

OER: NO-COST ONLINE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES—WHY, HOW, & WHERE

By Kelly Donahue and Randi Madisen

Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning materials that are public domain or licensed to allow free use, remixing, and redistribution. Faculty often think of OER as an entire textbook that they use the same way they would use a publisher's print textbook in a class. However, open resources allow much more flexibility. Often the best approach is to use the course modules in the Learning Management System



Image: [ET EducationalTechnology.net](https://www.educationaltechnology.net)

(LMS) to arrange multiple resources, with one or two modules for each course goal.

Courses designed with OER often link students to multiple sites. For example, faculty may use library resources like films, articles, or even whole e-books for some course content. Other course work may link students to readings from websites like Gutenberg Project for past-copyright novels, professional sites like MLA to teach citation, or how-to explanations from online writing labs to review paragraph structure.

Open resources are licensed under Creative Commons to allow adaptation and remixing, so they can be creatively reused, adapted, and made-to-order to fit the requirements of local learners like aligning to the Minnesota State transfer curriculum or diversifying the voices represented. Resources can also be remixed. For example, faculty can use the best chapter from this resource, an article from that resource, and a video from a third resource. Faculty have the subject knowledge to either adapt existing resources or even create new ones.

No-cost OER benefit students by saving them money and increasing text accessibility. Classes using OER allow students access to course materials on the first day of classes, regardless of their ability to pay. And OER improve course grades and lower fail rates more for Pell recipients and historically underserved populations.^[1] Most college LMS sites and all library databases incorporate accessibility software that reads content aloud to students. Some colleges' LMS sites even have software that translates written material into multiple languages for students to increase your course accessibility for all students.

Use the resources below and your institution's library resources to leave the constraints of a conventional textbook behind. Your students will benefit from anything you can do to reduce their costs.

OER for First-Year Comp and Lit Students and Beyond

- Button, Aly, et al. [Writing in College](#), Open SUNY Textbooks, 19 Jan. 2016. Focuses

on the reason students write

- Glynn, Alexandra, et al. [You, Writing!: A Guide to College Composition](#). *Minnesota State OpenDora*. Explores the writing process in a logical order: finding audience, purpose, and topics; developing a thesis and paragraphs that support it; writing a first draft; and revising, editing, and proofreading
- Jewell, R. [CollegeWriting.org, A College Composition and Writing Textbook](#). Basic, first-year and advanced comp and disciplinary writing. Most chapters have student examples at three levels of difficulty.
- Kashyap, Athena, and Erika Dyquisto. [Writing, Reading, and College Success: A First-Year Composition Course for All Learners](#). *Humanities LibreTexts*, 12 June 2020. Includes additional materials that support developmental or English language learners with college success skills, reading, and writing
- Literacy4DS. "[Active Reading](#)." YouTube, 28 Nov. 2012. Short video to help students understand if their reading is active or passive, then review strategies to promote critical reading
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#). All essential elements of writing with links to specific readings or exercises.
- Stedman, Kyle D. "[Annoying Ways People Use Sources](#)." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 1, ed. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky. WAC Clearinghouse. Helps comp students explore common source-use errors by comparing it to poor driving. The entire book also is free and aimed at higher-level FYC.

OER Designed for Writing about Literature Students

- Bennett, Tanya Long. "Writing and Literature: Composition as Inquiry, Learning, Thinking, and Communication." [GALILEO Open Learning Materials](#). Shows students how to read and analyze texts, then write about what they learned
- Jewell, R. "[Response to Literature](#)." Step-by-step lessons on five typical methods of writing to and about literature, with clear instructions and student examples
- Ringo, Heather and Kashyap, Athena. "Writing and Critical Thinking Through Literature." City College San Francisco through ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative." [Humanities LibreTexts](#), 13 Nov. 2021. A broad landing page connecting to multiple literature-based writing texts

Other Places to find OER

- [Mason EER Metafinder](#). Simultaneously search 16 OER repositories.
- [OASIS](#). From SUNY Geneseo, Openly Available Sources Integrated Search (OASIS). It is a search tool that aims to make the discovery of open content easier. Try OER by subject label to find materials for a particular discipline.
- OpenDora - [OpenDora](#). From Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, a repository to access, load, and share open educational resources.
- [UMN Open Text Library](#). From the University of Minnesota. Find open-source textbooks that have been funded, published, and licensed to be freely used, adapted,

and distributed. These books have been reviewed by faculty from a variety of colleges and universities to assess their quality.

[1] Colvard, Nicholas, et. al. "The Impact of Open Educational Resources on Various Student Success Metrics." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 2018, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 262-276. <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/articleView.cfm?id=3386>.

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