



ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

# Testing and Education Reference Center (TERC)

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**Composite Score: ★★★★★ 1/8**

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## Abstract

Testing and Education Reference Center (TERC) is an eLearning database produced by Gale. The product includes test preparation, college planning, and career readiness materials to assist those high school age and up in reaching their vocational and higher education goals. TERC includes practice tests, online courses, tutorials, streaming videos, and e-books. The product is available by annual subscription for the base product, with an add-on Career Module with a career assessment and occupational database component for an additional fee. TERC is competitive with Mometrix and PrepSTEP in its content. With its broad range of applicability, accessibility, and relatively moderate pricing TERC is recommended for purchase by public, K-12, and academic libraries.

## Pricing Options

TERC is available by annual subscription. Pricing is variable based on such factors as FTE and consortium agreements. Academic pricing for TERC is based on FTE and starts at \$1,440. Because many variables go into pricing, customers should contact Gale directly for quotes. Consortia may receive volume discounts depending upon the size of the offer and sale. TERC with Career Module is a separate add-on subscription. The minimum cost for a subscription to TERC with Career Module is \$1,944 (Siefker, 2018).

## Product Overview/Description

TERC is an eLearning resource produced by Gale and available by annual subscription which includes materials for test preparation, college planning, and career development. The Career Module is available as an add-on to the subscription. TERC is geared primarily to those high school age and up, but with some materials also applicable for grade school age and up in remedial reading, writing, and mathematics. The product is targeted at those who are considering higher education, starting a career, or making a career transition. The database contains tutorials, videos, practice tests, and e-books amongst other materials. Users are required to create an individual account before being allowed to access content such as practice tests. Maintaining an account allows users to save their progress on their practice test, resume, etc. All materials in the database are published by either Peterson's (basic skills, high school, and college preparatory materials) or Delmar (non-college career certifications).

The test preparation feature includes practice exams that are full-length and timed according to the standards of the test. Each available test includes two to three practice exams. Practice tests are offered for high school entrance, high school equivalency, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, undergraduate admission, graduate admission, U.S. citizenship, English language proficiency, and vocational certification exams (such as nursing, teaching, real estate, and cosmetology).

Popular tests contained in the database include the GED, PSAT, SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT, MAT, LSAT, ASVAB, TOEFL, AP courses, and CLEP courses. Once an exam is scored, each question provides the user's answer and an explanation of the correct response to promote learning and improved performance. There are a number of on-line courses available in various vocational areas, as well as for the ACT and SAT. Along with online practice tests and courses, TERC includes a collection of 50 e-books (as of the November 2018 title list) for test preparation.

The college planning feature offers a robust database of over 4,000 accredited undergraduate and graduate schools that can be searched by location, tuition, admission requirements, academic programs of study, and many more features. There is a separate search tool available to find undergraduate and graduate nursing programs and MBA programs. For financial planning, users can search for scholarships and make use of an Award Analyzer that compares financial aid offers in order for the user to select those that best fit their needs.

Finally, TERC includes a number of resources to assist users in exploring and preparing for careers of interest. Along with test preparation materials for career related exams, the Virtual Career Library is comprised of modules by Peterson's on such topics as transitioning out of the military, career change, writing resumes and cover letters, and salary negotiation. Remedial education tutorials and videos are available in language arts, math, and STEM subjects to prepare individuals to gain the skills necessary to compete in the workplace or to pursue higher education. For those seeking to create a resume, Resume Builder includes more than 40 industries with phrases, keywords, and tips to develop a resume that can be directly emailed to prospective employers and schools. The Career Module, available as an add-on subscription, includes the Career Assessment Tool and the Occupational Database. With the Career Assessment Tool, users can research occupations of interest to learn more about those jobs and their associated salaries among other factors. The Occupational Database links to the Occupational Information Net (O\*NET) developed for the U.S. Department of Labor which provides information on 1,100 types of occupations.

## User Interface/Navigation/Searching

TERC is navigable by four means: a search box at the top of the page; drop-down tabs across the top of the page; tabs in the center of the page with the question, "What type of student are you?"; and icons across the bottom of the page.

Users can begin a search by entering key words or the title of an exam in the search box at the top of the page. Alternatively, along the top of the page are drop-down tabs labeled Basic Skills, High School, College Prep, Career, Grad School, and International (see Figure 1). After clicking on one of these tabs, users will find a list of available tests related to that area from which to select.

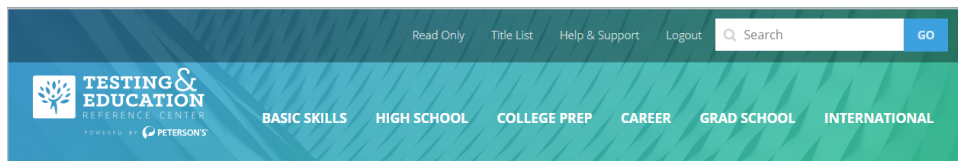


FIGURE 1 TERC Home Page, Top Banner

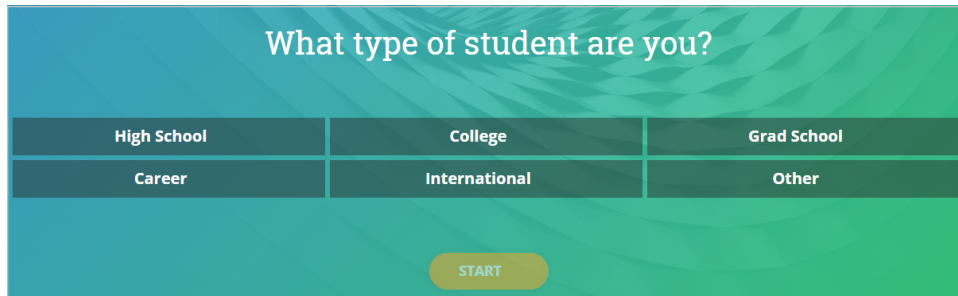


FIGURE 2 TERC Student Type Options

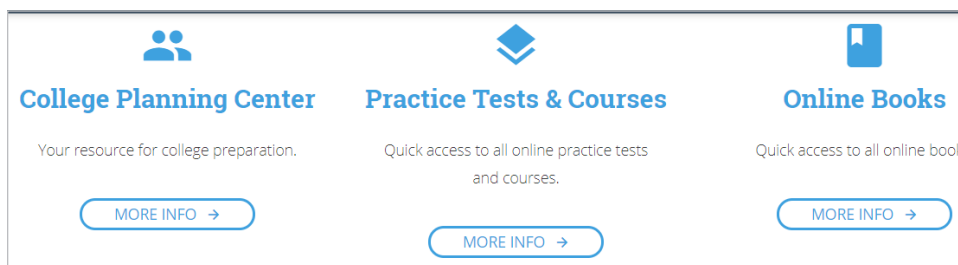


FIGURE 3 TERC Home Page, Bottom Icons

In the center of the page, users will see the question “What type of student are you?” with tabs labeled High School, College, Grad School, Career, International, and Other (see Figure 2). After making a selection, the Start tab becomes activated and can be clicked for further choices.

Finally, along the bottom of the page are icons labeled Career Planning Center, Practice Tests and Courses, and Online Books, with a More Information tab below each that takes the user another page with more information and options (see Figure 3).

Upon selecting a test, the user will be prompted to click Start Now, which leads to the user name and password login which is required before the material can be accessed.

### Critical Evaluation

TERC is a comprehensive eLearning product that covers a broad range of areas for those in high school and up to explore career choices, prepare for career or college entrance exams, and research and fund their higher education needs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The product’s content, accessibility, and cost are all points to consider in the purchase decision.

This database attempts to fill every possible test preparation and career readiness niche by targeting a range of users, from those seeking entrance to a private high school to those pursuing a cosmetology license. While this breadth of coverage makes the product relevant to a wide range of patron needs, it struggles in presenting its content in a way that is not overwhelming to the user. The home page is quite busy, with numerous avenues of accessing content and with a great deal of overlap, as well as discrepancies across choices. For the nov-

ice user, it is likely that the product may be overwhelming and difficult to navigate due to the variety of avenues for accessing content as well as the number of clicks required to ultimately get to the desired product. The requirement that the user create and log into an individual account may also be a barrier to access for those who do not choose to take this additional step.

TERC’s content is undoubtedly rich, offering materials in a variety of formats. The titles in the collection are all up-to-date relative to the latest update to the corresponding standardized test. Users can access tutorials in the form of modules, online courses, and streaming videos. Online practice tests are interactive in providing feedback to the user regarding the correct answer for each item. One potential drawback of the online practice tests is that once they are scored, they cannot be reset. Therefore, the user must be certain that the test is complete before selecting to score the test. Another somewhat minor issue is that the actual number of PDF e-books in the collection is somewhat small relative to the total number of titles in the title list, at just 50 PDF e-books out of the 208 listed titles. Each of these e-books are related to test preparation. This is somewhat confusing to the user given the presence of a Virtual Career Library, which implies the presence of e-books, but is actually comprised entirely of modules on various career topics. A final potential drawback to the appeal of the collection for those who prefer test preparation materials from competitors such as Barron’s or Princeton Review, TERC is limited to publications by Peterson’s and Delmar.

The accessibility of the product is a substantial benefit. As the materials are Digital Rights Management (DRM) free, content can be downloaded and printed. Materials can also be embedded electronically in courses via learning management systems, such as Canvas or Moo-



## TERC Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 1/8

*The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.*

### Content: ★★★★★

A broad range of coverage from remedial skills to graduate school makes it applicable to a wide population of users. The relatively limited holdings of e-books and restriction to two publishers is a potential drawback.

### User Interface/Searchability: ★★★ 1/2

The navigation is not always intuitive and may be overwhelming to some users given the variety of choices and clicks required to access content.

### Pricing: ★★★★★

Moderately priced relative to competitors and with content that supports the value of the product. The Career Module add-on subscription does not appear to be a good value relative to the expense and content gained.

### Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★★★

Standard terms and conditions. The contract allows for Interlibrary Loan, ability to embed content in electronic courses or via electronic reserves, and options for creating audio or Braille copies for those who are visually impaired.

dle, or via electronic reserves. TERC is also mobile device friendly with users having the capability to take practice tests or read e-books on smart devices.

The cost of the product is relatively modest in comparison to such competitors as PrepSTEP. The availability of a broad range of up-to-date content is an advantage for libraries who struggle with the cost of replacing print materials regularly. Given that the product can accommodate an unlimited number of simultaneous users, the materials are therefore accessible to many more patrons than the single print copy model of old. However, the add-on subscription of the Career Module does not seem to be of substantial value relative to the cost. This add-on includes merely a career assessment tool (which may be available from other products in a library's database, such as Ferguson's Career Guidance Center) and the ONET which is freely available online from the U.S. Department of Labor. The division between the base product and the add-on subscription thus feels rather capricious.

TERC's breadth of coverage, accessibility, and moderate pricing make it an appealing addition to public, K-12, and academic libraries. The clunky navigation, requirement for users to create an individual account, add-on Career Module subscription, and limitation to two content publishers detract somewhat from the product. In essence

however, TERC fits a variety educational and career needs and is likely to be of substantial benefit to a range of users making it a recommended purchase.

## Competitive Products

Mometrix and PrepSTEP are the two main competitive products for TERC. These products each have various strengths and weaknesses relative to accessibility, content, and cost. PrepSTEP is a LearningExpress product from EBSCOhost. Information for this comparison of products was taken from The Council of Chief Librarians Electronic Access & Resources Committee review, *Test Preparation Databases*, published in January 2018.

Regarding accessibility, PrepSTEP and TERC are the most user-friendly as they provide MARC records and are DRM free. Both products allow users to download e-books as PDFs that can be saved or printed. Both products are also able to be used on a mobile device. However, these products require users to create an individual account before they can view content. In contrast, Mometrix does not pro-

### Contact Information

#### TERC is produced by Gale

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Producer URL: <https://www.gale.com>  
Product URL: <https://www.gale.com/c/testing-and-education-reference-center>

**Free Text Keywords:** TERC | Gale | test preparation | high school | college | graduate school | career | Peterson's | Delmar | international | resume | basic skills | eLearning | eBooks

**Primary Category:** Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology

**Type of product being reviewed:** Ebook collection; Other

**Target Audience:** Secondary; General public; Undergraduate (including community colleges); Graduate/Faculty/Researcher

**Access:** Subscription

vide MARC records and DRM prohibit users from downloading or printing content. It is the only one of the three products that does not require users to create an account, but also does not offer this option for users who wish to save their progress. Mometrix performs rather poorly on a mobile device.

In terms of content, Mometrix primarily provides study guides and practice test books for general standardized tests and professional exams. The product does not include a career component to assist users in exploring careers or creating a resume. PrepSTEP and TERC both offer content related to general academic and career skills along with career materials for resume building. PrepSTEP has two versions, one aimed at two-year and one at four-year college students. TERC seeks to be more broadly applicable, identifying its user base as high school, college, grad school, career, and international.

The products vary in their cost. Pricing for Mometrix is a tiered model based on the number of users and the number of titles selected. The price ranges from one-fourth the price (1-10 tests) to full price (the entire library of over 2,000 titles). Mometrix is the least expensive of the three products. TERC is priced based on FTE and the add-on subscription of the Career Module. PrepSTEP offers a 2-year college and a 4-year college version that can be purchased on their own or with the Computer Skills Center and/or Job & Career Accelerator as add-ons making it the most expensive of three.

## Purchase & Contract Provisions

Purchase and contract provisions are outlined in the Subscription and Hosting Services Agreement with Cengage Learning, Inc. Access to the product is allowed for walk-ins and remote users who have been authenticated. Authorized users are permitted to download, view, or print limited paper or electronic copies for internal business, educational research, or personal noncommercial purposes. The contract al-

lows for parts of the content to be incorporated in electronic course packs or course reserves. Hard copy course packs are prohibited. The contract does allow for the creation of audio or Braille course packs for visually impaired users. Insubstantial portions of the content may be transmitted to third-parties for scholarly use. The contract allows for the user to “fulfill occasional requests” for the purposes of interlibrary loan in compliance with Section 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law. Remote access is permitted with proper security procedures in place. The contract does not allow for usage statistics.

## Authentication

Gale offers a variety of authentication options including: IP, password library-managed, referring URL, cookie, barcode, and Shibboleth and Athens.

## Author’s References

Council of Chief Librarians Electronic Access & Resources Committee. “Test Preparation Databases.” 2018. <<https://cclibrarians.org/sites/default/files/reviews/Documents/comparisonreviewtestprep.pdf>>

Kayla Siefker (Senior Media & Public Relations Manager, Gale), e-mail contact to author, July 2018 and November 2018.

## About the Author

**Dawn Behrend** is an adjunct Instruction and Reference Librarian at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Ms. Behrend holds a B.A. in Psychology, M.A. in Clinical Psychology, MBA, and MLS. She has 20 years of experience as a psychologist and has recently joined the library science field where she serves as Lenoir-Rhyne University library’s liaison to the departments of business and economics, mathematics and computer science, psychology, and counseling. ■