

Using Open Educational Resources in Courses

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What are Open Educational Resources?

Open Educational Resources (OER) “are 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”¹. In addition to being freely available, OER allow the user to use the materials in 5 ways called the 5Rs: **Reuse**, **Repurpose**, **Remix**, **Redistribute**, and/or **Retain**.



While OER materials are often textbooks, these materials can also be lectures, slides, assignments, tests, video, audio, or any other material that is free to use and due to its public domain status or Creative Commons license allows the material to be used with the “5 Rs”.

Adopt/Adapt/Create

There are 3 main ways to use OER in a course:

Adopt: Faculty can adopt an existing text or course material and freely use it in their course.

Adapt: Faculty can adapt an existing OER text or course material and freely use it. The material can be adapted in any way (removing content, taking OER content from different sources, or rearranging the content).

Create: A faculty member can create their own OER material and license it with a Creative Commons License that allows for the item to be freely shared and remixed.

Why Use OER?

The ability to customize, remix, and redistribute these educational materials, can reduce costs to students, promote ADEI initiatives, improve retention and student success, promote creativity and collaboration, and lower barriers to education.

Cost and Affordability

According to a survey conducted in 2019, “80% of Colorado College students surveyed had forgone buying a textbook because it was too expensive”. Since OER are free, students can access course materials without needing to pay for increasingly expensive textbooks and course materials.

¹ *Open Educational Resources* | UNESCO. (n.d.). Retrieved March 13, 2023, from <https://www.unesco.org/en/open-educational-resources>

1st Day Access

In addition to students forgoing textbooks and course materials due to cost, many students that do purchase course materials may not have access to the materials on the first day of class. Studies have shown that students that have the required course materials on day one, perform better academically than those students that don't².

One Text, Many Formats

OER texts and materials can be printed or digital. Since there is no cost to the student, they can have the course material on many digital devices, as well as have a printed copy. Since students are able to retain OER materials, they can keep the text or course material and refer to it throughout their academic and professional careers.

Accessibility

Since OER materials allow for the free reuse, revision, and redistribution, course materials can be converted to braille, audio, video, or other accessible formats, and freely shared without restrictions that a traditional course material or text might have.

Equitable, Inclusive, and Anti-oppressive Teaching

OER's free to use model lowers barriers to students, including low-income or first-generation students, by eliminating the added costs of textbooks. Additionally, the ability to revise and remix content, gives faculty the freedom to include diverse and marginalized voices in the course texts, assignments, and exercises³.

Opportunities for Creativity and Collaboration

Faculty can collaborate with other faculty, including networks of OER practitioners to work together to create and remix OER materials. Open pedagogical practices can be used in the classroom to include students in the OER creation process.

How do I Find Open Educational Resources?

There are many ways to identify and find OER texts and materials. Three of the major OER platforms include:

- OER Commons: <https://www.oercommons.org/>
- Open Textbook Library: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>
- OpenStax: <https://openstax.org/>

Getting Started

There are many ways to get started investigating and using OER. The Tutt Library has a guide about OER at Colorado College: <https://coloradocollege.libguides.com/oer> . This guide has information and links to information about the Colorado College Open Education Curriculum Development Grant Program, links to OER repositories, and information about OER consultations at the Tutt Library.

² Baker, R. S., Lindrum, D., Lindrum, M. J., & Perkowski, D. (2015). *Analyzing Early At-Risk Factors in Higher Education e- Learning Courses*.

³ Jenkins, J. J., Sánchez, L. A., Schraedley, M. A. K., Hannans, J., Navick, N., & Young, J. (2020). Textbook Broke: Textbook Affordability as a Social Justice Issue. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 2020(1), 3. <https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.549>