

read things for free

Knowledge should be free. There's a lot more that can be said there by people more eloquent and politically developed than I, but there is also no need to. It's as simple as that – knowledge should be free.

This page is a resource list describing how to access paywalled and restricted content, and especially academic content, for free.

Academic books

Go to [Library Genesis \(LibGen\)](#) and try to find it there. LibGen's search parameter is a little sensitive, so I would try a few keywords instead of (for example) the full title, printing press and publication year.

LibGen has a lot, but it doesn't have everything; if it doesn't, go to the [Ask For PDFs from People With Institutional Access](#) Facebook group. Search for the resource there, and check out the flowchart in the group banner to see if any of those resources have it available. If they don't, ask nicely if anyone can send a PDF of the book.

If that route doesn't work, you may want to try asking on [r/AAAARG](#) for access to the AAAARG archive. This mostly works for older philosophy texts and other books in the humanities.

If none of those work, you can try paying for an eBook from a retail outlet like Google Books, Amazon, or Barnes and Noble, and “returning” it to get a refund. This is somewhat unsafe.

If none of these work, your book may only be available in print. Check on [worldcat.org](#) to see if this is the case. You may be out of luck.

Academic articles

1. Find and copy the DOI of the article, or digital object identifier. This is essentially an ID for academic articles. If you can't find it immediately on the site of the article, you can search for it on [CrossRef](#)
2. Go to SciHub and paste it. SciHub's URL changes quite frequently because of legal issues, so the best way is just to go to Google and find the current one in your country.

There is an international network of scholars contributing their credentials and labor to make SciHub work, so I've never had an issue with it. But in case of trouble,¹ you can try some of the following:

¹An example would be when SciHub stopped uploading content due to legal battles at the beginning of 2021

- Directly email the authors of the resource. They are usually very kind!!
- [Ask For PDFs from People With Institutional Access](#) as mentioned above. Please follow their contributor guidelines :)
- Ask on [r/Scholar](#).
- post with the #ICanHazPDF hashtag on Twitter (don't laugh)

Non-academic articles

Use the [Bypass Paywalls](#) extension on Chrome, Firefox, or Edge.

For a few other Medium-based sites like Towards Data Science, I also like to use [Medium Unlimited](#).

Share the resources

If you obtained a text through any means other than free and accessible resources, you have the opportunity to share that resource and ensure others won't have to jump through the hoops you did. Here are a few notes on doing so.

Before sharing, we have to make sure the file is shareable. Resources often have a lock called a DRM on them to ensure that a PDF for you can't be opened on any other machine besides your own.² If this is the case, download the eBook viewer [Calibre](#) and use a plugin called [DeDRM](#) to remove it.

If you are sure the file is shareable, you can upload it to the [Ask for PDFs](#) Facebook Group and to [LibGen](#). If you are on the tech-y side, you might also consider setting up and hosting a [Calibre server](#).

Last thoughts

You can email me at nathan.kim@yale.edu. Offer suggestions directly at [the Github repo](#).

²Some indicators for the case is if you "borrowed" an eBook (what the hell is even borrowing an eBook, anyhow), have to open the file through Adobe Digital Editions, or got it from a retail outlet