# Reading for All, Part 1: Getting to Know EPUB

## Presenters

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## What is EPUB?

EPUB (aka “electronic publication”) is a standard for authoring and distributing digital publications and documents that has been widely adopted in postsecondary education and trade publishing. An EPUB file is essentially a website that has been compressed into a single file for distribution. EPUB relies on robust web technologies (such as HTML), which provides greater opportunities for accessibility.

For additional background information, see [Getting Started with EPUB](http://aem.cast.org/creating/getting-started-with-epub.html) on the AEM Center website.

## Why EPUB Now?

Remote learning in response to COVID-19 means learners don’t always have the same supports at home they had in school. They need a format that provides flexibility to address the variability of learners in a variety of environments.

## Benefits of EPUB for Learners

EPUB provides a flexible, adaptable reading experience:

* Reflowable text: As the text size is increased, the content will reflow so that images and other media will move along with their related text. Reflowable text is especially helpful on devices with small screens (smartphones and tablets) where it allows the text size to be increased without the need to pan or scroll between the end of one line and the start of the next.
* Customizable display of information: text size, background/text colors, choice of fonts, line spacing, margins (depends on reading application)
* Flexible navigation options: direct page access, table of contents, navigation by headings (for screen readers)

## EPUB is an Industry Standard

Major commercial online stores support EPUB:

* [Apple’s Book Store](https://www.apple.com/apple-books/)
* [Google Play Books](https://play.google.com/books)

Providers of textbooks (prepare students for higher ed):

* [VitalSource](https://www.vitalsource.com/)
* [Redshelf](https://redshelf.com/)

[Bookshare](http://www.bookshare.org/) Supports EPUB:

* **Read Now** for many books – read in the browser using the Bookshare Web Reader – great option for Chromebooks
* Download an EPUB file and open with preferred reading app

Bookshare has an extensive collection of books that are available to non-members. To search that collection, choose Advanced Search on the Bookshare website and then make sure to choose “**Freely Available Books**” from the Books to Search pulldown menu.

Another source for EPUB titles is [Standard Ebooks](https://standardebooks.org/), which is based on public domain content. When browsing Standard Ebooks, make sure to select the **Compatible EPUB** option for your download – this version will work with a wide selection of reading tools.

Many reading apps support EPUB (partial list):

* [Thorium Reader for Windows](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/thorium-reader/9nfzp1g7m2sc?cid=msft_web_chart&activetab=pivot:overviewtab) (free)
* [Apple Books](https://www.apple.com/ibooks/) (Mac, iPad, iPhone) (free)
* [Dolphin EasyReader](https://yourdolphin.com/en-gb/products/individuals/families/easyreader) (Windows, iPad, iPhone, Android) (free for mobile)
* [Read and Write](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/readwrite-for-google-chro/inoeonmfapjbbkmdafoankkfajkcphgd?hl=en-US) (Chrome extension) (subscription-based, free for teachers, trial available and text-to-speech is free even after trial expires). Watch a demonstration of [how to use Read and Write with Bookshare Web Reader (Read Now).](https://youtu.be/xVNwrn3V2p8)

Note: Kindle E-Readers do not support EPUB, but Amazon’s proprietary formats.

## Benefits of EPUB for Content Creators

Anyone can create an EPUB file by exporting from familiar authoring tools:

* Google Docs (File, Download As, EPUB)
* Apple’s Pages
* LibreOffice
* Microsoft Word (with free [WordToEPUB](https://daisy.org/activities/software/wordtoepub/) plugin)

Simple workflow:

1. Start with a Microsoft Word file that follows best practices (visit [Creating Accessible Documents and Slide Decks](http://aem.cast.org/creating/creating-accessible-documents.html) on the AEM Center website for more information).
2. Check your work with the Word Accessibility Checker (Review tab of the Ribbon)
3. Export to EPUB with the free [WordToEPUB](https://daisy.org/activities/software/wordtoepub/) plugin (just a few clicks)

## Challenge for Webinar 1

Get to know EPUB by downloading a title from either the Freely Available Books collection on Bookshare or Standard Ebooks. Open the downloaded title in a free reading app such as Thorium, Books or Dolphin EasyReader and explore some of the options for adjusting the appearance of the content (text size, background color, font and more).

## Upcoming AEM Center Webinars: EPUB in K-12 Series

* October 20th: Reading for All Part 2 - Finding and Using High-Quality EPUB
* November 10th: Reading for All Part 3 - Creating Accessible Content with EPUB

Register on the [AEM Center website’s Events page](http://aem.cast.org/about/events).