

# Navigating Textbooks and Course Materials on Campus: The Basics

Most instructors use textbooks or course materials to teach a class. Textbooks and course materials come in various formats, and campus stores generally offer several purchasing options for students. Check the store's website before the first day of class for the list that will outline the materials you might need for your courses. The following are common terms you may encounter when purchasing these materials.

## Required

These are textbooks and course materials that instructors will teach from directly, often assigning specific readings and assignments necessary to learn the subject. These materials are considered essential for academic success. Most lab manuals, for example, are required since students must regularly submit completed assignments for grading purposes.

## Textbook Rentals

Many campus stores rent textbooks for a set period. This can be a cost-effective solution, especially when students won't be using the textbook for subsequent classes.

## Buyback/Sellback

At the end of term, most campus stores give students the opportunity to sell their textbooks through a program called Buyback. Check your bookstore's website for dates and details.

## Used Textbooks

Because many professors use the same textbook for several terms, students are often able to buy (and sell) used textbooks and save money. Most campus stores make used copies available whenever possible, either through buyback or by purchasing them from used book wholesalers.

Some instructors require specific editions of a given textbook: make sure you're getting the version compatible with your class. Also, if a course requires an access code, see if you can purchase the code separately before buying used materials. Finally, because stock is always limited, shop early in the term as used books tend to sell first.

## Optional/Recommended

Professors might recommend optional materials to expand students' understanding of a given subject. Unlike required textbooks and course materials, instructors don't generally refer to optional materials nor will they assign specific readings or assignments from them.

## Bundles

Instructors often work with publishers to create custom course material bundles. These packages often include an abridged version of the required textbook, an access code, and possibly lecture notes produced specifically for the class. Individual components might be available for purchase separately.

## E-Textbooks

Some textbooks are available in a digital format that can be read on a PC, laptop, tablet, and many other devices. Because there are no associated printing costs, the price of e-textbooks is generally lower than traditional formats. It's worth noting, however, that access to e-textbooks expire after a certain length of time, generally between 6-24 months.

## Access Codes

Large classes often require students to get digital access to a course-specific website that is administered by the instructor. These websites are similar to online classes and can include assignments, quizzes, study aids, discussion groups, and even an e-textbook. Although some access codes can be purchased separately (similar to an online subscription) they usually are packaged with new textbooks or included in custom bundles.

## Coursepacks/Readers

Custom coursepacks are collections of readings from various sources that your instructor has produced specifically for a class. Coursepacks can range in size from a few pages to several hundred and are almost always required.

## Library Reserves

Many instructors will put textbooks, digital materials, readings, and other resources on reserve at the campus library specifically for students registered in their classes. Students can access these materials for a set amount of time.

## Receipts

Always, always, always keep your receipts. If you need to return any of your course materials, you'll need the receipt. Before you purchase or rent materials, take the time to read and understand the return policy. Don't assume that all vendors will allow you to return materials for full credit. Also, course materials are often tax deductible, once again requiring receipts.

## Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open educational resources are content or materials that are available at no cost or low cost to students. This is because they were created under an open copyright license or are no longer under copyright. Many OER materials must be accessed online, but check with your campus store to see if an inexpensive print version is available.

## Print-on-Demand (POD)

Print-on-demand technology enables the printing and binding of one book at a time, upon receiving an order, using a specialized printing machine. Print-on-demand eliminates the warehousing of stock, allowing stores using the technology to offer more books.

## Learning Management System (LMS)

Many colleges and universities use a learning management system, an electronic registrar that handles record keeping for enrollment and student management, including information on students such as skills tracking. The LMS can be used to track classroom as well as online learning. Students can log into the LMS to view information on each of their classes, submit homework, take tests, participate in discussions, and communicate with faculty. In some cases, course materials may be accessed through the LMS.

## Adaptive Course Materials

A new type of educational software adapts content to the knowledge level of the learner to create a more personalized learning experience, helping the student to master concepts before moving on to new material.

## ISBN

ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a 13-digit number that uniquely identifies the specific edition of a given work. It's important for students to find the ISBN of a required course material to make sure they have the correct edition needed.

## QUESTIONS?

**When in doubt, ask your instructor, the department, or the campus store when you have any questions regarding your textbooks. Student success is based on getting the best, most-effective course materials possible, and help is always available.**

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