For many first time college students, textbooks can be a real financial stressor. Often, students don’t understand how costly textbooks can be until they hit the checkout line in the university bookstore. On average, students spend about $900 per year on college textbooks (McGowen, 2006). However, if students prepare themselves, they can save themselves a lot of money on textbooks. Read on for helpful tips to help reduce the stress of book buying!

What you want to know about textbooks before hitting the bookstore!

RENTING:
Pros —
• No need to search for books, the school has them for you
• 1 low flat rate
• Won’t be stuck with unnecessary textbooks after classes are over
• No hassling with book buy-backs
Cons —
• Must return books at end of semester
• If book is lost, you must pay for it + renting costs

BUYING:
Pros —
• You have a resource to keep after the class is over
• You may do whatever you want with the book without worrying about damage charges
Cons —
• Cost is much more expensive
• If you don’t want the book at the end of class, you have the hassle of book buy-backs

RENTING vs. BUYING

Websites for buying textbooks:
• www.bestbookbuys.com
• www.bookfinder.com
• www.booksoncampus.com
• www.campusbookswap.com
• www.amazon.com

Websites for selling textbooks:
• www.bestwebbuys.com/books
• www.textbookwheel.com
• www.mybookbuyer.com

Some students are fortunate enough to attend a university, such as Northwest Missouri State University, that has textbook rentals. However, many schools do not offer this luxury. Before school starts, run through the following checklist to make sure you do not spend more than you have to on your college textbooks.

BEFORE classes start, do the following:
→ Talk to your professors — Get a syllabus, this will help you figure out what books you need before classes start
→ Talk to former students who took the same classes — Find out how often they used the required textbooks — Find out if they still have their old books (Can you buy or borrow from them?)
→ Hit the bookstore early (Used books go fast!!)
→ Check your online options [See section on buying online]
→ Find a friend with the same class/textbook (You may be able to share the book and copy info from it. You could split the cost of the book!!)

Arielle McGowen’s Tips for lightening the financial burden of buying textbooks:
COMPARISON SHOP — Scour Web retailers for low prices, including estimated taxes and shipping costs” (McGowen, 2006).
STAY LOCAL — “Barter online and do the deal in person—sellers can earn more than they would from the campus store’s buybacks, and buyers avoid tax and shipping charges” (McGowen, 2006).
BROADEN YOUR SCOPE — “Save up to 90% by purchasing international editions, found through domestic online retailers like Abebooks.com” (McGowen, 2006). However, these books may have “Subtle differences, such as cheaper paper” McGowen, 2006).