



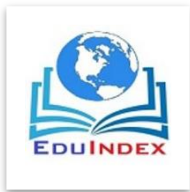
“Don’t Reinvent The Wheel” - An Introduction To Open Educational Resources (Oer)

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One of the essential ingredients in effective teaching is having good materials to work with. Often teachers do not have such materials available and have to either make them or find them. This can be difficult and time consuming. Many Content Based Instruction (CBI) teachers face an additional challenge: the content area that they teach is not their area of expertise. One way to address these issues is by locating quality materials made by other teachers. The following article explains how to find teaching materials one can use freely and legally in their classes.

The English expression “Don’t reinvent the wheel” is used to say, “If there are already good materials that you can use, don’t spend time redesigning another version of it. Just use what someone else has already invested time in.” One as a teacher knows that it can take a lot of time to make good materials for your students. If one can find someone else’s worksheet, test, or lesson plan and adapt it to their class, one can save a lot of time in class preparation. At the same time, one will learn new teaching techniques and presentation ideas, by seeing how other people prepare their lessons and made available on the internet their handouts, lesson plans, tests, and whole textbooks for other teachers to use.

Creative Commons (CC) is a system for specifying what people are allowed to do with a text or work of art. It is an alternative to *copyright* and fits the realities of the internet better than the copyright system does. Through CC licensing, there are available hundreds of thousands of teaching and learning materials on the web. These materials are called **Open Educational Resources (OER)**. More than half of the OER available online are licensed through CC to allow one to use, edit, and redistribute the materials, as long as one cites the source correctly.



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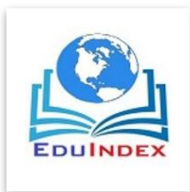


All CC license names start out with "CC." Then they have "BY," because no matter what kind of CC license it is, you have to attribute the source (cite the author). That is, you have to say who the OER is BY.

		COPY & PUBLISH	ATTRIBUTION REQUIRED	COMMERCIAL USE	MODIFY & ADAPT	CHANGE LICENSE
	COPYRIGHT	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
	PUBLIC DOMAIN*	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
	CC BY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	CC BY-SA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
	CC BY-ND	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	CC BY-NC	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
	CC BY-NC-SA	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
	CC BY-NC-ND	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓

In the above Figure one can see the different CC licenses that exists. What letters comes after "CC BY" indicates what restrictions there are on one's ability to use, edit and distribute the work. When the license says one cannot change or edit the OER, then it's called "NoDerivs" or "ND." one can see in Figure that two of the types of license include this restriction.

Another possible restriction is that one, as the user of an OER, must also offer their work as an OER. This is called "ShareAlike" or "SA." Finally, some CC licenses say that one cannot use their work to make something commercial. This is called "NonCommercial" or "NC." If one uses an OER to teach class, that is considered *educational* use, not commercial use, and so one can use OER that have "NC" as part of their license description.



Where Can We Find These Materials?

There are many websites set up as collections of OER. They are all searchable. Many of the OER

collections have a system of quality control. That is true of the examples listed below.

The Site

Open Educational Resources Commons <https://www.oercommons.org/> .More than 30,000 educational material. Specifies grade, topic, and whether it is aligned with the common core standards.

MERLOT II – Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Teaching

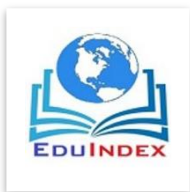
Online <https://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm>. Very large collection of materials for a wide range of subjects and levels. Many results connect to other OER websites.

Curriki- <http://www.curriki.org/>. Searchable OER collection available in English and Spanish, designed to address the “Education Gap,” or unequal distribution of educational resources. Focused on kindergarten through 12th grade (**K-12**).

The Khan Academy- <https://www.khanacademy.org/>. Extensive collection of high quality tutorial videos, as well as other teaching materials. Wide grade span and subject area, with focus on math in early grades. Some of the largest collections of OER, such as MERLOT II, will redirect one to other websites’ OER as well, such as <http://sciencespot.net/> and <https://www.econedlink.org>.

There are dozens and dozens of other OER collections that we could have directed one to, but what is contained in the websites cited above is enough to keep one searching online for days. Hence, the first piece of advice to is:

Stay Focused. Don’t let yourself get lost in searches that are not directly related to the classes you need to plan for. When searching for materials, be as specific as possible. If you search for “Chemistry,” you will get thousands of documents. You do not have time to



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review them all. To save time, add more words to your search. Something as specific as “Boyle’s Law” will get you straight to materials of interest. If possible, specify the age or grade level as well.

Check for Required Materials- Some shared lesson plans will name a text that the students should read, but the text is copyrighted. This means that if you do not have access to that text, you cannot carry out the lesson as intended. Many OER contain links to websites. If you are not able to (reliably) link to the websites during class, plan ahead and see if it is possible to save all of the materials that you need to access ahead of time.

Lots of Advertisements- Be careful, some OER sites have a lot of ads on them, to help pay for the initiative. Be alert, and do not confuse educational material with advertisements. As we mentioned, there are dozens and dozens of OER collections online. You can find them through online searches. Searching for the acronym “OER” is a good way to target what you are looking for. The more specific keywords you can enter in your online search, the more likely you are to find a source that speaks to your teaching context.

This Google document named "Free and/or Open Educational Resources" lists dozens of options:

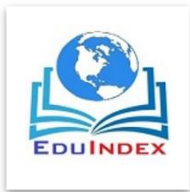
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iaKcIO7P9P9f2r0VrtIxVKbKp5U3oHk_AsVHmyQprs/edit#gid=0.

English Literature: Victorians and Moderns: English literature. Secondary/Post-secondary level.

Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/english-literature-victorians-and-moderns/view>

CBI teachers have the potential to save a lot of time, one must be aware that it will usually be necessary to adapt any OER before using it with your students. All teaching–learning materials need to be adapted to fit the context they are used in. This text highlights factors that affect how difficult a task is for a student.

In case you are limited in your ability to search for materials, here is a sampling of lesson plans to consider.



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Internet addiction: Health and critical thinking. Secondary level. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/20339-assessment-prototype/view>

English Literature: Victorians and Moderns: English literature. Secondary/Post-secondary level.

Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/english-literature-victorians-and-moderns/view>

Global Warming: Applied science. Secondary/Post-secondary. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/25517-global-warning/view>

Adding Integers to Real Life Problems: Mathematics. Middle school. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/13624-adding-integers-to-real-life-problems/view>

Arithmetic and Travel Planning: English language arts and mathematics. Adult education. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/21584-arithmetic-and-travel-planning-remix/view>

Great Migration: Social science. High school. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/17451/overview>

Comparing Fractions with Unlike Denominators: Mathematics. Secondary level. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/18664-comparing-fractions-with-unlikenomdenominators/view>

An Introduction to the Brain and Nervous System: Brain Power!: Anatomy/Physiology. Grades 6-9.

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Sources of Task Difficulty

Guidance- Students need goal-directed practice. They need to understand what is being asked of them. For this reason, it is important to always provide students with clear instructions. The instructions should outline the steps the students need to take to perform the task. The instructions should also specify the level of detail expected from them. The students should be clear on which elements of the task are required, and in which elements of the task they are allowed some degree of freedom and creativity.

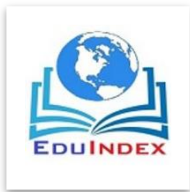
Language- Whenever students need to read something in order to do a task, we can say that reading comprehension is involved. There are a number of factors that make a text more or less difficult to read. When we design learning tasks, we need to think about how difficult reading texts are -- and this includes the instructions that students read. Likewise, whenever students need to understand what their teacher is saying to them in the target language, or when they need to understand a listening passage or video, or even when they need to understand their classmates' L2 speech, we see that listening comprehension is involved. There are even more variables that affect comprehensibility in spoken language than written language. These include the speaker's accent, how fast the speaker is speaking, and whether the listener can watch the speaker's lips while he or she is talking.

Familiarity - Students will be quicker to understand what is being asked of them if the task is somewhat familiar. Although variety in activities in class is essential for maintaining interest, as well as for targeting different aspects of the learning process, it is also important to establish some classroom routines and familiar types of activities.

While OER are an amazing resource for teachers, we need to be aware of the ways we may need to adapt them when using them in our classes. The reading identified different types of task difficulty that have to do with how much and what kind of guidance students are given while performing a task, the language used, how familiar tasks are to students, and task complexity.

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