

# An E-book Primer for English Instructors



- What are e-books?
- How can I read e-books?
- How can I create e-books?
- What should I consider when using e-books for English instruction?

## What are e-books?

E-books are books that exist in an electronic format rather than on the printed page. E-book files may be read on a computer, phone, or dedicated e-book reader. Some e-book files may only be opened on specific devices, while others can be opened almost anywhere.

## How do e-books differ from print books?

Because e-books consist of computer files, they behave more similarly to software than to normal books. Some e-books use DRM (digital rights management) to restrict use of the e-book to a single device. Other e-books can be freely copied and moved from device to device. E-books can be downloaded, deleted, and stored on a hard drive. Files can also become corrupted, get lost when a device crashes, and become unreadable when software vendors change formats.

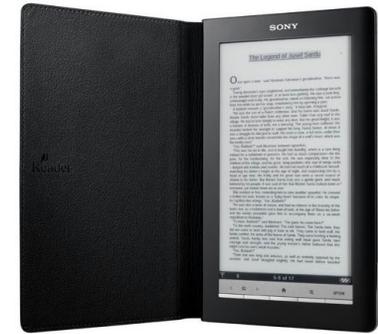
## How can I read an e-book?

E-books are often designed to be read on a dedicated e-book reader, but they can also be read on computers and some phones. Dedicated e-book readers usually use a technology called E Ink that resembles natural ink. E Ink is designed to lessen eyes strain and work well bright light, as they don't get washed out



*Various devices on which e-books can be read*

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*The Sony Reader Daily Edition uses E Ink technology*

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*The Apple iPad is not a dedicated e-book reader, but it can be used to read e-books*

**How can I create an e-book?**

In many cases, a normal document can be opened on an e-book reader without any special process. For instance, .txt and .doc files can be read on many e-book readers without the need to convert them to another format. If you want your layout to stay fixed, saving a file as a .pdf will keep the page layout static but still allow it to work on most devices.

**What are some benefits of e-books?**

**Title availability.** Because e-books don't require printing runs, they can be used for books with limited audiences or that would otherwise be out of print.

**Cost.** E-books are generally priced lower than print books and can change price depending on market demand.

**Portability and size.** Because e-books consist of a computer file, many thousands of complete books can be stored on a single e-book reader and taken from place to place. If an e-book has a standard format and isn't tied down with DRM, it can easily be transmitted over large distances via email or other electronic means.

**What are some drawbacks of e-books?**

**Incompatibility.** Because many e-books use proprietary formats, they can only be used on specific e-book readers. This means that if you want to switch from an Amazon Kindle to a Sony e-reader, you'd have to rebuy all your books in the new format. If you distribute an e-book to a class, not all students will be able to open it unless it uses an open format.

**Copy protection.** Many e-book stores sell e-books with DRM protection. This means that a book is tied to a particular user--you can't sell the book to someone else or even loan it. Even if e-books are nominally cheaper than print books, the inability to resell them can make their net cost higher.

**Layout and formatting.** Because e-books are tied to the screen resolution of an e-book reader, sizes and resolutions may be changed between the print version and the e-book version. If done poorly, the conversion can result in e-books that are illegible or difficult to read.

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