

# USING AN OER

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## What is an OER?

Open educational resources (OER) are openly-licensed, freely available educational materials that can be modified and redistributed by users. They can include any type of educational resource, from syllabi to full courses.

- **Openly-licensed:** The content is released under an open license. You can read about this more in the “[Creative Commons and Selecting a License](#)” chapter in *Publishing with VIVA*.
- **Freely Available:** The resources must be freely available online with no fee to access. Physical OER may be sold at low prices, to offset the cost of printing.
- **Modifiable:** The resource must be made available under an open license that allows for editing. Ideally, it should also be available in an editable format.

The most comprehensive definition of OER available today is provided by the Hewlett Foundation:

“Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.”<sup>1</sup>

With a definition so broad that it includes any educational material so long as it is free to access and open, it might be easier to ask, “What isn’t an OER?”

## What is Not an OER?

If a resource is not free or openly licensed, it cannot be described as an OER. For example, most materials accessed through your library’s subscriptions cannot be altered, remixed, or redistributed. These materials

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1. William & Flora Hewlett Foundation. “Open Educational Resources.” Accessed June 15, 2019. <https://hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/>

require special permission to use and therefore cannot be considered “open.” **Table 1** below explains the difference between OER and other resources often misattributed as OER.

**Table 1: Components of an OER**

Material Type	Openly Licensed	Freely Available	Modifiable
Open educational resources	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free online resources under all rights reserved copyright	No	Yes	No
Materials available through the University Library	No	Yes	No
Open access articles and monographs	Yes	Yes	Maybe

**Note:** Although some materials are free to access for a library’s users, that does not mean that they are free to access for everyone (including the library). Similarly, while some open access resources are made available under a copyright license that enables modification, this is not always the case.

This section is an adaptation of “[Introduction to Open Educational Resources](#)” in *The OER Starter Kit* by Abbey K. Elder, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

## Open Licensing

While an OER can be assigned any type of open license, Creative Commons are the most commonly used in open education.

## Creative Commons Overview

Creative Commons licenses function within the copyright system. Creators who assign their works a Creative Commons license still own the copyright to their work, but they have determined that they do not wish to retain all the rights that copyright provides to them. Instead, they say that users can access and share their works (and maybe more depending on the license) without asking for permission.

Creative Commons is a non-profit organization who has written and released these licenses to the public. You can [read more about Creative Commons on their website](#).

## Restrictions

Creative Commons licenses outline four rights/restrictions that the creator of the work retains:



**BY: Attribution.** Users must attribute the original work and creator.



**NC: Non-Commercial.** Users are not allowed to commercialize items. In other words, uses “primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or monetary compensation” are prohibited.

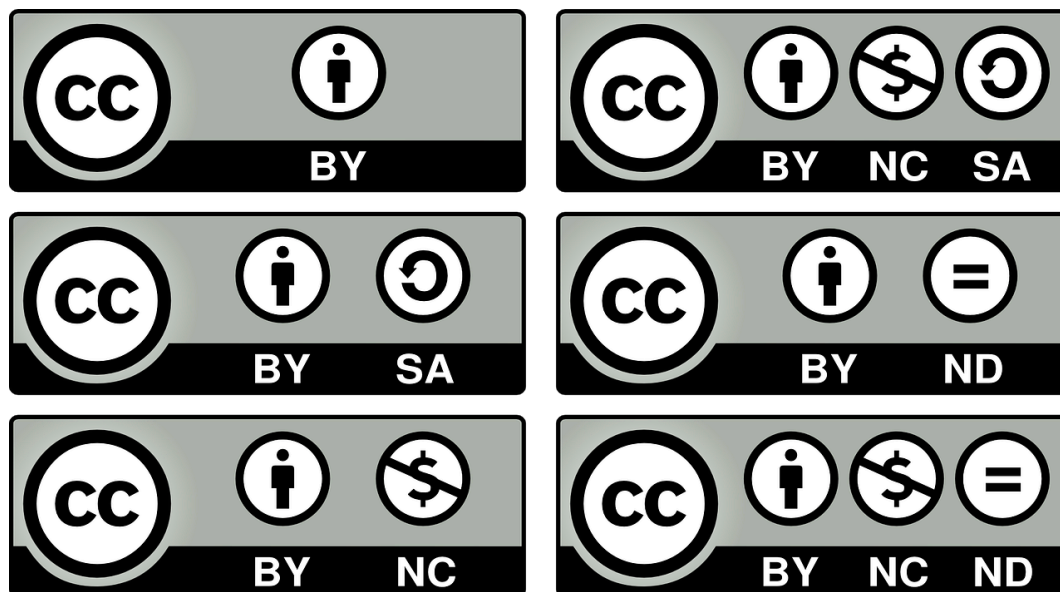


**ND: No Derivatives.** Users cannot make any changes to the work (aka derivative works). In other words, someone can share or reuse content as long as they present it as an exact copy of the original.



**SA: Share Alike.** Any adaptations/derivatives must be shared using the same license as the original.

The rights/restrictions combine to make 6 licenses:



Creative Commons  
Licenses

You'll note a couple of things:

- All licenses include the BY restriction. Attribution and credit for work remains the underpinning for creative commons licensing.
- The SA and ND restrictions do not appear on the same licenses. The details of the restriction make them incompatible as No Derivations prohibits derivative works while Share Alike only applies to derivative works.

Creative Commons also has a Creative Commons zero (CC0) license, which creators can use when they do not wish to retain control over the work and instead release it into the public domain. This license is the only license which does not require attribution.

## Interpretation

These licenses can be interpreted by completing the following sentence with the relevant restrictions in the blank:

Users are allowed to do whatever they want with the work as long as they:

So, for example, the CC BY-NC-ND license can be interpreted as “Users are allowed to do whatever they want with the work as long as they *attribute the original creator/work (BY) and don’t commercialize (NC) or make changes to the work (ND).*”

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## What can you do with this OER?



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## Sharing the Resource

You are welcome to copy and share the resource in any medium or format. This can include:

- Emailing a copy to a colleague or your students
- Uploading a PDF to your LMS
- Embedding the digital version into your LMS
- Printing a copy of the text for personal use
- Working with a campus printer to print the text for your class
  - \*Please note VIVA is working on releasing a print version of the textbook soon.

## Adapting or Customizing the Resource

While some professors find the textbook a good fit for their class, it may not work perfectly for others. OER allows instructors to customize resources to better fit their classroom and context. In other words, OER allows faculty to create or customize a resource to fit their syllabus rather than forcing them to build a syllabus around an existing text. Instructors may also consider adding local examples or making changes that reflect your student population, a practice known as *localization*. This could mean changing names, referencing local traditions or landmarks, or even updating spelling or language.

Adaptations could occur by cloning or copying the instructor guide in Pressbooks, adjusting a PDF, or using another platform.

You are welcome to *adapt*—or change—the resource, assuming you attribute the original version. We also request linking back to the original version if the adapted version is shared digitally.

## Examples of adaptations

For the textbook, adapting the resource might include:

- Using only select chapters
- Rearranging chapter order
- Creating a new version of the book which includes only select chapters
  - These chapters can be consecutive (e.g. Chapter 1-6) or throughout the text (e.g. Introduction, Chapters 1-3, and Chapter 10-11)
- Combining selections from the book with another OER
  - Combining OER is also known as “remixing”
  - Make sure to track and share the origins of the varying sections if you do this
- Substituting the data for your local context for the Virginia-focused data or adding in local examples
- Adding additional content (e.g., a preface, an additional chapter, or just additional sections within a chapter)
- Translating the text into another language

For the instructor guide, adapting the resource might include:

- Using only select chapters
- Using only select activities from each chapter
- Integrating the sample NCLEX questions, reflection question, or another activity to your LMS
- Changing the names, numbers, or examples provided in the activities
- Adding additional details, questions, or details to an activity
- Combining with other activities you've created or found in other OER
- Translating the exercise into another language

## Sharing Adaptations

You can also share the adapted versions. If you're only making small edits (e.g. remixing OER), we recommend listing yourself as the editor to retain acknowledgement of the work of the original authors. Please also make sure to list the origin of specific pieces and include the provided attribution. We request including a link to the original source as a part of the attribution.