This factsheet was created through OER STEM, as part of American Institutes for Research. ­[](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)This factsheet was created through OER STEM, as part of American Institutes for Research.

# Open Educational Resources (OER): A Fact Sheet for Adult Education and Numeracy

What are OER?

**OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits sharing, accessing, repurposing̵̶ including for commercial purposes̶ and collaborating with others.**

What are the benefits of using and creating OER for adult education?

Creating and using OER may improve student persistence because the materials can be tailored to their current needs and interests; increase student use of online tools; encourage educators to collaborate and share; save costs; and serve as a model for lifelong learning.

Where can I create and   
remix OER?

OER Commons Open Author

[www.oercommons.org/open-author-about](http://www.oercommons.org/open-author-about)

**Gooru Learning** <http://about.goorulearning.org>

WikiEducator

[wikieducator.org/](http://wikieducator.org/)

Open Tapestry

[www.opentapestry.com/](http://www.opentapestry.com/)

YouTube Video Editor

[www.youtube.com/editor](http://www.youtube.com/editor)

TedEd

<http://ed.ted.com>

## What is the value of OER in adult education (AE)?

Quality OER can be powerful tools to enhance learning and instruction in adult education. OER help students achieve their learning goals by providing flexible and accessible supplements to instruction. OER encourage life-long learning habits in students by providing them with personalized and readily available learning materials. OER also help educators by augmenting instruction, strengthening their content knowledge, and providing access to free online professional development.

## What is the difference between free and open?

Free resources serve a meaningful purpose in AE by providing teachers with tools to support teaching and learning. “Free” means that materials are free to access but not remix or revise. However, when a resource is open, a user can remix or revise with other open resources or self-generated content to produce new material that directly targets the adult learner’s needs.

## The 5Rs\*

Another way to think about OER is through the Five R Framework, developed by David Wiley. It supports a deeper understanding of what it means to consider an object (i.e., resource) an OER.

1. **Retain** – the right to make, own, and control copies of the content
2. **Reuse** – the right to reuse the content as verbatim or in its unaltered form
3. **Revise** – the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself
4. **Remix** – the right to combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new
5. **Redistribute** – the right to make and share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others

## Classroom Scenario

You are teaching Adult Basic Education to GED students. Most students are also co-enrolled in a career pathways preparation course so you decide to provide them with supplemental materials.

While searching for materials, you find a whole series of career-focused OER. However, you do not feel the directions are clear enough or provide enough structured support for students to successfully complete the entire range of activities. You rewrite the directions and chunk the lesson into smaller manageable activities because it is an OER.

Another problem you notice is that there are very few visuals in many of the lessons. You decide to add appropriate visuals or diagrams as needed.

You have **revised** (refined directions, built in scaffolded supports, and added visuals/diagrams) the lesson to support student needs.

[This example courtesy of CTE Architecture: Storage Sheds retrieved from: https://www.oercommons.org/courses/cte-architecture-storage-sheds

## What is the future of OER?

OER are here to stay. The movement to increase open resources for teaching and learning is continuously growing because OER provide a means of addressing the cost of education and the need for more student-centered materials, particularly in adult education. It is important to ensure that this growing body of resources has a method of evaluation (see Achieve Rubrics found at [www.oercommons.org](http://www.oercommons.org)) to make sure that materials are high quality. Providing teachers with more training on evaluating, creating, and remixing OER has the potential to transform teaching and learning for adult education.

**“I love the way OER have sparked curiosity in my students via the various media delivery systems that OER offer.”**

— Adult Educator, Alabama

What are some types of OER?

* Activities
* Lesson Plans
* Full course
* Online textbooks
* Interactive/simulations

Where to find OER:

OER Commons

[www.oercommons.org](http://www.oercommons.org)

Merlot

[www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm](http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm)

Creative Commons Search

<http://search.creativecommons.org>

National Science Digital Library

<https://nsdl.org/>

To learn more visit:

OER Research Hub

[**http://oerresearchhub.org/**](http://oerresearchhub.org/)

## What are the teaching and learning implications of OER?

* Personalized teaching and learning
* Development of high interest materials
* Greater ability to support various learning styles
* Teacher-directed professional development

OER in Action