

Making College Affordable: Textbooks

While tuition and room and board are the primary costs associated with higher education, students also typically face a number of significant out-of-pocket expenses such as class fees and textbooks. Finding ways to reduce your costs and advocating for more affordable options can help you stretch your college dollars.

Smart Textbook Shopping

To reduce your textbook costs, use these money-saving tips:

1. **Know what you need.** Make sure you know what book you need, including the ISBN, title, author, publisher, edition and any supplements required by your professor.
2. **Shop online.** Online retailers often have lower prices for new and used textbooks. If your professor doesn't require any supplements, you may be able to find unbundled versions of textbooks online.
3. **Rent textbooks.** If you don't plan to keep the textbook, save money by renting it from an online book rental company. If you choose an e-textbook subscription, be aware that your access time is limited and printing may be restricted. Be sure to read the fine print.
4. **Swap books with other students.** Seek the books you need for common classes from fellow students or look for book swaps on social media and Craigslist.
5. **Buy used textbooks.** If you have to go through your campus bookstore, look for used books, which are typically 75% of the new price. If a book is being used again next term, the bookstore will usually buy it back for about 50% of the new price.¹ Expect the buyback price to be much less if the book is not being used again next semester.
6. **Save your receipts.** You may be eligible for the American Opportunity Tax Credit, a federal tax break worth up to \$2,500 for textbook and other eligible education expenses. See www.textbookaid.org for more information.

Advocating for Lower Textbook Costs—#TextbookBroke

While the tips above can help you reduce your textbook costs, colleges and universities can also develop and use new programs to reduce the burden on students. Encourage your college or university to make changes to their textbook policies and adopt more affordable programs, such as open educational resources. These resources, such as open access textbooks, use public domain material or have open copyright licenses allowing the information to be shared at no cost. These free resources are posted online for students to access as needed.

Your school does not have to develop its own open source or open access textbooks—hundreds of books already exist online and many colleges and universities throughout the country have begun using them to save their students money. For more information, check out the Student Government Resource Center's *Making Textbooks Affordable: Student Government Toolkit* on the center's website, www.studentgovresources.org/toolkits.

¹Tips to Save on Textbooks. Student PIRGs. <http://www.studentpirgs.org/resources/textbook-tips>.