

Key Terms to Better Understand Remote Learning and Education Technology

Across the country, schools have rapidly transitioned to providing remote services in response to the COVID-19 crisis. For many educators and parents, the terms used to describe remote learning and the accompanying technology is brand new and often confusing.

The term “digital” is a common word being used when discussing remote learning. It is important to define “digital” as it can apply to different types of materials. For example, materials could be lessons available for free online, commercial supplemental programs, or year-long comprehensive core materials. For year-long comprehensive materials, the term is used to encompass a broad range of products ranging from online PDFs or ebook versions

of textbooks to materials designed for full-time remote teaching and learning. For this glossary, “digital” is used in its broadest definition, referring to any materials accessed through technology as opposed to print.

As part of EdReports' efforts to provide more information about the digital design and components of standards-aligned instructional materials, we have put together a list of key terms that are frequently associated with remote learning.

This glossary should be used as a companion to our [Instructional Materials Technology Information Document](#) currently being completed by publishers and scheduled for rolling release in early summer 2020.

1-to-1 technology - One device per student with the goal of making learning more individualized and to extend academics beyond the four-walled classroom.

Adaptive Software - Adaptive software is any software or program that builds a model of the preferences, goals, and knowledge of each individual student and uses that model throughout the interaction with the student in order to adapt to that student's assessed needs.

Accessibility - A person with a disability is provided an equal opportunity to acquire information, receive a service, and participate in a learning experience with ease of use and independence. Accessibility must meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards which includes [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) and comply with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Asynchronous Learning - Learning that occurs in elapsed time between two or more people. Examples include email, online discussion forums, message boards, blogs, podcasts, etc.

Blended / Hybrid Learning - Situations in which a student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

Browser / Web-Based - Computer tools and applications which run on a web browser via the internet without accessing the operating system of any individual computer. These applications are accessed through web pages.

Differentiated Instruction - Adjusting and adapting instructional methodology, programs, and materials to address individual students' learning needs.

Learning Management System (LMS) - Technology platform through which students access online courses or digital instructional materials. An LMS generally includes software for creating and editing course content, communication tools, assessment tools, and other features for managing the course.

Mobile Application - A mobile app is a software application developed specifically for use on small, wireless computing devices, such as smartphones and tablets, rather than desktop or laptop computers.

Open Education Resources (OER) - Any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license (free for public use). The materials can be full year scoped and sequenced or individual lessons or units. Learn more about OER materials by visiting [Creative Commons](#).

Remote Learning - General term for any type of educational activity in which the participants are at a distance from each other—in other words, are separated in space. They may or may not be separated in time (asynchronous vs. synchronous).

Responsive Design - An approach to website design that automatically scales webpage content and elements to match the screen size on which it is viewed. It keeps images from being larger than the screen width, and prevents visitors on mobile devices from needing to do extra work to read the content.

Single Sign-On (SSO) - A session and user authentication service that permits a user to use one set of login credentials—for example, a name and password—to access multiple applications. SSO can be used to ease the management of various usernames and passwords.

Syncing - Process of updating apps and software to or between specific devices.

Synchronous Learning - Learning in which participants interact at the same time.

Virtual Private Network (VPN) - A VPN is a service that allows you to connect to the internet via an encrypted tunnel to ensure your online privacy and protect your sensitive data. VPNs are commonly used to secure connections to public Wi-Fi hotspots, hide IP addresses, and make your browsing private.

More information can be found at:

- [The Education Technology Dictionary](#) - Ed Shelf
- [EdTech Glossary](#) - Common Sense Media
- [Key Terms Regarding Online Learning and Education Technology: A Resource for Educators and Parents During the COVID-19 Disruption](#) - National Center for Learning Disabilities
- [Pandemic Planning for Distance Learning: Scenarios and Considerations for PreK–12 Education Leaders](#) - New America