



Obtaining Free Accessible Digital Books for Eligible Florida K-12 Students

Created by the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired,
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There are times when either an online book provided by a publisher is not accessible to a student with a disability, or a student with a disability needs a print book in an accessible digital format.

1. What are the primary sources for digital books for eligible students with disabilities?
 - [Bookshare](#) – The world’s largest online library of accessible ebooks for people with reading barriers. Bookshare is **free** for U.S. schools and qualified students.
 - [Learning Ally](#) and Learning Through Listening – A discretionary project of the Florida Department of Education, Learning Through Learning has human-narrated books that are audio-only or VOICEtext that are available for **free**.
2. **Which students are eligible** for digital books from Bookshare and Learning Ally?
 - Students who have been certified by a competent authority as being an individual who
 - **(A)** is blind;
 - **(B)** has a visual impairment or perceptual or reading disability that cannot be improved to give visual function substantially equivalent to that of a person who has no such impairment or disability and so is unable to read printed works to substantially the same degree as a person without an impairment or disability; OR
 - **(C)** is otherwise unable, through physical disability, to hold or manipulate a book or to focus or move the eyes to the extent that would be normally acceptable for reading.
3. Who is a competent authority? (from a March 2021 [NIMAC presentation](#))
 - This person is responsible for certifying that a student is eligible to use accessible formats. The competent authority may be one of the following: doctor of medicine; doctor of osteopathy; ophthalmologist; optometrist; psychologist; registered nurse; therapist; and professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or welfare agencies (such as an educator, a social worker, case worker, counselor, rehabilitation teacher, certified reading specialist, school psychologist, superintendent, or librarian).
 - Visit [Bookshare](#) and [Learning Ally](#) for additional information.
4. Does it matter if the eligible student has an IEP or not?
 - Students who have an IEP will have access to all the files in Learning Ally and Bookshare, including NIMAS-derived files.
 - Students who do NOT have an IEP will have access to all the files in Learning Ally and a majority of files in Bookshare, excluding NIMAS-derived files.
5. What is a NIMAS-derived file?
 - NIMAS stands for National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard and represents the HTML standard to be used in the preparation of electronic files suitable and used solely for efficient conversion into accessible formats (i.e., DAISY files, BRFs, EPUBs, Word files, etc.). NIMAS files are provided by the publisher and are restricted for use by eligible students under IDEA.
 - NIMAS files can be created for static, digital-only materials.
6. What if a student doesn’t meet the eligibility criteria for Bookshare and Learning Ally?
 - The District Instructional Materials Department can contact the publisher to determine if digital versions are available to purchase.
7. Who can I contact for more information?
 - [Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System](#)
 - [Technology & Learning Connections](#)
 - [Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired](#)

When an accessible digital version of a book is needed for a K-12 eligible student with a disability (see number 2 on first page) to access the learning environment:

The student should be registered with Bookshare and/or Learning Ally.



Is a digital version of the needed book available from Bookshare or Learning Ally?

If yes, then:



Assign the book to the student. In Bookshare, the student can then download the needed file format directly to their device.

If not on Bookshare, then:



If a student is NIMAS eligible, follow the directions for [requesting books from the NIMAC](#).

OR

If the student is **not** NIMAS eligible, follow the directions for [requesting a book](#). You may be asked to provide Bookshare with a copy of the physical book, which will be scanned and used to create a digital file.



Bookshare will notify you when the book is available, and you can then assign the book to the student.

If not on Learning Ally, then:



Follow the directions for [how to request a book be recorded](#). This does not guarantee that the book will be added to the library. Check back regularly, as you will not be notified if your suggestion is approved.

Digital Formats used for Accessible Digital Books (from [Bookshare](#))

- BRF (Braille Ready Format) – digital braille for use with refreshable braille devices and braille embossers.
- EPUB (electronic publication) – a digital book file format. EPUB books from Bookshare are EPUB 3.0 text files that work with many popular large scale reading applications including iBooks.
- DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System format) – a digital book file format. DAISY books from Bookshare are DAISY 3.0 text files that work with just about every type of accessible technology that reads text, such as screen readers, self-voicing synthetic-voice DAISY players, braille notetakers, portable self-voicing DAISY Players, and scan-and-read software such as Kurzweil K1000 and K3000, and WYNN and OpenBook. Learn more about DAISY format [here](#).