

Cheapest Textbooks Online

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Quick Links

For the best savings on textbooks check out:

- Chegg.com
- Amazon.com
- BookByte.com

Study: Cheapest Place to buy Textbooks

Our latest study is here to answer one question: Where is the cheapest place to buy textbooks online?

Update: See the latest ranking done in January 2011 here.

It seems every online textbook seller claims to be one of the cheapest places to buy textbooks. So, lets find out for a fact who sells the cheapest textbooks.

We selected 10 major online textbook sellers and compared prices of four selected textbooks from various subjects.

The textbooks used in this study are:

TitleISBN

Book A Biology 0073227390

Book B Contemporary Business 0324359292

Book C Essentials of Psychology 0618713123

Book D Intermediate Accounting 0471749559

All of these books are in their current editions and just about all textbook stores listed here will buy the book back (for about half of what you paid for it).

The goal is to find out who actually sells the cheapest textbooks, shipping included, on the net.

Of course, there may be other methods of obtaining books cheaper than this by buying the e-book, buying used or simply going with a past version from your school's library... all solid options for frugal students. This study compares the cost of new textbooks and the added shipping costs if applicable (Many online textbook sellers offer free shipping).

Now, Amazon may seem like the most popular place to buy textbooks online and is pretty much the only online textbook

store a not-so-internet-savvy person may know of.

However, there are cheaper options out there that students looking to save on textbooks should consider.

Many of the "Best places to buy Textbooks" lists out there are pretty disappointing, merely listing a dozen or so textbooks sites that all do the same thing: compare from prices at amazon, half.com, etc.

There is nothing innovative about what these sites are doing. Basically it's just lack of research.

Here is the break down of the results (Total price includes all shipping costs):

Cheapest Online Textbook Retailers

Textbook Retailer

Book A

Book B

Book C

Book D

Total

1. CollegeBooksDirect.com\$126.38 \$105.96\$63.29\$125.68\$433.28
2. TextbooksNow.com\$122.21\$102.46\$70.18\$145.16\$440.01
3. Amazon \$131.49\$111.96\$85.28\$142.93\$471.66
4. BookByte\$130.05\$106.00\$81.70\$133.95\$475.50
5. Barnes and Noble\$131.80\$111.96\$85.28\$126.63\$485.66 1
6. Textbooks.com \$143.50\$120.25\$82.25\$147.00\$493.00
7. Textbooksrus.com\$167.98\$142.20\$66.90\$130.47\$511.51
8. Powells\$177.25\$104.00\$87.25\$180.35\$548.85
9. TextbookX.com\$149.10\$126.46\$105.91\$172.94\$554.41
10. eCampus\$161.72\$136.75\$94.76\$186.20\$579.43

1. Total price includes a \$25/year membership fee which gives you 20% off on textbooks.

The main focus of sites this study compares are the online textbook retailers listed above.

Marketplace textbook sellers were originally going to be left out of this study as they are similar to price comparison textbook sites in that they find the

best available price based on the sellers in their network and usually vary in price. These include: half.com, ValoreBooks, abebooks.com, alibris.com and other sites that connect to hundreds of independent booksellers around the world.

But, we decided to compare purchase prices on some of the more popular textbook comparison sites and marketplaces. Let it be known that these prices may not always be available, as being a marketplace, it's usually a seller just selling one individual book.

What comparing these marketplace and comparison sites does do, is find which one does the best job of finding the cheapest overall books.

We kept these to a limited few, as all of the following services pretty much do the same thing: compare prices from books available at half.com, Amazon marketplace, BookByte and others.

Be wary though, many comparison sites out there include international editions of the textbook in their results. While most contents will be the same, international editions are usually soft cover books that may not contain illustrations, amongst other things.

The following results were taken using the price of the U.S. version of the textbook (in new condition).

Cheapest Textbook Marketplace and Comparison Sites

Textbook Marketplace

Book A
 Book B
 Book C
 Book D
 Total

1. BigWords.com\$93.94\$72.98\$52.69\$93.99\$313.60
2. CampusBooks.com\$93.94\$72.98\$52.69\$93.99\$313.60
3. half.com\$93.94\$72.98\$54.96\$93.99\$315.87
4. Valore Books\$120.95\$103.20\$57.65\$105.95\$387.75
5. AbeBooks.com\$120.90\$105.57\$56.00\$108.03\$390.50
6. alibris.com\$133.98\$121.10\$63.66\$98.99\$417.73

Conclusions

BigWords.com is good if you want to find the cheapest new and used books on the market at the click of a button. Basically, it aggregates prices from Chegg, half.com, TextbookX, Abebooks, Amazon, etc. Granted this study is for new textbooks, BigWords is even a better option if you're looking for used textbooks.

CollegeBooksDirect.com was the biggest surprise of this study. A website that we came across while conducting this study was the cheapest place to buy new textbooks among all listed textbook retailers. Both of these sites seem like solid choices for students to buy their textbooks, as they provide cheaper textbooks than the College Book Store (obviously) and Amazon. Of course, if a student isn't interested in owning the textbook, another cheaper option is renting textbooks, as it requires less money up front.

Study Results

Best Online Retail Store: CollegeBooksDirect.com
 Best Comparison site: BigWords.com
 Best Textbook Marketplace: half.com (ebay)
 Best Textbook Renter: Chegg
 Best Place to Sell Textbooks: Textbooksrus.com