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# 10 Reasons Buying Textbooks Still Outsmarts Renting Them

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NEW YORK (MainStreet) -- After emptying the bank account or signing your life away with a mountain of student loans to foot the tuition bill for the fall semester, the costs are just beginning.

Textbooks have become a big-ticket expense for college students and their families. And there are plenty of options out there in terms of finding the best deals on books, which only adds to the confusion. Textbook rentals have become wildly popular, but renting books prevents you from selling the books back after the semester and if you're not careful, you may be slammed with fees if the book is returned late or returned damaged.

MainStreet decodes the downsides of renting and sheds light on the benefits of purchasing books, even as the renting trend has caught on.

## 1. Hey, you might need the book after class

It may seem hard to believe that you'll need your organic chemistry textbook after college, but especially if you're planning on heading off to medical school, your college chemistry textbook might come in handy.

And if you find the textbook to be well-written and easy-to-understand, you're going to want to be able to refer back to that book later in your academic career, especially when you'll be taking more advanced courses that require a mastery of the subject material you learned in college.

## 2. Highlights and damage

When renting books, you run the risk of the book being littered with highlights, markings or notes written in the book from previous students. This can be distracting when studying on your own. While most textbook rental companies aim to repair and minimize the wear and tear on the rentals, don't always expect a clean book.

## 3. Don't you want to write in the book?

A helpful study tip includes marking up the book and highlighting important definitions. Especially on open-book exams, making notes inside the textbook can be the difference between a grade of an A or a B. If you rent a book, make sure you check with the rental company on the fees involved with highlighting or writing in the textbook. Some companies allow highlighting, but don't allow writing in the book.

Plus, if you drop the book a few times and by the end of the semester the book is damaged, well, the saying, "you break it, you buy it," comes into play, as you may be forced to buy the book *after* renting it.

## 4. After final exams, you're exhausted

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ing a shipping label, packaging up your book and heading to the UPS location (which may not even be close to campus!) on the day of your final or right after your final exam, when your brain is fried?

With buying textbooks, you call the shots as to what you want to do with the book once the semester is over, and on your own timetable.

**5. Returning the book**

What happens if you return the book past the due date? Don't think the rental company will give you a free pass. They'll just kindly increase the length of your rental period -- and you'll have to pay for that extension.

As always, if you're going to rent a book, know the return policy beforehand.

**6. Campus library**

Why rent books when you can "rent" them for free? We're talking about the school library -- you've heard of libraries, right?

Jacqueline Jones, a 2011 graduate of Ohio University, relied on campus libraries for some of the textbooks she needed during college: "I was able to check my textbooks out from the library for free. My school partnered with eleven other campuses to link their libraries so there were always a few textbooks in the stacks that were available for long-term checkout."

The drawbacks? Only a few copies of each book were available at the library. "If you knew about this service, you definitely did not tell your friends or classmates because you wanted that book," she adds. Chances are you won't be the only one to think of this even if you keep it quiet, so if you do want to "rent" from the library, plan on beating the crowd.

If the town or city your college or university is located in has a decent public library system, you may be entitled to a library card as a resident. While a public library may not be of much help when you need the latest organic chemistry text, for many humanities courses a public library system may not only have the relevant texts, but more copies than the campus library catalog.

**7. Buying used**

Believe it or not, you can actually find a deal when trying to purchase a textbook on your own. And used textbooks are the prime way to save on textbooks. Websites like [Bigwords.com](http://Bigwords.com) let you search for the cheapest textbooks -- type in the book's title or ISBN number and prices will likely be lower than you expect.

Many colleges now offer as part of your tuition bill (unless you opt-out) a pre-set limit on a debit card that can be used for on-campus purchases, including the campus bookstore. Suffice to say that the campus bookstore is not likely to offer the most competitive prices on texts, especially if you are buying new.

**8. Selling the book back**

Another guaranteed way to save on buying textbooks is to sell the book back at the end of the semester to recoup the sunk cost from when you originally purchased the book.

And these days, selling your book back is easier than ever. Amazon.com recently unveiled a new textbook buyback program, where they'll give you an Amazon gift card of up to 70% of the book's value, even if you didn't buy the book from Amazon.

An Amazon gift card is as good as cash, though if you would rather have the cash, Jeff Knobs of [Extrabux.com](http://Extrabux.com) suggests using [Abebooks.com](http://Abebooks.com) as a resource to sell back your books. "They'll give you the most cash -- but it depends on the edition, how popular the book is and the supply of the book," he adds.

**9. Don't just sell your book, sell your "A" in the course**

Did your textbook help you ace a course? Don't keep that a secret when selling your books -- especially if you're selling to a friend or on eBay or Craigslist.

"A highlighted textbook used by an A student is a lot more valuable to a B, C or D student who has trouble identifying what to highlight in the textbook and what to study. There are many online resources where you can add notes that advertise a used textbook as having been highlighted by someone who got an A in that course," says author April Masini of [AskApril.com](http://AskApril.com).

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-- By *Scott Gamm*

Gamm is the founder of the personal finance website [HelpSaveMyDollars.com](#). He has appeared on NBC's TODAY, MSNBC and CNN. Follow Scott on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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