

# Choosing Instructional Materials and Technologies Tip Sheet

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## Selecting Instructional Materials with Purpose

Before selecting instructional materials, online course designers and instructors should identify the learning outcomes students will be expected to demonstrate. Select materials that support those learning outcomes: materials that are level-appropriate, aligned to student goals, standards-aligned, and accessible to learners. See the following considerations and the [Writing Goals, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes Tip Sheet](#).

[Active learning](#), using teaching strategies that “involve students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing,” as opposed to passive learning, which usually relies on students listening or reading without much interaction, can require more planning in an online environment. Course designers and instructors need to think not only about *what* curricular materials will be used, but also *how* they will be used.

## Types of Instructional Materials and Technologies

There are several options for materials and technologies that can be used for an online course. Instructors need to consider what materials and/or tools will be used for instruction, activities, and/or assessment. Some materials may be selected and/or assigned at the program level; however, instructors may want to include supplemental materials as well.

- **Instructional Materials**
  - Materials may include web- and software-based programs and curricula as well as print textbooks and curricula. The list of [Approved Distance Education Education Curricula for Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Programs](#) includes many examples of curricular materials suitable for adult learners (although online course planners and instructors are not limited to the resources it identifies).
  - Online content such as readings, videos, or Open Education Resources (OER) can be valuable components of an online course. Web-based content can provide engaging, real-world examples, texts, and multimedia; lesson plans and

ideas; sources for problem-solving and project- or research-based activities; and materials for supplemental practice or extension.

- [OER Commons](#) is a public digital library of educational resources. (An online resource is considered an OER if it is freely available in the public domain, uses a format that is easily reused and adapted by teachers and students, and has been released under an open intellectual property license allowing such reuse.)
  - [iRubric: Evaluating OER Rubric](#) is a free rubric that can be used to help you evaluate OER.
  - For more information on using OER, please see Ed Tech's self-paced online course, [Introduction to Open Educational Resources](#).
- **Instructional Technologies**

Consider the following technologies when determining how students will interact with the course materials, build knowledge, and practice and demonstrate their skills.

    - [Web conferencing platforms](#) for synchronous learning
    - Platforms for asynchronous learning such as:
      - [LMS Platforms](#)
      - Discussion board platforms such as [Threads](#) and [Backchannel Chat](#)
      - Information-sharing platforms such as [Padlet](#) and [Wakelet](#)
    - Platforms for [communication](#)
    - Interactive [instructional tools](#)

## Considerations for Choosing Instructional Materials and Technologies

- **Student Access and Digital Literacy Skills**
  - Consider what devices students have access to and choose materials that work well on all devices (e.g., mobile phone, laptop, etc.).
  - Consider your students' level of digital literacy skills and choose materials and/or technologies that best align with their skills.
  - If your course uses print-based instructional materials, consider how they will be distributed to students and reviewed by instructors. If students will be using seats in a web-based curriculum or logging into an LMS or website that requires

account creation, consider how you will provide students with account information and tech support in accessing or creating any accounts.

- For more information on student access and digital literacy skills, visit the [VALRC digital access webpage](#).

- **Standards-based Instruction (SBI)**

- Consider how the materials, technologies, and the ways they will be used align with SBI practices.
- Use the Resource Alignment Tools ([English language arts/literacy](#) and [Mathematics](#) versions) provided on [VALRC's Standards Based Instruction website](#) to evaluate how well your materials and/or technologies align with SBI.
- For more about SBI, including the key advances and core actions that inform instruction, consult [Implementing Standards-based Instruction in Virginia: A Technical Assistance Roadmap](#).

- **Criteria Specific to Online Instructional Materials and/or Technologies**

- It is important to evaluate tools used for teaching online according to criteria that directly impact learning online such as ease of use, accessibility, technical aspects, and security.
- [This resource evaluation rubric](#), developed by Ed Tech Center at World Education, is an example of the criteria that should be considered when using a tool for online learning.

- **Copyright Laws and Regulations**

- Ask for permission when using materials that have been created by someone else. Cite or acknowledge your sources.
- Review [Fair Use Doctrine](#) for information on using materials for educational purposes.
- Use [Open Education Resources](#) or materials from [Creative Commons](#).
- For more information about copyright use, visit [the VALRC copyright webpage](#).

- Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

- Read this article, [Synchronous Learning Versus Asynchronous Learning in Online Education](#), to learn more about the definitions, advantages, and disadvantages of both synchronous and asynchronous learning.
- Plan what tools will be used to deliver synchronous instruction and what tools will be used to deliver asynchronous instruction. These choices will most likely depend on the structure of the course and the role that synchronous and asynchronous instruction is playing in delivering instruction, engaging learners with content, and assessing learning outcomes.
- Use a plan, such as this [Teaching Remotely Worksheet](#), to organize which aspects of your course will be delivered synchronously and asynchronously and what tools will be used for each aspect of the course.
- See the [Student Engagement Tip Sheet](#) to learn more about engagement strategies and tools for engagement for both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

For more information on instructional tools for online learning, visit the [VALRC Instructional Tools webpage](#).

When selecting curricular materials and identifying learning activities, course planners and instructors should also plan for how they will keep track of learner participation, progress, and activity completion. The [Approved Distance Education Education Curricula for Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Programs](#) list includes guidelines for tracking learner hours. Most other learning activities will be counted as part of synchronous contact hours (if they take place during live class sessions) or tracked via teacher verification. For more information, see the [Distance Education Tip Sheet](#) and the [Adult Education Indicators of Quality Online Courses Rubric's accounting for activities worksheet](#).