
Books without Barriers

Bookshare is a free online repository of electronic accessible books for students who are blind or have other print disabilities. Bookshare provides the world's largest online library of accessible reading materials for people with print disabilities. It operates under an exception to U.S. copyright law which allows copyrighted digital books to be made available to people with qualifying disabilities. In addition, many publishers and authors have volunteered to provide Bookshare with access to their works.

A Bookshare membership offers unlimited access to accessible books, textbooks, newspapers and magazines. Through an award from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Bookshare offers free memberships to U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students.

Bookshare Members can download books, textbooks and newspapers in a compressed, encrypted file. They then can read the material using adaptive technology, typically software that reads the book aloud (text-to-speech) and/or displays the text of the book on a computer screen, or Braille access devices, such as refreshable Braille displays. Additionally, free access technology makes it easy to read books with a computer.

Joining Bookshare offers a number of benefits

- Access to the world's largest online library of accessible reading materials (books, textbooks, newspapers and magazines) for people with print disabilities.
- An unlimited library card, providing a steady flow and variety of new reading materials anytime you want, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.
- Free access technology for reading books in the DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) and BRF (Braille Refreshable Format) formats.

Individuals can sign up for membership and access the library on their own. Schools that serve individuals with print disabilities can sign up and provide access to their students.

Individual Memberships

An individual membership allows any individual with a qualifying print disability to download books from Bookshare for free. Individuals can have their own individual membership and can also be listed on an organization's membership.

Students under the age of 18 need permission from a parent or guardian to sign up with Bookshare.

School Memberships

Schools that serve students with print disabilities (Member) may register for organizational memberships. With this type of membership, teachers and/or staff members (Sponsors) can download books for their students.

The School needs to provide Bookshare with:

- Roster of Sponsors: teachers and/or staff members who will download the books
- Roster of Members: students with qualifying print disabilities who will read the books

Schools can also recommend that their students with print disabilities sign up for individual memberships so they can download books on their own. Currently, memberships for U.S. educational institutions are funded by OSEP, and are therefore free.

U.S. K-12 schools with memberships have access to Bookshare's NIMAC-sourced (National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center) textbooks and can download these books for students who are Chafee qualified and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Qualifications

The Chafee Amendment to the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. Section 121, allows an "authorized entity" to reproduce or distribute copyrighted materials in specialized formats for blind or other disabled students without the need to obtain permission of the copyright owner. Authorized entities are governmental or nonprofit organizations whose primary mission is to provide copyrighted works in specialized formats to blind or disabled people.

If an individual has a disability that makes it difficult or impossible to read a printed book, the individual most likely will qualify for Bookshare services. To confirm that the individual qualifies, the individual, or the school representing the individual, will be asked to provide the individual's Proof of Disability (certified by a qualified professional) during the registration process.

The table below provides guidelines for determining what qualifies as a print disability. It also lists examples of professionals qualified to make this assessment.

Disability	Qualified/Not Qualified	Examples of Certifying Professionals
Visual Impairment (VI), such as blind or low vision	Qualified	A family doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Special Education teacher Certification from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in the U.S. or similar national body
Physical Disability (PD) which affects one’s ability to read print, such as inability to hold a book or turn pages	Qualified	A family doctor or other medical professional, physical therapist, resource specialist, Special Education teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Disability • Reading Disability 	Students with a severe enough disability, and a professional certifying that the disability has a physical basis	A neurologist, psychiatrist, learning disability specialist, Special Education teacher, school psychologist, or clinical psychologist with a background in learning disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism • Emotional disabilities • ADHD • ESL and ELL 	Not qualified unless accompanied by a visual or physical disability, or a qualified reading disability that has a physical basis	Examples above

Training Opportunities

Bookshare offers a range of complimentary training opportunities for individuals and schools from live and pre-recorded webinars, online learning guides, and online learning modules. In addition, Bookshare is now offering fee-based, on-site (at your school) Professional Development workshops for teachers on key topics for students with print disabilities. These workshops qualify for the use of Part B funds for teachers, parents and service providers.

Workshops currently offered include:

- **Bookshare in Depth**
 - This workshop will teach participants how easy it is to download free electronic accessible textbooks, improve outcomes for students with print disabilities, and enable your school to meet IDEA National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards criteria.

- **Aligning Assistive Reading Tools to the Needs of Students with Print Disabilities**
 - Print disabilities affect 15% of the population. Bookshare has an interactive hands-on curriculum, where participants will study the use, features, and benefits of accessible instructional materials and electronic reading tools from a variety of vendors. This workshop will give the school the ability to identify which assistive technology products will work for your students identified with print disabilities.

Workshops will include the following key components:

- Best practices and standards for professional development
- A focus on student needs and improved student achievement
- Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) and assistive technology in the classroom
- Hands-on activities
- Follow-up virtual coaching for sustained learning

Bookshare's goal is to support long-term improved outcomes for students with print disabilities using accessible instructional materials. For additional information about Bookshare, please visit: <http://www.bookshare.org/>.