not always mean public. Kimmons (2016) argues that openness in education can involve degrees of sharing and participation, and that educators should consider how open practices are designed rather than assuming publicness alone makes learning meaningful.

Example

Students create a “what I wish I knew before this assignment” guide for future students. The audience is authentic because the resource helps real learners, even if it stays inside the learning management system.

Principle 5: Attribution and Credit

Open pedagogy should teach students that knowledge work has creators. Attribution is part of ethical participation.

When students use openly licensed materials, they should learn how to credit creators. When students create something useful, they should also have options for how they are credited. Some may want their full name attached. Others may prefer a pseudonym, group attribution, or no public credit.

Example

A class-created resource might include a note such as:

Created by students in [Course Name], Spring 2026. Individual names are included only for students who chose public attribution.

This makes credit visible while respecting choice.

Principle 6: Consent and Choice

Consent is not an add-on to open pedagogy. It is part of the design.

Students should know:

1. What they are being asked to create.
2. Who may see it.
3. Whether it may be reused.
4. Whether it may be revised.
5. Whether their name will appear.
6. What license may apply.
7. What alternatives exist if they do not want to share.

Public sharing should be opt-in whenever possible. Students should be able to succeed in the course without being required to publish publicly or disclose personal experiences.

Example

An instructor invites students to contribute to a public resource, but students can also choose a private submission, an anonymous contribution, or a class-only version without penalty.

Principle 7: Care and Harm Reduction

Open pedagogy can be powerful, but it can also create risk. Public work can expose students to unwanted attention, identity-based harm, privacy concerns, data collection, or pressure to disclose personal experiences.

Care-centered open pedagogy asks:

1. Who benefits from this assignment?
2. Who carries risk?
3. What happens if a student says no?
4. Does the assignment require personal disclosure?
5. Can students participate safely and meaningfully in different ways?
6. Are accessibility needs considered from the start?
7. Is public sharing necessary, or is another audience enough?

Open pedagogy should not ask students to be vulnerable for the sake of making a course feel innovative. The learning design should protect student agency, dignity, and safety.

Common Misunderstandings

Misunderstanding 1: “Open Pedagogy Means Everything Is Public”

Public sharing is one option, not the whole point. The deeper goal is meaningful participation. A class-only glossary or future-student FAQ can still be open pedagogy if it gives student work a real purpose and creates something reusable.

Misunderstanding 2: “Students Must Use Open Licenses”

Students should understand their choices before applying an open license. If student work will be openly licensed, students need clear information, consent, and alternatives.

Misunderstanding 3: “Renewable Assignments Are Always Better”

Not always. Some learning needs private practice, reflection, drafting, failure, and revision. Disposable assignments can still be useful. The goal is to choose intentionally.

Misunderstanding 4: “Open Pedagogy Requires New Technology”

It does not. Open pedagogy can happen in a shared document, class discussion, learning management system page, spreadsheet, whiteboard, or simple guide.

Misunderstanding 5: “Open Pedagogy Is Less Rigorous”

Open pedagogy can be highly rigorous. Students may need to evaluate sources, write for an audience, revise work, collaborate, apply concepts, attribute materials, and explain their choices.Why Open Pedagogy Matters

When students know their work matters beyond the gradebook, learning can shift.

A systematic review by Clinton-Lisell (2021) found that open pedagogy research frequently highlights themes such as student agency, public impact, motivation, critical thinking, and deeper engagement. Students in reviewed studies reported feeling like contributors to knowledge, developing critical thinking through evaluating and synthesizing sources, and finding motivation in work connected to public or social value (Clinton-Lisell, 2021).

Open pedagogy can support:

1. Student pride and agency.
2. Motivation connected to purpose and audience.
3. Critical thinking and deeper learning.
4. Community-building.
5. Reusable learning resources.
6. Public or community impact.
7. Information literacy.

8. Collaboration.
9. Confidence.
10. A more participatory view of knowledge.

It can also reduce instructor burden over time when students help build, revise, annotate, or improve learning resources, but only when the work is designed ethically and sustainably.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Open pedagogy gives you a way to make student work more purposeful without redesigning everything.

For example, you might turn a private reading response into a class-created “common questions and explanations” guide that future students can use, while giving students choices about attribution and sharing.

What This Means for Students and Learners

Open pedagogy can give your work more audience, purpose, and impact.

For example, instead of completing an assignment that disappears after grading, you might help create a resource that supports classmates, future students, or a community audience.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

Open pedagogy creates opportunities to support ethical design, access, attribution, and student agency.

For example, you might help an instructor think through consent language, public/private options, licensing, accessibility, and where a student-created resource should live.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Open pedagogy can support program-level learning, collaboration, and shared resources.

For example, a department might invite students across multiple sections to contribute to a shared glossary or study guide while keeping public sharing optional.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Open pedagogy connects student learning to institutional values such as access, collaboration, civic engagement, and public impact.

For example, an institution might support open pedagogy through mini-grants, library publishing, student privacy guidance, accessibility support, and recognition for faculty who design care-centered co-creation projects.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Open pedagogy is not about making learning performative. It is about making learning more participatory, purposeful, and connected.

If learners help create something useful, revise something that already exists, or contribute to a shared learning resource, they are participating in knowledge-making.

Practice: Open Pedagogy Principle Check

Choose one assignment or activity.

For each principle, note whether it is already present, could be added, or may not fit.

Principle	Already Present?	Could Be Added?	Notes
Agency			
Participation			
Reuse or revision			
Authentic audience			
Attribution and credit			
Consent and choice			
Care and harm reduction			

Then answer:

1. What is one principle you could strengthen?
2. What is one risk you would need to reduce?
3. What is one choice students should have?
4. What is one small open pedagogy move you could try?

5.3 Designing Authentic Work Without Forcing Publicness

Open pedagogy often raises an immediate concern:

Does this mean students have to publish their work publicly?

No.

Public sharing can be one powerful form of open pedagogy, but it is not the only form. Authentic work is not defined by how public it is. Authentic work is defined by whether it has a meaningful purpose, audience, and use.

A student-created resource can matter inside a course. It can matter to future students. It can matter to a department, a campus group, a community partner, or a public audience. The key is that the audience and purpose are intentional and that students have meaningful choices about participation, attribution, and sharing.

Kimmons (2016) describes openness as existing in degrees rather than as a simple open/closed binary. That matters here. Open pedagogy does not require maximum exposure. It requires thoughtful design.

Authentic Does Not Always Mean Public

Authentic work means students are creating something that has a purpose beyond “the instructor will grade this.” That purpose can be public, but it does not have to be.

An authentic audience might be:

1. Classmates.
2. Future students.
3. A department or program.
4. A campus office.
5. A community partner.
6. A professional audience.
7. An open online audience.
8. The student’s own future self.

A private class glossary can be authentic if future students use it. A department resource guide can be authentic if it helps new majors. A public-facing explainer can be authentic if students choose that level of sharing and understand the risks.

The design question is not:

“How do I make this public?”

The better question is:

Who could this help, and what level of sharing is appropriate?

Three Audience Pathways

You can think about open pedagogy audiences in three broad pathways:

1. Private-renewable.
2. Campus-renewable.
3. Public-renewable.

These are not ranked from “least open” to “best.” They are different options for different contexts.

Private-Renewable

A private-renewable assignment creates something useful beyond the original submission while keeping the artifact within the course or learning space.

This can be a strong option when students are new to a topic, when the work involves early drafts or personal reflection, or when public sharing would create unnecessary risk.

Examples include:

1. A shared class glossary.
2. A study guide for the next exam.
3. A common misconceptions document.
4. A course FAQ for future students.
5. A troubleshooting guide for a difficult assignment.
6. A private annotated resource list.
7. A set of student-created practice questions.
8. A collective notes document.
9. A private set of worked examples.

Why Choose This Pathway?

Private-renewable work allows students to contribute to a shared learning resource without being publicly visible. It can still support agency, collaboration, revision, and future use.

Example

Students in a biology course create plain-language explanations of difficult concepts. The instructor reviews and revises the strongest explanations, then shares them with the next semester’s students as an optional study guide. Students can choose whether their names are included.

This is open pedagogy without public exposure.

Campus-Renewable

A campus-renewable assignment creates something useful beyond a single course and shares it within a department, program, campus unit, library, student organization, or institutional space.

This can be useful when the work has value beyond the class but does not need to be fully public.

Examples include:

1. A department resource guide.
2. A guide for new majors.
3. A campus-specific glossary.
4. A student-created orientation guide.
5. A library research guide contribution.
6. A collection of local case studies.
7. A program-level FAQ.
8. A resource map for a campus office.
9. A guide for student organizations.
10. A peer-reviewed collection of student tips.

Why Choose This Pathway?

Campus-renewable work gives students a real audience while keeping the project connected to a known community. It may reduce risk compared to public sharing while still giving the work purpose and visibility.

Example

Students in a social work course create an annotated guide to local community resources. With consent and review, the guide is shared with a campus support office. Students may choose named credit, group credit, or anonymous contribution.

The work has a real audience and practical value, but it does not require a fully public online presence.

Public-Renewable

A public-renewable assignment creates something that can be shared openly beyond the course or institution. This might involve public websites, open textbooks, Wikipedia, institutional repositories, Pressbooks, OER Commons, public blogs, or other open platforms.

Public-renewable work can be powerful, but it requires the most careful design because student work may be visible beyond the course.

Examples include:

1. A public explainer or guide.
2. A student-created open textbook chapter.
3. A Wikipedia contribution.
4. A public resource list.
5. A podcast episode or video tutorial.
6. A public-facing infographic.
7. An openly licensed case study.
8. A contribution to an existing OER.
9. A public exhibit or timeline.
10. A public data visualization or map.

Why Choose This Pathway?

Public-renewable work can help students contribute to a broader knowledge commons. It can also build digital literacy, public communication skills, attribution practices, civic engagement, and disciplinary participation.

Example

Students in a history course identify gaps in a public resource about local history. Working in teams, they create short, reviewed entries with citations. Students choose whether their work is published publicly, credited by name, credited as part of the class, or submitted privately as an alternative. Public sharing is meaningful here because the project has a clear purpose, review process, and consent pathway.

Designing for Choice

Choice is what makes open pedagogy safer and more ethical. Students should not feel that their grade depends on being publicly visible, personally vulnerable, or comfortable with online exposure.

Design choices can include:

1. Choice of topic.
2. Choice of format.
3. Choice of audience.
4. Choice of individual or group work.
5. Choice of named, anonymous, or pseudonymous attribution.
6. Choice of public or private sharing.
7. Choice of whether work can be reused in future semesters.
8. Choice of tool or medium, when possible.
9. Choice of personal or nonpersonal examples.

Choice does not mean an assignment has no structure. It means students have meaningful options within a clear learning design.

Example

All students complete the same learning task: create a short resource that explains one course concept.

Students may choose whether the final version is:

1. Submitted privately to the instructor.
2. Shared anonymously in the course.
3. Included in a future-student study guide.
4. Shared publicly with a Creative Commons license.

The learning outcome stays the same. The sharing pathway changes.

Consent Should Be Built In From the Start

Consent should not happen at the end after students have already completed the work. It should be part of the assignment design from the beginning.

Students should know:

1. What they are creating.
2. Who may see it.
3. Where it may be shared.
4. Whether it may be reused.
5. Whether it may be revised.
6. How they may be credited.
7. What license may apply.
8. What alternatives are available.
9. How they can decline public sharing without penalty.

Open pedagogy should not surprise students with visibility after the fact.

Sample Consent Language

You will create a learning resource connected to this course concept. You may choose to keep your work private, share it with future students anonymously, or opt in to public sharing after revision. Your grade will not depend on choosing public sharing.

This kind of language makes participation clearer and less coercive.

Publicness Is a Risk Ladder

Publicness is not one single step. It is a ladder. Each step creates different possibilities and different risks.

Level	Audience	Example	Risk Level
Private	Student and instructor	Private reflection	Lowest
Class-only	Current classmates	Shared class notes	Low
Future students	Later course sections	Study guide reused next semester	Low to moderate
Campus/community	Department, program, partner	Resource guide for campus office	Moderate
Public web	Anyone online	Public guide, blog, OER contribution	Highest

This ladder helps you choose the smallest audience that still serves the learning purpose. Not every assignment needs to climb to the top.

Design Moves That Reduce Harm

Open pedagogy should be designed with harm reduction in mind, especially when student work may be shared beyond the instructor.

Helpful design moves include:

1. Avoiding forced vulnerability.
2. Offering private alternatives.
3. Making public sharing opt-in.
4. Allowing anonymous or pseudonymous credit.
5. Using collective artifacts instead of individual exposure.
6. Avoiding required personal disclosure.
7. Letting students review before sharing.
8. Giving students a chance to revise.
9. Checking accessibility before publication.
10. Clarifying who maintains the resource.

11. Explaining how students can request removal or correction when possible.

These moves do not make every project risk-free, but they make the design more respectful and thoughtful.

Avoiding Forced Vulnerability

Some assignments ask students to connect learning to personal experience. That can be meaningful, but it can also create pressure to disclose identity, trauma, hardship, immigration status, disability, mental health experiences, family history, or other sensitive information.

Open pedagogy should not require students to make private experiences public in order to succeed.

Instead of:

“Share a personal story about a time you experienced discrimination and publish it on the course blog.”

Try:

“Choose one of three options: analyze a public case study, reflect privately on a personal experience, or create a resource explaining the concept for future students. Public sharing is optional.”

This still supports meaningful learning, but it does not force exposure.

Working With Community Audiences

Some open pedagogy projects involve community partners or public audiences. These projects can be meaningful, but they require extra care.

Before designing a community-facing project, ask:

1. Does the community partner actually want this artifact?
2. Who defined the need?
3. Who benefits from the work?
4. Will students receive guidance and support?
5. Will the artifact be reviewed before sharing?
6. Could the work misrepresent or harm the community?
7. Who maintains the artifact after the course ends?
8. Is this project realistic within the semester?

Community-connected work should be reciprocal, not extractive.

Authentic Work Design Template

Use this template to plan an authentic assignment without defaulting to public sharing.

Question	Your Notes
What will students create?	
What learning outcome does it support?	
Who could benefit from the artifact?	
What is the lowest-risk meaningful audience?	
What choices will students have?	
How will consent work?	
How will students be credited?	
What private alternative is available?	
Who reviews the work before sharing?	
Where will the artifact live?	
Who maintains it later?	

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You can design meaningful student work without requiring public sharing.

For example, a student-created study guide can stay inside a course site and still help future students. Public sharing can remain optional for students who want that experience.

What This Means for Students and Learners

You should have meaningful choices about how your work is shared and credited.

For example, you might choose to share a resource anonymously with future students but keep your name off any public version.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help instructors think through audience, consent, attribution, privacy, and platform choices before student work is shared.

For example, if an instructor wants students to publish public blog posts, you might help them design a private alternative, an opt-in consent process, and clear attribution options.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Authentic assignments can support shared learning resources without requiring all student work to become public.

For example, a department might invite students to contribute to a shared program FAQ or resource guide that stays within the institution.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Open pedagogy works best when institutions provide guidance around student privacy, accessibility, consent, and public sharing.

For example, an institution might support faculty with sample consent language, accessibility review, publishing workflows, and student rights guidance.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Meaningful audience does not have to mean the whole internet.

A resource can be valuable if it helps one future class, one student group, one department, or one community partner.

Practice: Choose the Smallest Meaningful Audience

Choose one assignment or activity that could become more authentic.

Answer:

1. What will students create?
2. Who could benefit from it?
3. What is the smallest audience that would still make the work meaningful?
4. Could the work stay private-renewable?
5. Could it be campus-renewable?
6. Would public sharing add meaningful value, or just risk?
7. What choices should students have?
8. What consent language would you include?
9. What private alternative would be available?
10. Who would review the work before sharing?

5.4 Tools and Formats for Co-Creation

Co-creation does not require an elaborate platform. It does not need to begin with a public website, a polished textbook, or a large-scale class project.

In many cases, the best co-creation tool is the one that students can actually access, understand, and use without the tool becoming the assignment. The purpose of the tool is to support learning, collaboration, revision, and contribution. It should not distract from those goals.

This section focuses on practical tools and formats for co-creation: simple ways students can help build, improve, annotate, organize, or revise learning materials.

Start With the Artifact, Not the Tool

Before choosing a platform, decide what students are creating.

Ask:

1. What will students help build or improve?
2. Who is the audience?
3. Will the artifact stay private, campus-facing, or public?
4. Does the artifact need to be editable over time?
5. Will students work individually, in pairs, or as a group?
6. Does the tool require students to create accounts?
7. Can the artifact be exported or preserved?

8. Who will maintain it after the course ends?

A simple shared document may be better than a more powerful platform if it better fits the learning goal, privacy needs, and maintenance plan.

Low-Lift, High-Impact Co-Creation Formats

The following formats can work in many disciplines and do not require major course redesign.

Learning Management System

A learning management system can be a good starting place for private-renewable work.

Use it for:

1. Class-only guides.
2. Private discussion-based resources.
3. Shared course notes.
4. Future-student FAQs.
5. Pilot versions of student-created resources.
6. Class glossaries.
7. Assignment troubleshooting guides.

Watch for:

1. Limited public access.
2. Student access ending after the course.
3. Difficulty sharing beyond one section.
4. Content getting trapped in the course shell.
5. Difficulty preserving or exporting student contributions.

Shared Documents

Shared documents are often the easiest way to begin co-creation. Google Docs, Microsoft Word Online, and similar tools can support real-time collaboration, commenting, and revision. Google describes Docs as an online word processor for creating and collaborating on documents in real time (Google, n.d.).

Use shared documents for:

1. Glossaries.
2. Collaborative notes.
3. Draft guides.
4. Study resources.
5. Peer feedback.
6. Class-authored FAQs.

7. Common misconceptions guides.
8. Group-authored explainers.

Watch for:

1. Unclear sharing permissions.
2. Accidental editing.
3. Version confusion.
4. Student account requirements.
5. Long-term ownership if stored in one person's account.
6. Accessibility of formatting, headings, tables, and comments.

Spreadsheets

Spreadsheets work well when students are collecting, comparing, tagging, or organizing information.

Use spreadsheets for:

1. Resource maps.
2. Annotated bibliographies.
3. Practice question banks.
4. Glossaries.
5. Accessibility review logs.
6. Case study libraries.
7. Data collection.
8. Source comparison tables.

Watch for:

1. Crowded layouts.
2. Inconsistent entries.
3. Accessibility of complex tables.
4. Need for clear column instructions.
5. Difficulty reading on mobile devices.
6. Confusion about sorting, filtering, or editing.

Pressbooks

Pressbooks can support larger, more polished resources such as open books, guides, workbooks, and edited collections. The Pressbooks Directory helps users discover open books published across Pressbooks networks (Pressbooks, n.d.).

Use Pressbooks for:

1. Open textbooks.

2. Course guides.
3. Student-created collections.
4. Workbooks.
5. Public or campus-facing resources.
6. Multi-chapter projects.
7. Revised or remixed OER.

Watch for:

1. Need for training.
2. Editing permissions.
3. Accessibility review.
4. Versioning.
5. Maintenance responsibility.
6. Publishing workflows.
7. Student consent if work is public-facing.

OER Commons or Repository Collections

OER Commons and other repositories can help organize or share collections of resources. OER Commons supports discovery and organization of open and freely available teaching and learning materials (Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education [ISKME], n.d.).

Use repositories for:

1. Curated resource collections.
2. Open teaching materials.
3. Shared department collections.
4. Publicly discoverable resources.
5. Teaching activities.
6. Adapted OER.
7. Resource lists connected to specific topics or outcomes.

Watch for:

1. Metadata quality.
2. License accuracy.
3. Long-term maintenance.
4. Whether students need accounts to contribute.
5. Review processes before public sharing.

Public Websites or Guides

Public websites, library guides, institutional pages, and other web-based guides can be useful for campus-facing or public-facing resources.

Use them for:

1. Resource guides.
2. Public explainers.
3. Department collections.
4. Student-created guides.
5. Community resource lists.
6. Digital exhibits.
7. Open project pages.
8. Public-facing FAQs.

Watch for:

1. Institutional publishing policies.
2. Review and approval workflows.
3. Accessibility.
4. Maintenance.
5. Student privacy and consent.
6. Who can edit or update the site later.

Choosing a Tool by Audience

The audience should shape the tool choice.

If the audience is…	Consider using…	Why
Current class only	LMS page, shared doc, private discussion, class folder	Keeps the work contained and lower-risk
Future students	Course page, shared guide, PDF, Pressbooks draft	Supports reuse across semesters
Department or campus	Institutional guide, webpage, shared folder, repository	Makes the resource easier to find and maintain

Public audience	Pressbooks, public website, repository, OER Commons, Wikipedia	Supports broader access and reuse
Collaborators or project team	Shared doc, spreadsheet, Zotero group, project folder	Supports drafting and revision

Choosing a Tool by Student Experience

Before selecting a tool, think about what students will actually experience.

Ask:

1. Will students need a new account?
2. Is the tool mobile-friendly?
3. Does the tool work with assistive technology?
4. Can students use it with low bandwidth?
5. Can students contribute privately or anonymously if needed?
6. Will students need training before they can participate?
7. Can the instructor review work before it is shared?
8. Can the work be exported, backed up, or preserved?

A tool that creates too many access barriers may not be the right choice, even if it looks useful.

Simple Tool Options and Project Types

Class Glossary

Students define key terms in plain language, add examples, and connect terms to course concepts.

Good for:

1. Vocabulary-heavy courses.
2. Introductory courses.
3. Review and exam preparation.
4. Courses where students struggle with jargon.

Possible formats:

1. Shared document.
2. Spreadsheet.
3. Learning management system page.

4. Pressbooks chapter.
5. Course wiki.

Example:

Students each contribute one glossary entry with a definition, example, and “common confusion” note. The class reviews and revises entries together before the glossary is shared with future students.

Study Guide for Future Students

Students create explanations, practice prompts, concept maps, or “what helped me understand this” notes for students who will take the course later.

Good for:

1. Gateway courses.
2. Courses with difficult threshold concepts.
3. Exam review.
4. Student success and belonging.

Possible formats:

1. Shared document.
2. Course page.
3. PDF guide.
4. Pressbooks webbook.
5. Department resource page.

Example:

At the end of each unit, students add one study tip, one concept explanation, and one practice question to a future-student guide.

Practice Question Bank

Students write quiz questions, answer explanations, examples, and distractor explanations. This helps students practice content and think about how learning is assessed.

Good for:

1. Test preparation.
2. Concept review.
3. Peer learning.
4. Courses with frequent quizzes or exams.

Possible formats:

1. Spreadsheet.
2. Quiz tool draft bank.
3. Shared document.
4. LMS question bank.
5. Study guide.

Example:

Each student writes one multiple-choice question and explains why the correct answer is correct and why the distractors are incorrect. The instructor reviews questions before sharing selected examples.

Resource Map or Annotated Resource List

Students find and annotate resources connected to a topic, community, discipline, or course concept.

Good for:

1. Research skills.
2. Information literacy.
3. Discipline exploration.
4. Community-based learning.
5. Open resource discovery.

Possible formats:

1. Spreadsheet.
2. Zotero group library.
3. Institutional guide.
4. OER Commons collection.
5. Shared document.
6. Public or private website.

Example:

Students build an annotated resource list on a local or disciplinary issue. Each entry includes a short description, audience, source type, and credibility note.

Zotero can support this kind of work because it allows users to collect, organize, annotate, cite, and share research materials (Zotero, n.d.). OER Commons also supports searching, filtering, and organizing teaching and learning materials by criteria such as subject, level, material type, and conditions of use (ISKME, n.d.).

FAQ or “What I Wish I Knew” Guide

Students create guidance for future learners based on common challenges, assignment expectations, or course navigation.

Good for:

1. First-year courses.
2. Gateway courses.
3. Online courses.
4. Complex assignments.
5. Student success support.

Possible formats:

1. Course page.
2. Shared document.
3. PDF.
4. Department webpage.
5. Pressbooks chapter.

Example:

Students answer the prompt, “What do you wish you understood before starting this project?” The instructor curates responses into a future-student FAQ.

Mini Case Study Library

Students create short case studies that connect course concepts to real-world examples.

Good for:

1. Applied disciplines.
2. Professional programs.
3. Social sciences.
4. Humanities.
5. Business.
6. Health sciences.
7. Education.

Possible formats:

1. Shared folder.
2. Pressbooks book.
3. Course website.
4. Learning management system page.
5. Spreadsheet with links.

Example:

Students in a public health course create short case studies about local health communication campaigns. Each case includes context, key stakeholders, course concepts, and discussion questions.

Collaborative Annotation

Students annotate readings together by adding questions, comments, definitions, examples, and connections to course concepts. Tools such as Hypothesis can support collaborative web annotation (Hypothesis, n.d.).

Good for:

1. Close reading.
2. Source evaluation.
3. Collaborative sense-making.
4. Reading-heavy courses.
5. Building shared notes.

Possible formats:

1. Annotation tool.
2. Shared document.
3. Course discussion.
4. LMS-integrated annotation activity.

Example:

Students annotate an open textbook chapter by identifying confusing terms, adding examples, and connecting concepts to current events or course themes.

Public Knowledge Projects

Students contribute to public knowledge spaces such as Wikipedia, open textbooks, public guides, digital exhibits, or community-facing resources.

Good for:

1. Public scholarship.
2. Research and citation practice.
3. Community engagement.
4. Digital literacy.
5. Advanced courses with strong scaffolding.

Possible formats:

1. Wikipedia dashboard.
2. Pressbooks.
3. Public website.
4. Institutional repository.
5. Digital exhibit tool.

Example:

Students improve a Wikipedia entry using credible sources, clear citations, peer review, and instructor guidance. Public sharing is optional or supported through structured alternatives.

A Low-Risk Co-Creation Ladder

If you are unsure where to start, move gradually.

Level 1: Private Contribution

Students create something only the instructor sees.

Example: Students submit one study question privately.

Level 2: Class Contribution

Students contribute to a shared class resource.

Example: Students add terms to a class glossary.

Level 3: Future-Student Resource

Students create something that can help future sections.

Example: Students contribute to a “what I wish I knew” guide.

Level 4: Campus or Department Resource

Students create something for a known campus audience.

Example: Students build a department resource map.

Level 5: Public Contribution

Students opt in to sharing work openly.

Example: Students contribute to a public guide, open textbook, or community-facing website.

You do not need to start at Level 5. Many strong open pedagogy projects begin at Level 2 or 3. This ladder helps you choose the smallest audience that still serves the learning purpose.

Tool Choice and Consent

The tool itself can affect consent. If students are asked to create accounts, publish under their real names, or work in a public space, the assignment carries more risk.

Before using a tool, decide:

1. Whether students can participate without public accounts.
2. Whether students can use pseudonyms.
3. Whether contributions can be reviewed before publication.
4. Whether students can choose a private pathway.
5. Whether the platform allows content removal or revision.
6. Whether students understand what will happen to their work.
7. Whether the platform collects data or displays student profiles.

If a tool makes consent difficult, choose a different tool or a more private version of the activity.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

You can begin with tools your students already know.

For example, instead of launching a public website, you might start with a shared class glossary in a course page or shared document, then decide later whether a revised version should be shared with future students.

What This Means for Students and Learners

The tool should support your learning, not become a barrier.

For example, if a platform requires public posting, real-name attribution, or a new account, you should understand why and have meaningful alternatives when possible.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help instructors choose tools that match the audience, privacy level, accessibility needs, and maintenance plan.

For example, if an instructor wants students to co-create a public guide, you might help compare a web guide, Pressbooks book, course page, shared document, or institutional repository.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Shared tools and formats can make student-created resources easier to sustain.

For example, a department might use one shared template for student-created study guides across gateway courses so resources are consistent and easier to update.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Co-creation projects need infrastructure, not just enthusiasm.

For example, institutions can support open pedagogy by providing accessible platforms, privacy guidance, publishing support, and clear workflows for student-created materials.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Co-creation can start small.

A class-created FAQ, glossary, or resource list can be a meaningful contribution, even if it never leaves the course.

Practice: Choose a Co-Creation Tool

Choose one possible co-creation project.

Complete:

1. What will students create or improve?
2. Who is the audience?
3. Is the audience private, future-student, campus-facing, or public?
4. What tool or format could support the artifact?
5. Does the tool require accounts?
6. Can students participate privately or anonymously?
7. Is the tool accessible?
8. Can the work be reviewed before sharing?
9. Can the artifact be exported or preserved?
10. Who will maintain it?
11. What is the lowest-risk tool that still supports the learning goal?

5.5 Ethics, Power, and Care in Co-Creation

Open pedagogy can be powerful. It can help students see themselves as knowledge creators, not just knowledge consumers. It can make learning more participatory, meaningful, and connected to real audiences.

But open pedagogy can also cause harm if it ignores power, consent, privacy, accessibility, or student choice.

When students are asked to create, revise, publish, or share work beyond the instructor, the assignment changes. The work may have a longer life. The audience may expand. The student's name, ideas, identity, or labor may become visible to others. That visibility can create opportunity, but it can also create risk.

DeRosa and Robison (2017) describe open pedagogy as a shift toward participatory learning and shared knowledge creation. Wiley and Hilton (2018) describe OER-enabled pedagogy as teaching and learning practices made possible by open permissions. Those possibilities matter, but they need to be designed with care.

Openness should increase agency, not reduce it.

Care-centered co-creation asks a simple but important question:

How can students contribute meaningfully without being pressured, exposed, or used?

Open pedagogy should never require students to be publicly vulnerable in order to succeed.

Power Is Always in the Room

Instructors and students do not enter co-creation on equal terms. Instructors assign work, evaluate performance, control grades, and often decide what counts as successful participation. That power does not disappear because an assignment is called "open" or "collaborative."

This matters because students may feel pressure to say yes, even when they are uncomfortable.

They may feel pressure to:

1. Publish publicly.
2. Use their real name.
3. Share personal experiences.
4. Represent a community or identity group.
5. Agree to open licensing.
6. Contribute labor to a resource that benefits others.
7. Participate in a tool or platform they do not trust.
8. Take risks they do not fully understand.

A care-centered design does not assume consent just because students complete the assignment. It creates real options.

Consent Is a Design Feature

Consent should be built into the assignment from the beginning. It should not be added at the end, after students have already completed the work.

Students should understand what they are being asked to create, who may see it, where it may live, whether it may be reused, how they may be credited, and what alternatives they have.

Students should know:

1. What they are creating.
2. Why they are creating it.
3. Who the intended audience is.
4. Where the work may be shared.
5. Whether the work may be reused or revised.
6. Whether a Creative Commons license may apply.
7. How attribution or credit will work.
8. Whether they can choose anonymity or pseudonymity.
9. Whether they can opt out of public sharing.
10. What private alternative is available.
11. Whether their choice affects their grade.

Consent is strongest when students can say no without penalty.

Sample Consent Language

You will create a learning resource connected to this course. After revision, you may choose whether your work remains private, is shared anonymously with future students, or is considered for public sharing. Your grade will not depend on choosing public sharing.

This kind of language helps students understand that sharing is a choice, not a hidden requirement.

Public Sharing Should Be Opt-In Whenever Possible

Public work can be meaningful, but it carries different risks than private or course-only work. Once student work is public, it may be seen, copied, archived, criticized, or circulated beyond the original course context.

For that reason, public sharing should usually be opt-in, not automatic.

Public sharing needs:

1. Clear explanation.
2. Student choice.
3. Review before publication.
4. Attribution options.
5. Privacy options.
6. An alternative pathway.
7. A plan for removal or revision when possible.
8. A conversation about licensing.

Open pedagogy is not stronger just because the work is public. It is stronger when students understand the choice and can participate safely.

Attribution, Credit, and Student Ownership

Students create copyrightable work too. Their essays, videos, images, presentations, podcasts, infographics, guides, and other creative projects may be copyrighted to them when they create and fix them in a tangible form.

That means instructors should be careful about reusing, sharing, or openly licensing student work. Students should know what rights they have and what they are being asked to permit.

Credit options might include:

1. Full name attribution.
2. First name only.
3. Pseudonym.
4. Anonymous contribution.
5. Group attribution.
6. Class attribution.
7. No public attribution.

Example

A class-created guide might say:

Created by students in [Course Name], Spring 2026. Individual contributors are credited by name only when they chose named attribution.

This gives credit without assuming all students want the same level of visibility.

If students are invited to apply an open license to their work, they need time and plain-language explanation. Creative Commons licenses are generally irrevocable for copies already shared under the license, so students should understand what that means before choosing one (Creative Commons, n.d.).

Avoiding Free Labor

Co-creation should not turn students into unpaid content producers for the instructor, department, institution, or public.

The difference between meaningful co-creation and extraction often comes down to purpose, choice, credit, and benefit.

Ask:

1. Does this assignment primarily support student learning?
2. Are students gaining skills, feedback, agency, or meaningful experience?
3. Are students credited appropriately?
4. Can students decline public sharing?
5. Who benefits from the final artifact?
6. Will the artifact be used in ways students understand?
7. Is the work replacing paid labor or institutional responsibility?
8. Is the workload reasonable for the course level and credit hours?

A student-created guide, glossary, or resource can be appropriate when it supports learning and students understand how it may be used. It becomes more concerning when students are expected to create institutional resources without choice, credit, review, or meaningful learning value.

Privacy and Digital Risk

Digital spaces are not neutral. Public platforms can expose student work to search engines, screenshots, comments, harassment, data collection, or future audiences the student did not imagine.

Before asking students to use a public tool or platform, consider:

1. Does the platform require real names?
2. Does it require a public profile?
3. Does it collect personal data?
4. Can work be deleted later?
5. Can students use pseudonyms?
6. Can students participate without creating an account?
7. Will the work appear in search results?
8. Could the work affect students' safety, employment, immigration status, family privacy, or online identity?
9. Does the assignment have a nonpublic alternative?

A tool may be useful, but if it forces unnecessary exposure, it may not be the right tool for the assignment.

Accessibility Is Part of Care

Open pedagogy should be accessible to the students participating and to the people who may use the final artifact. Accessibility is not only a technical requirement. It is part of whether the contribution can actually serve others.

The BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit offers practical guidance for accessible open textbooks and learning materials, including images, links, tables, multimedia, formulas, font size, color contrast, and accessibility statements (Coolidge et al., 2018).

Ask:

1. Can students complete the assignment using accessible tools?
2. Are multiple formats allowed when appropriate?
3. Are instructions clear and readable?
4. Are videos captioned?
5. Are images described when they carry meaning?
6. Are tables simple and accessible?
7. Are color and visuals used accessibly?
8. Can students use assistive technologies?
9. Will the final artifact be accessible to future users?

If students are creating materials for others, accessibility should be part of the teaching and revision process. Students may need examples, checklists, and support.

Cultural Safety and Representation

Co-creation often invites students to bring examples, perspectives, experiences, and community knowledge into the learning space. That can enrich a course, but it also needs care.

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes that students' cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and frames of reference can be important strengths in learning (Gay, 2018). But educators should not assume students are responsible for representing an entire identity, community, or experience.

Ask:

1. Are students being asked to speak for a group?
2. Are students being asked to educate others about their identity?
3. Could the assignment tokenize students?
4. Are multiple perspectives included?
5. Are students allowed to choose public, private, or nonpersonal examples?
6. Does the assignment avoid stereotypes and deficit framing?
7. Will community-based work be reviewed for accuracy and respect?

Representation should expand the learning environment, not place unfair burdens on individual students.

Review Before Sharing

Student-created work should usually be reviewed before being shared with future students, a campus audience, or the public. Review protects students, future users, and the quality of the resource.

Review may include:

1. Content accuracy.
2. Accessibility.
3. Privacy.
4. Attribution.
5. Representation.
6. Clarity.
7. Tone.
8. Licensing.
9. Safety.
10. Alignment with the learning goal.

A review process also helps students learn that public or reusable knowledge work usually improves through feedback and revision.

A Care-Centered Co-Creation Checklist

Before asking students to create something reusable, shared, or public, ask:

Question	Why It Matters
Who benefits from this artifact?	Clarifies purpose and avoids extraction
Who carries risk?	Identifies privacy, identity, and exposure concerns
Is public sharing necessary?	Prevents unnecessary visibility
Can students opt out without penalty?	Supports real consent

How will students be credited?	Respects authorship and choice
Is there a private alternative?	Protects students who cannot or do not want to share
Are students asked to disclose personal experiences?	Reduces forced vulnerability
Is the tool accessible and privacy-conscious?	Supports equitable participation
Who reviews the work before sharing?	Protects quality and student safety
Who maintains the artifact later?	Prevents abandoned or misleading resources

Sample Assignment Language

Here is a short example you can adapt:

In this assignment, you will create a short learning resource connected to one course concept. The purpose is to help you explain the concept clearly and consider how your work might support other learners. After revision, you may choose one sharing option: keep your work private, share it anonymously with future students, share it with named attribution inside the course, or opt in to public sharing. Your grade is based on the assignment criteria, not on which sharing option you choose.

This language makes the assignment's purpose clear while separating grading from publicness.

Stakeholder Perspectives

What This Means for Faculty and Educators

Care-centered design helps you invite student contribution without creating unnecessary risk.

For example, if students create a future-student guide, you can make sharing optional, allow anonymous contributions, review the guide before reuse, and provide a private alternative.

What This Means for Students and Learners

You should understand how your work may be used and have choices about sharing and attribution.

For example, you might choose to contribute anonymously to a shared class resource while keeping your individual draft private.

What This Means for Staff and Support Professionals

You can help instructors think through the practical risks before student work is shared.

For example, you might help review assignment language for consent, privacy, attribution, accessibility, platform choice, and student alternatives.

What This Means for Department and Program Leaders

Co-created resources can support programs, but students should not be treated as unpaid content producers.

For example, if a department wants students to contribute to a public resource, it should provide clear review processes, consent options, credit practices, and maintenance support.

What This Means for Institutional Leaders

Ethical open pedagogy needs institutional support.

For example, institutions can support open pedagogy by providing sample consent language, student privacy guidance, accessibility support, publishing workflows, and consultation on licensing and attribution.

What This Means for Anyone Curious

Co-creation is strongest when people know what they are agreeing to.

Before sharing someone's contribution, ask whether they understand where it will appear, who may use it, how they will be credited, and whether they can choose another option.

Practice: Envision Collaborative OER

Open does not mean solo. Collaboration can make OER more sustainable and meaningful by distributing the workload, widening expertise, and inviting students into real knowledge-making.

Collaboration can:

1. Distribute effort so one person is not carrying the project alone.
2. Bring in diverse expertise, including instructional design, research skills, subject knowledge, lived experience, accessibility, and technical support.
3. Improve relevance by including perspectives closer to learner needs.
4. Increase sustainability so the resource can grow over time instead of stalling out.

Potential collaborators include:

1. Students, who can co-create, curate, annotate, revise, build study supports, and provide learner-centered perspective.
2. Colleagues, who can share units, align outcomes, co-develop assessments, and peer review materials.
3. Librarians, who can support resource discovery, licensing, attribution, and research.
4. Instructional designers or educational technology staff, who can support course design, accessibility, multimedia, and publishing tools.
5. Community partners, who can provide real audiences, authentic problems, and local context.

Students as co-creators can deepen engagement, strengthen critical thinking, build information literacy, increase confidence and agency, and improve resources by adding clarity, examples, and perspectives from people who just learned the material.

Practical Ways to Start Without Overhauling Your Course

You do not need a huge project for this to be meaningful. A good first step is one small, structured contribution.

Try one:

1. Collaborative annotation of a chapter or article, where students add comments, questions, examples, or definitions.
2. Student-created study supports, such as a glossary, practice quiz, or common misconceptions guide.
3. Resource curation, where students build an annotated list of high-quality sources for a unit.
4. Micro-content creation, such as short explainers, worked examples, brief videos, or visual guides.
5. Renewable assignment design, where students create something future students can use.
6. Peer review of class-created materials.
7. Small accessibility improvements to an existing resource.
8. Student-generated examples or case studies.

Choose a first project that is small enough to complete in one unit, with clear expectations and a simple rubric.

Practice: Envision Collaborative OER

Think about a course, workshop, training, or learning experience where students or participants could help create, adapt, or improve a resource.

Step 1: Pick a Focus

Choose one:

1. A resource learners currently use, such as a study guide, glossary, practice set, or unit materials.
2. A pain point in the course, such as a confusing topic, weak examples, or missing practice.
3. A project learners already do, such as a presentation, paper, discussion, lab, or reflection.

Step 2: Sketch the Collaboration

Answer in short bullets:

1. Student roles: What role or roles could students play? Researcher, author, curator, editor, explainer, peer reviewer, designer, tester, accessibility reviewer, or contributor?
2. Project type: What kind of collaborative open project fits best? Annotation, study support, resource collection, multimedia, case study, wiki entry, guide, glossary, or practice bank?
3. Open upgrade: Could a past assignment become renewable? What would make it useful to others?
4. Support and structure: What scaffolding would students need? Template, rubric, examples, checkpoints, peer review, consent options, accessibility checklist, or attribution guide?

Step 3: Make It Doable

Choose one starter version you could actually try:

1. One unit, not the whole course.
2. One deliverable, not five.
3. One place to share, even if it is internal to start.
4. One review process.
5. One clear choice point for students.

Step 4: Capture Your Plan

Write three to five lines:

1. What students will create or improve.
2. Who it is for: future students, peers, campus audience, community partner, or public audience.
3. Where it could live: LMS, OER platform, shared folder, guide, website, repository, or internal resource.
4. What success looks like: quality criteria, rubric idea, usefulness, clarity, accessibility, or learner feedback.
5. What consent and sharing options students will have.

Reflection: Collaboration Fit Check

Consider:

1. Who could support this OER work, such as students, librarians, colleagues, instructional designers, accessibility specialists, or community partners?
2. What could each collaborator contribute?
3. What roles could students realistically play in this collaboration?
4. Which open pedagogy approach feels most doable in your context right now?
5. What would make this collaboration sustainable, such as time, structure, templates, peer review, licensing support, or hosting?
6. What is one collaborative step you could take that would reduce workload and increase student ownership?

There are no wrong answers here. The goal is to move from “collaboration sounds nice” to one concrete possibility you could build on.

Topic 5 Closing Reflection

You have now explored open pedagogy as a set of teaching practices that invite learners into knowledge-making. You considered disposable and renewable assignments, core principles of open pedagogy, authentic work without forced publicness, practical tools and formats for co-creation, and the ethical responsibilities that come with student-created work.

Take a few moments to reflect:

1. What is one assignment that could become more renewable?
2. What is one student-created artifact that could help future learners?
3. What audience would be meaningful without creating unnecessary risk?
4. What choices should students have about sharing, credit, and publicness?
5. What tool or format would be simple enough to support the work without becoming a barrier?
6. What consent language would students need before participating?
7. What review process would protect students and future users?
8. What support would make this co-creation project sustainable?
9. What is one small, low-risk open pedagogy move you could try?

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Theoretical and Design References

The following references informed the broader design philosophy behind *Open Education in Practice*, including its attention to adult learning, care-centered facilitation, critical pedagogy, communities of practice, implementation support, reflective practitioner inquiry, and sustainable program design. They are not required background reading for using the curriculum, but they help situate the curriculum's "in practice" approach.

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Generative AI Delegation Acknowledgment

I, Megan Brittany-Fruia Zara, used generative AI tools as delegated support during the development of this curriculum. I conducted the underlying research manually and maintained my own research trail, resource tracking, notes, reflections, and original drafting in Notion.

Tools Used

Notion AI was used within Notion during curriculum development to help retrieve and synthesize my existing notes and drafts, support outlining, and support iterative expansion by prompting me with questions to clarify, deepen, and complete sections.

Microsoft Copilot was used after I created base content to assist with reformatting, rephrasing, and revision for audience fit, with the final language decisions made by me.

Model Disclosure Note

Notion AI and Microsoft Copilot do not provide a single stable, user-visible model version identifier for every interaction. At the time of writing, May 2026, vendor documentation described these tools as using large language model systems that may include GPT-class and, in some Microsoft Copilot experiences, Claude-class model options. Because model availability, routing, and product integrations can change over time, this statement identifies the tools used and the nature of the delegated tasks rather than claiming a single fixed model version for every interaction.

Delegated Tasks

AI tools were used for limited delegated support in the following areas:

Writing and editing: outlining, reorganizing, summarizing, rephrasing, reformatting, and stylistic revision.

Supervision and quality support: question-based prompting to identify gaps, strengthen clarity, and maintain forward progress during drafting.

Data and literature management, limited to my own materials: locating and pulling from my own stored notes and tracked references. AI tools were not used to conduct the primary literature search.

Human Responsibility and Verification

All substantive decisions, interpretations, and final content were made by me. I reviewed and edited AI-assisted outputs, verified citations and factual claims against the original sources I collected, and ensured the final work reflects my intent and professional judgment.

AI-assisted text was not accepted automatically. It was reviewed, revised, rejected, expanded, or rewritten as needed. I remained responsible for the structure, argument, instructional design, citations, tone, and final language of the curriculum.

Purpose and Accommodation Context

These delegations were used as a support strategy for executive function and attention/focus needs: not to replace authorship or critical thinking, but to reduce friction in drafting, sustain momentum, and help me do the work more thoroughly and consistently.

This disclosure is included in alignment with open education values of transparency, accountability, accessibility, and ethical knowledge creation.

Accessibility Statement

Open Education in Practice was developed with accessibility and usability in mind. The goal is for this curriculum to be readable, navigable, and adaptable across learning contexts.

This PDF version has been prepared with attention to:

- Clear heading structure.
- Readable language and layout.
- Descriptive section titles.
- Consistent formatting.
- High-contrast, text-first design where possible.
- Links written in a way that identifies their destination or purpose.
- Activities and reflection prompts that can be adapted into multiple formats.

Because this is a PDF version of a living curriculum, accessibility may improve across future versions and formats. Future adaptations may include editable documents, web-based versions, Canvas modules, slide decks, worksheets, and other accessible formats.

If you identify an accessibility issue, need the curriculum in another format, or would like to share an accessibility improvement, please contact:

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Accessibility is part of open practice. Feedback, correction, and revision are welcome.