

SMART WAYS TO SAVE ON YOUR TEXTBOOKS



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No one needs to tell a college student that textbooks are expensive. Since the costs keep climbing — about 6% annually over the last two decades, according to the Government Accountability Office — what’s a strapped-for-cash student to do?

RENTALS

There are more than 1,800 college stores and several companies offering rentals this year, giving cost-conscious students temporary access to course materials.

According to companies such as Chegg, Inc., BookRenter.com, and Campus Book Rentals, rental books are often 50% to 85% off the list price. You have to remember, however, this is the savings when compared to a brand new book.

“I think it’s a good resource for people who want to save money on their books, and who don’t want a stack of textbooks to try to get rid of every semester, says Chanelle Broyles, a sophomore at Ivy Tech Community College. “I saved \$60-70 [on one book] by renting from Chegg instead of renting or buying used from the school.” But read the fine print carefully.

Rental companies charge fees for books which are postmarked past the due date. For instance, Chegg.com says, “If your book is not returned by the due date, Chegg may automatically extend the rental for a fee, or charge you the purchase price of the book minus any rental fees you have paid.”

Occasionally, you will find that the rental period is not long enough. Perhaps the class took longer than you expected or the book turned out to be a great reference volume. Most book rental companies offer many different types of rental extensions. For instance, Chegg.com offers these different extensions: 15 days, 30 days, 45 days, 60 days, a quarter 85 days), and a semester (125 days). In addition, they also have a way to easily convert a rental into a purchase.

E-BOOKS

With the explosion in sales of tablets such as the Apple iPad, Amazon Kindle Fire and Barnes and Noble Nook, electronic books have perhaps come of age. Although

textbooks are more widely read on paper that trend is changing. According to the Student Monitor, a private student market research company based in New Jersey, about 5 percent of all textbooks acquired fall 2011 in the United States were digital textbooks. That is more than double the 2.1 percent of the spring semester. A big advantage of e-books is that they’re much cheaper. Take the textbook “Media Law and Ethics”, a new copy is \$142, while at coursesmart.com, it’s available for \$68.00.

Andrews University student Maxwell Murray is sold on e-books. Since he buys his textbooks out-of-pocket — no loans involved — he’s intentional in his search for the cheapest options. Apart from the savings, he says he likes the e-book’s portability.

“I got tired of carrying a backpack, and since I didn’t live in a dorm where I could go and leave books this was a quicker way for me to move across campus,” says the marketing major. But there is a downside to consider before you

make that purchase.

While e-books are less expensive, bear in mind that you can’t sell them back to the bookstore. It’s a good idea to calculate beforehand how much it would cost if you had purchased, say a used textbook, and sold it back at the semester’s end. You also need to factor in the hidden costs, such as a computer, Internet access, and of course, printing.

Whatever route you choose — whether renting or purchasing an e-book—it’s always a good idea to do adequate research and find out what’s the best option for you. **e**

Additional reporting by
Skye Tenorio | emmaskyet@gmail.com
Online Textbook Resources
<http://www.coursesmart.com>
<http://www.ecampus.com>
<http://books.google.com/ebooks>
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