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# When Open Isn't Accessible

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# When Open Isn't Accessible

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**11%** of students in postsecondary institutions have **self-identified** as having a disability.<sup>2</sup>

## Why Accessibility?

**"Accessibility is all about our ability to engage with, use, participate in, and belong to, the world around us."**<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of open access is to **remove barriers** to education. This includes barriers related to accessibility. Accessibility, as it relates to open educational resources, means that your OER should be accessible to a variety of users - learners with disabilities, the aging population, and those for whom English is a second language.

Designed correctly, OER's create **equal learning opportunities** for all students; designed poorly, they create new barriers to participation. Furthermore, institutions of higher education have a **legal and ethical responsibility** to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to information both online and in the classroom.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are the legal and technical standards for ensuring accessible open educational resources.<sup>3</sup>

## What is Accessible Content?

Accessible content refers to instructional materials that are designed from the outset to be **flexible** and **responsive** to the needs and abilities of students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities, by offering media in **multiple formats** and/or by being interoperable with **assistive technologies**<sup>4</sup>



The use of accessible, open, and affordable resources requires knowing where to look. Searches do not guarantee results that are accessible and open. Fortunately, there are many websites that have made it easier to locate open materials such as images, books, and courseware.

Photo credit: inspection by Creative Stall from the Noun Project

## Useful Sites for Locating OERs

\* Indicates accessibility page attached to site

### Multiformat

MERLOT\*  
OER Commons  
OpenLearnWorks\*

### Open Textbooks

Open SUNY  
OpenSTAX\*  
Open Library\*

### Courseware

Saylor  
Lumen Learning\*  
Open Learn

### Images

Pixabay  
Noun Project  
Wikimedia

## Your Library's LibGuides

## Additional Tools for Locating a Range of OERs

SUNY Accessible Book Finder<sup>6</sup>

Advanced Search in Google<sup>7</sup>

Creative Commons Search<sup>8</sup>



Not all open access resources will be accessible from the get-go. Taking measures to check an existing resources' accessibility is necessary.

Photo Credit: Checklist by Evan Shuster from the Noun Project

## Accessibility Criteria

- ✓ Navigation that is clear and consistent.
- ✓ Properly structured documents, including headings.
- ✓ Sufficient color contrast. Avoid using color to convey meaning.
- ✓ Alternative text descriptions - for images, tables, equations, maps, etc.
- ✓ Intelligibly-captioned multimedia and descriptive audio.
- ✓ High quality scans with no highlighting or handwriting.
- ✓ PDFs that are text renderable, tagged, and structured appropriately.
- ✓ Meaningful hyperlinks. Avoid phrases like 'click here' and 'more'.

## Use a Checklist or Rubric

BC Open Accessibility Toolkit<sup>9</sup>  
Achieve OER Rubric<sup>10</sup>

## Use Accessibility Checkers

Microsoft Products  
Word, PowerPoint, & Excel  
(File > Info > Inspect)

Adobe Acrobat Professional  
(View > Tools > Accessibility)



There are choices designers make that can render content more accessible to all learners. To create a truly inclusive learning environment, consider sensory, motor, cognitive, emotional and social restraints; individual learning styles and approaches; and technical, financial or environmental constraints.<sup>5</sup>

Photo Credit: design by Scott Lewis from the Noun Project

**Developing**  
Consider usability and navigation.

**Conversion**  
Is it possible to convert to another format if needed?

**Licensing**  
'Creative Commons'  
Register open work with a CC license.

**Test your Work**  
Try BC Open Accessibility Toolkit.

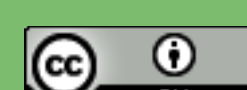
**Anticipate people's needs from the start. Be proactive!**

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Be. Accessible. (n.d.). What is Accessibility? Retrieved from <http://www.beaccessible.org.nz/the-movement/what-is-accessibility>
- <sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). Digest of Education Statistics, 2013 (NCES 2015-011), Table 311.10. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=60>
- <sup>3</sup>UDL On Campus by CAST. (n.d.). Accessibility and Open Educational Resources. Retrieved from [http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/media\\_oer](http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/media_oer)
- <sup>4</sup>Treviranus, J. (2013). Inclusive Design for Learning [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from [http://www.slideshare.net/UnaDaly/designing-oer-with-diversity-in-mind/34-OneSizeFitsOne\\_Education\\_optimizing\\_learning\\_for](http://www.slideshare.net/UnaDaly/designing-oer-with-diversity-in-mind/34-OneSizeFitsOne_Education_optimizing_learning_for)

## Resources

- <sup>5</sup>SUNY Accessible Book Finder - <http://www.opensunyals.org/accessibility.html>
- <sup>6</sup>Advanced Search in Google - [https://www.google.com/advanced\\_search](https://www.google.com/advanced_search)
- <sup>7</sup>Creative Commons Search - <https://search.creativecommons.org>
- <sup>8</sup>BC Open Accessibility Toolkit - <http://bit.ly/accessibilitytoolkit>
- <sup>9</sup>Achieve OER Rubric - <http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveOERRubrics.pdf>



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