

Alternate Format Educational Materials (FAQs)

What are alternate format educational materials?

- Alternate format materials are electronic, Braille, or large print versions of standard print educational materials (e.g. textbooks, novels, student guides, etc.). Electronic versions include, but are not limited to, e-text, scanned text, web-based text, and audio files.

Who would use alternate format educational materials?

- Individuals who cannot use standard print materials due to a visual impairment, physical disability or comprehension disability can use alternate format materials to access the same information as their non-disabled peers. Technologies are now commonly available in schools which can create or support the use of a wide variety of alternate format materials making it much easier for students with perceptual disabilities to complete their educational programs.

How are alternate format educational materials created?

- These materials can be created a number of ways, but, in many cases, the original print version of the text is scanned and then converted into one or more file formats. The current Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology is quite accurate when converting a scanned image of a print page to electronic text which can be read aloud on the computer, translated to Braille, or converted to an audio file.

What are the copyright issues pertaining to the creation, acquisition, or use of alternate format educational materials in Canada?

- The Canadian Copyright Act (CCA) Section 32(1) outlines, very specifically, the acceptable creation and use of alternate format materials for individuals with disabilities. In simple terms, the act allows for an individual with a perceptual disability, or an agent acting on behalf of that individual, to create, acquire, or use an alternate format of a copyrighted work as long as that alternate format is not large print or is not commercially available. The act further defines 'perceptual disability' as one that prevents or inhibits access to standard print materials due to a visual impairment, a physical disability or a comprehension disability.
- Alternate formats of works in the public domain (i.e. not copyrighted) can be created and distributed freely but credits to the original author and/or publisher should always be included in any materials.
- Please see the FAQs (Copyright) for more detailed information.

What are the different types of alternate format file types and what technologies are required to utilize the various types?

- These are some of the commonly available alternate format file types and the technologies required to utilize them:

File format	Hardware	Software
.pdf (Portable Document Format)	Computer	Adobe Acrobat Reader
.txt (simple text)	Computer	Text processing software (e.g. WordPad, MSWord, Kurzweil 3000, etc)
.rtf (rich text format)	Computer	Text processing software (e.g. WordPad, MSWord, Kurzweil 3000, etc)
.html (hypertext markup language)	Computer	Current web browser (e.g. IE, Firefox, Safari, etc.)
.wav (waveform audio format)	Computer iPod	Windows Media Player iTunes
.mp3	Computer iPod mp3 player	Windows Media Player iTunes
.kes (Kurzweil Educational Systems)	Computer	Kurzweil 1000 Kurzweil 3000
.brf (digital Braille)	Braille reading devices Braille embossers	Kurzweil 1000 Duxbury Braille 2000
DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System)	Computer Daisy Player mp3 player	Daisy Reader software Kurzweil 1000 Kurzweil 3000

Is one type of alternate format better than another?

- The selection of alternate format type depends on two important factors, the most important being the needs of the student with perceptual disabilities. Formats that are accessible to some students with one type of disability are not necessarily accessible to other students, even those with the same disability. Each student’s requirement for an alternate format is very individual and usually requires an in-depth knowledge of that student and his or her learning needs. Additionally, the availability of technology will often impact the selection of alternate formats. The technology required to utilize the

alternate format must be readily available to the student within their learning environment or it is unlikely that the use of these materials will be successful.

Can alternate format educational materials be used in Universal Design for Learning classrooms?

- Accessible curriculum is a foundational element in Universal Design for Learning classrooms. Digital or electronic materials are often used to create curriculum that is accessible to all students. For those students in a UDL classroom that have a perceptual disability, alternate formats of the standard educational materials being used are entirely appropriate. As only a percentage of any given class has been identified as having a perceptual disability, it is important to consider the copyright restrictions that apply to any alternate formats used by any other students. For those classrooms with students with perceptual abilities, the use of alternate format materials for instructional purposes (e.g. projecting to the class during instruction) is also appropriate and helpful.

Where can alternate format educational materials be acquired for use with students?

- There are many different sources for alternate format materials. The following list is, by no means, complete but it provides a starting place when searching for these materials.
- If you are looking for materials specifically for the BC curriculum, you can search...
 - OpenSchool BC – <http://order.openschool.bc.ca>
 - ERAC – <http://bcerac.ca>
 - ARC-BC – <http://www.arc-bc.org>
- If you are looking for e-text formats of public domain materials, you can search...
 - Project Gutenberg – http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - Bartleby – <http://www.bartleby.com>
 - University of Virginia Library's e-Text Center – <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/ebooks>
 - Bibliomania - <http://www.bibliomania.com/4/-/frameset.html>
 - Ebooks - <http://www.ebooks.com>
 - Online Books Page – <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu>

- If you are looking for alternate formats for students with visual impairments, search...
 - Canadian National Institute for the Blind – <http://webcluster.cnib.ca/Public/home.aspx#srch>
 - Provincial Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) – <http://www.prcvi.org>
- If you are looking for alternate formats offered by publishers, you can search...
 - Nelson Education – <http://www.nelson.com>
 - McGraw Hill – <http://www.mcgrawhill.ca>
 - Pearson – <http://www.pearsoncanada.ca>
 - Oxford - <http://www.oupcanada.com/>
 - Scholastic - <http://www.scholastic.ca/>

What if I am unable to locate the alternate format material through these or other sources?

- If you are not able to locate the specific alternate format material that you require, you can create it yourself by scanning the original print material and converting it to a file format that is appropriate for you or your student. If you are not able to produce it yourself, there are some online services that, for a fee, will scan and convert your printed material. If you are in British Columbia and supporting students with perceptual disabilities, you can also submit printed material to ARC-BC for scanning and alternate format production.

Where can I go for more information on alternate format materials?

- You can visit www.arc-bc.org for more general information or contact the ARC-BC alternate format production team directly via email (arc@setbc.org).
- There is also a great deal of information on alternate formats on the internet...
 - Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres (CAER)
 - <http://www.prcvi.org/links/caer.html>
 - Special Needs Ontario Window (SNOW)
 - <http://snow.utoronto.ca>
 - National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)
 - <http://www.neads.ca>
 - Nimas at CAST (US content but helpful information)
 - http://nimas.cast.org/about/resources/accessible_textbooks