

Adapt OERs

Published 11/8/2020 by [Ashley Ribbel](#)

Why would I want to modify a textbook?

There is a lot of great content already developed but maybe it's not quite right for your course. The great thing about OERs, in most cases, is you can modify the content as you wish!

You may want to:

- update examples or content
- tweak the level of the material (too low/too high)
- develop Canadian specific content
- add multimedia content
- add case studies

If you would like to modify an open textbook, contact [the Teaching & Learning Centre](#) for some tips before you get started.

6 Steps to Modifying an Open Textbook

Once you have made the decision to adopt an open textbook, you may wish to modify or adapt that textbook to fit your specific needs.

How easy or difficult this will be depends on a number of factors, including;

- How much content do you wish to change? Do you want to remove chapters, or rewrite entire chapters of content?
- What technical format is the original textbook in? A Word document is much easier to modify than a PDF document.
- What type of license is the content released under? Does it have a Creative Commons license that allows for modification or adaptation of the content?
- How comfortable are you with using technology and creating content?

Here are some steps to consider before modifying or adapting an existing textbook.

Some General Considerations

- If you wish to edit or create graphics, images, charts, and/or multimedia content, you will need to use additional, specialized tools to create those beyond the tools listed here. The tools listed here are primarily designed to modify text.
- Keep it simple is a good rule of thumb, especially if you are approaching a remix project for the first time. While it may be tempting to make a number of major changes, think of the textbook as a living resource that you can improve incrementally over time.

Step 1: Check the license

First, check the license to make sure you have the permission to modify the contents. As long as the Creative Commons license does not have a No Derivatives clause, you are able to change the contents of the book. Visit the [Copyright information for faculty website](#) for more information.

Step 2: The format of the textbook

If you wish to adapt an open textbook, you need the textbook in a format you can work with. Common formats for open textbooks that you should look for are:

- HTML files (webpages)
- Word or OpenOffice documents
- Text files
- ePub

Avoid PDF documents.

It is common that open textbooks may only be available as a PDF document. PDF documents are not editable. If you want to modify an open textbook that is only available in PDF format, you will need to convert the PDF document to one of the formats above.

Before you consider converting a PDF version of the textbook, you should contact the original author and ask for a copy of the textbook source files. *Converting a PDF document to an editable format is a difficult, time consuming and imprecise process.*

Step 3: Tools for editing an open textbook

Once you have a format that you can edit, you can begin to modify the textbook. What **tools** you will use to do this will depend greatly on what editable format you are working with, and your comfort level with working with that format.

Contact oyer@senecapolytechnic.ca to discuss formats and access to different editing tools.

Step 4: Choosing a license

Once you have finished creating your own version of the textbook, you should decide on which Creative Commons license you will use to license your book. This will depend a great deal on how the original textbook was licensed.

For example, if the original textbook was licensed with SA (Share Alike) license, then you must release your book with the same license as the original source material to ensure it is fully compliant with the original CC terms of use.

CC licensing at this stage can be a complicated process. Visit the [Copyright information for faculty website](#) for more information about how the various CC licenses work together.

Step 5: Output

Students like flexibility when it comes to their textbooks. Some may prefer printed versions of the textbook, others will prefer using a website. Still others will like to use an e-reader or e-reading software.

To make your book as accessible as possible, consider making your textbook available in multiple formats so students have the ability to choose the format that works for them. At a minimum, you should make textbooks available as a website (HTML), ePub document for e-readers, and PDF document which students can print or choose to have printed via a print on demand service.

Contact oyer@senecapolytechnic.ca to discuss formats for output.

Step 6: Hosting your book (or how do my students get my textbook?)

Once you have edited your version of the textbook, you will need a place to put your textbook where your students can access it.

Contact oyer@senecapolytechnic.ca to discuss hosting options.

This page is modified from "[6 Steps to Modifying an Open Textbook](#)" by Clint Lalonde, BCcampus.

tags : adapt, adapt-an-oer, adapting, adapt-oer, course-design, oer, open-educational-resources, teaching, teaching-and-learning, teaching-and-learning-centre