

Saving Money on Textbooks

In a nutshell, you've got four ways of obtaining textbooks; from most expensive to least expensive, you can: buy new, buy used, or rent. Chances are you'll need to combine a couple of methods based on availability and other issues you'll encounter. Regardless of which method you're employing, you've got plenty of ways to save money.

Buying New

The best strategy if you want to pay the most money when buying a new textbook: Go to your campus bookstore. Avoid this at all cost. There is rarely a situation where you can't find a better deal through an online retailer like [Amazon](#) or even a local bookstore (although they may have to put in a special order). Whether you're ordering online or in person, keep an eye out for [coupons](#) and [deals](#) to save a little extra.

If you do end up buying a brand new textbook and you want to make some of that money back, there are several places that will purchase your used textbooks. Your college bookstore is likely one option, but online textbook sellers like [Amazon](#), [Chegg](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [BookByte](#), [Cash4Books](#), and [Alibris](#) (whose textbook buy-back is Chegg-powered) are just some of your many options.

Buying Used

If you're still set on owning your textbooks but don't need a book that's never been touched, buying used is a good way to save but comes with its own set of issues. With so many options online, you'll want to pay attention to sites that have quality ratings or let you inquire about the quality of the textbook. While a mildly beat up book will serve you as well as a shiny new one, you want to be sure you don't end up with a torn-up book spine or pages filled with cartoon penises. Also be sure to check the store's return policy for those special occasions where you do, indeed, end up with a spineless, genital-ridden textbook and need a replacement. On the plus side, virtually every used textbook retailer is pretty careful about the used books they buy for resale, but once and awhile something will slip through the cracks. Additionally, in some cases you'll find the best deals directly from another person and there won't be an intermediary. It never hurts to double-check.

While a Google search will turn up a nearly endless supply of used textbook retailers, sorting through them all is a bit of a chore. Here is a semi-short list of your options:

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[eCampus](#)
[Alibris](#)

[Biblio](#)
[Bookbyte](#)
[Textbooks.com](#)

Regardless of how you're buying you're going to want to find the cheapest price. Searching a bunch of sites individually can be a pain. [CampusBooks](#) and [BigWords](#) let you search several textbook stores at the same time for a real-time price comparison. BigWords also has an [iPhone app](#) for comparison shopping when you're in, for example, your overpriced campus bookstore, though it's missing a handy barcode scanning feature. [CampusBooks has apps for both Android and iPhone](#) with

that feature. [SnapTell](#) ([iPhone](#) and [Android](#)), can also handle barcodes but will work from a photograph as well.

Renting

Textbook renting is becoming a more popular option these days, with [Chegg](#) sitting pretty as the (self-proclaimed) top textbook renting site at your disposal. Chegg lets you rent and return them, plus they'll [plant a tree for every rental](#). Chegg isn't the only rental option you have, though. [Valore](#), [Textbook Rentals](#), [BookRenter](#), [Campus Book Rentals](#), and [Textbooks.com](#) are other possible options. Some colleges have even started renting textbooks directly. In some cases, they'll even buy the book if they don't have it available for rent. Check with your school to find out if that's an option and plan ahead so they can order the book for you if necessary. If you're going digital and want a rental option as well, check out [CourseSmart](#). It'll let you read online or via a copy-protected PDF. While they have iPhone and iPad apps available, support for other mobile platforms and eReaders is currently unavailable.

If you plan to sell your books once you're finished with them anyway, you may as well rent. The important thing to remember is to avoid marking up the books or degrading their quality to much. If you do, you could end up paying a fee. Renting will save you money if you can take good care of the books, but since they'll inevitably find a new home once you've finished you will need to keep them in the best shape possible.

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COPYING COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IS ILLEGAL. You can copy a few pages for personal use but you can't copy a whole book without violating federal law. There are many ways to cut down on the cost of textbooks. Copying them is not one.

Getting the Right Book

If you're not careful, you might end up spending good money on the wrong textbook. New editions generally reconfigure the chapters even if little new content has been added. While the book might still be usable it can be a pain to find what you're looking for when the rest of the class has their book in a different order. Ensuring you order the correct volume(s) is also important, as each volume contains different chapters, and you can easily end up missing the material you need if you don't check carefully. If you have the ability to contact your professors before classes begin, ask them for the book's ISBN number to ensure you'll find the right copy. If you can't reach your professors, often the campus bookstore will have this information. If you're really pressed, don't feel you need to take the risk of buying the wrong book. Often you'll find a copy of the book in the school library and can use that until you can get your hands on the right copy.