

Where to Download Textbooks

Quick Links

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- CourseSmart.com
 - iChapters.com
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Due to the tighter economy, college students' budgets are being pinched more than ever. Even as tuition seems to keep rising, the biggest complaint by students and others alike seems to be geared toward the outrageous cost of textbooks. Across the entire Internet, there seems to be more and more 'How to Save Money on Textbooks' articles being written.

So it seems, in these tough times, people are out there looking to help one another by offering advice on where to shop for textbooks. Some others are helping out fellow students save in not so legal ways, in the form of textbook torrents, or illegally copied textbooks that are downloaded from the Internet (more on textbook torrents later).

Textbooks are expensive, and it's one of the many reasons college students will always be broke. There are ways around this though. First off, you can check out our study that finds the cheapest places to buy textbooks online. A good list of resources that will help you save on textbooks.

Some colleges are even trying to help with the problem by setting up their own textbook rental programs. But, as technology advances and more students and Colleges are making an effort to be Green, digital textbooks seem to be a solid option. If you don't mind reading on a computer screen instead of a printed book, you have several free or low-cost options for downloading textbooks. It's something Amazon could be betting on with their new digital e-book reader, the Kindle.

McGraw-Hill, a major textbook publisher, publishes 95% of their books electronically as well as in print. Publishers are eager to jump into the digital textbook market in order to shut out the used textbook market, something that cuts into sales of new textbooks. Last year, digital textbooks only accounted for less than 7% of all textbook sales revenue.

The problem is there is no reasonable device to read these digital textbooks on, as it can be hard to read and follow textbooks on a laptop. This is why many believe the Kindle will be a hit on college campuses, assuming many take a following to digital textbooks.

Textbooks in digital form are not only cheaper (in most cases), but will be much easier to carry around. Another benefit: no waiting in long lines at your college bookstore. Digital textbooks can be downloaded right from the Internet.

There are a few sites out there that allow you to download textbooks: some are free, some cost money, some not as legal as others.

Where to Download Textbooks:

CourseSmart

CourseSmart claims to have the largest collection of e-Textbooks, with 4,226 at time of posting. Founded and supported by five major textbook publishers, the site advertises a \$57.46 average savings per e-Textbook. Their e-books do have their limitations though, as CourseSmart only lets students print out 10 pages at a time (still better than carrying a whole book around I suppose). Purchasers of the e-textbook don't get to keep the book permanently because the downloaded files have digital expiration codes and expire after about 180 days.

CafeScribe

CafeScribe offers a collection of textbooks in e-Book form. Though you'll have to pay for these books, it offers books at half their retail price. Students can browse, purchase and download e-Books they need for class. The site is also a social network, allowing you to form online study groups and share notes with other students. Here you can also publish, share, and annotate your own PDF documents. Users can download the MyScribe software that allows you to read the digital content easier, and includes tools that let you highlight, bookmark, and make notes. Many students like to have two books open at the same time; you can keep multiple e-Books open with tabs using MyScribe.

iChapters

iChapters sells textbooks in print, e-book form (priced 50% below list price), audio books, and even individual chapters of textbooks known as eChapters.

Textbook Revolution

Textbook Revolution is a place for free textbooks in digital form.

The site's mission is to bring all free textbooks available, together in one place, and review them. Many of the books are PDF files, while others are only available online.

All of the books are offered for free by their respective copyright holders for online viewing, though some of the books do have printing/sharing restrictions.

Wikibooks

Wikibooks is a resource started back in 2003 by the same group that is behind Wikipedia.

It is a collection of open-content textbooks that anyone can edit and has grown to include over 31,167 pages created by its community. A GNU Free Documentation License makes sure that all content on the site will always remain freely distributable and reproducible. The mission of Wikibooks is to create a free instructional resource that anyone can use. This will take some time to achieve as Wikibooks has many incomplete texts, and many argue that even the ones that are complete are of poor quality. But, it's a good start/idea.

Flatworld Knowledge

Flat World Knowledge is a service coming January 2009 that will provide free and open college textbooks. Users of the site will also have the option of purchasing the book in print at a marginal cost, at about a third of the cost of a traditional textbook. They also have a facebook application that allows you to read your digital textbooks.

Open Text Book

Open Text Book is a registry of textbooks (and related materials) which are open, meaning they are free for anyone to use, reuse and redistribute.

Freeload Press

Free Load Press offers free textbooks in e-book form. In order to keep the books free, advertising is placed throughout each of its textbooks. Print versions are also available for reasonable prices, typically 65% less than what you would normally pay. On the downside though, once you register with the site, they do share some of your info with advertisers.

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Textbook Torrents is where students can download torrent files of Textbooks in full PDF form. While it's nice to get textbooks for free, the legality of the service is in question with the sharing of copyrighted material. These allegations led to a mid-July shutdown of Textbook Torrents. The site is (was) back up, but at time of article publishing the site was unavailable once again.

Other similar services to consider:

- Project Gutenberg
- Open Book Project
- Connexions

In the past, teachers often assigned books without knowing how much they would cost students. Make sure you tell your teachers about some of these services, and maybe your class will be using free and open textbooks in the near future.

Please note these services are for textbooks in digital form. Many students prefer textbooks in print form, even though they will obviously cost more. If you decide to go the traditional route and buy your textbooks in physical form, be sure to check out our independent study on the cheapest places to buy online.