

# Textbooks Survey Report

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Prepared for VPA Layla Alhussainy by  
Department of Research and Advocacy



## Overview

This survey ran on the UASU Perks platform, September 15-23, 2024. It reached 1,445 respondents, and repeated questions from previous surveys. Results were closely comparable to the previous survey.

"This semester (Fall 2024), how much did you pay for textbooks?  
(Estimate to nearest \$50)"

	Sept. 2024	<a href="#">Sept. 2023</a>
Average actually paid	\$115	\$106
Proportion of respondents who answered \$0	40%	42%
Average actually paid of respondents who did not answer \$0	\$197	\$181

Since these were text fields, a few respondents opted to provide other comments:

- "\$550 (textbooks) and around \$175 for lab materials (statoscope and blood pressure cuff)."
- "\$300 (bought 2 used, one digital new)."
- "\$69, and I still went to external sources because the e-reader is terrible."
- "\$0, I've given up on buying textbooks that'll never be used."
- "Taking a survey is often not the best way to decide on issues. Most students in university are immature kids who just want to get the highest grades possible with the least amount of effort. You need to look to established institutions who track education statistics over decades, accumulating comprehensive data that shapes institutional standards. If you actually researched this issue you'd find that despite what students want, the overall quality of education decreases when you pressure professors to stop using textbooks. Please actually consider the issue as a whole instead of just trying to save students money. Education is expensive for a reason, because it's valuable, and textbooks are a very tiny fraction of that cost. Textbooks can be kept as a reference for future courses and even throughout a student's future career. Changing long-established and effective educational conventions based on the whims of ignorant young students robs dedicated students of high-quality education."

## "Did you purchase all required textbooks for your course(s) this semester?"

- Yes: 33.4%
- No: 49.6%
- My course(s) had no required books: 16.9%

## "This semester (Fall 2024), if you had purchased all required textbooks, how much do you think you would have paid? (Estimate to nearest \$50)"

Results were closely comparable to last semester's survey: the average of respondents who did not answer \$0 was \$382, compared to \$380 in the September 2023 survey.

As above, some opted to provide other comments:

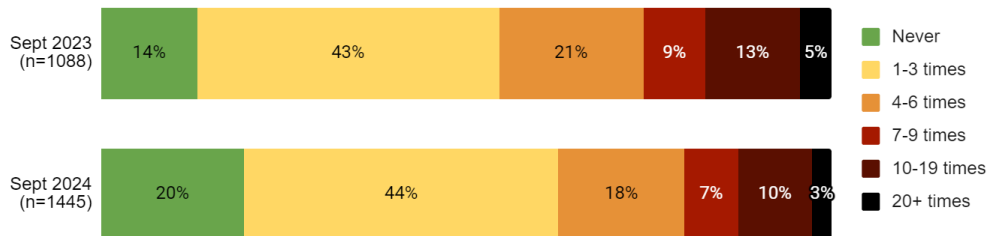
- "Probably around 1,500\$ which is insane. Thank god a classmate had found random PDF copies of some of them. Imma rant because textbooks this semester have pissed me off. So, I am in Nursing in the after degree program. In my previous program...I would almost never buy textbooks unless I absolutely needed them. Since I am starting a new degree, I'm not sure if I really textbooks (you know when the prof says required but you can still get like a B+ or A- without the textbook) so I'm testing out the water a bit this semester of my new degree; I bought some when the prof said they were absolutely necessary or there are textbook related assignments. Anyways, I like physical copies (which are so much more expensive then the eBooks) so I bought some. But please tell me why 2 of my textbooks were \$25\$ each?!! And the online copy is still like \$100?!!! Anyways, really pissed about this... why are they so expensive."
- "Since you didn't allow written input anywhere else in the survey, I'll type here. I am AGAINST the push to remove textbook costs from courses. Textbooks are high quality learning materials that have been peer reviewed by dozens of industry experts, professors, editors, etc which results in a valuable resource that is succinct, well-written, and organized. By pressuring professors to stop requiring textbooks, all you are doing is forcing professors to teach students using only their own lecture slides/notes, which always SUCK. Even if the professor tries very hard, you absolutely cannot compare the quality of a comprehensive textbook that's been reviewed by 60 people before its first publication (and then hundreds of experts before each subsequent edition) to the work of one or two U of A professors. One of my engineering professors, an expert in his field, used lecture slides that quoted Wikipedia (grammar errors and all) in Comic Sans font. You are causing the STANDARD OF EDUCATION to be reduced."

## "How often (if at all) have you had a class that had a textbook listed as required, but the textbook was not actually required?"

This question showed a positive shift since last year, suggesting that even more instructors are being conscientious about this.

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UASU Perks surveys

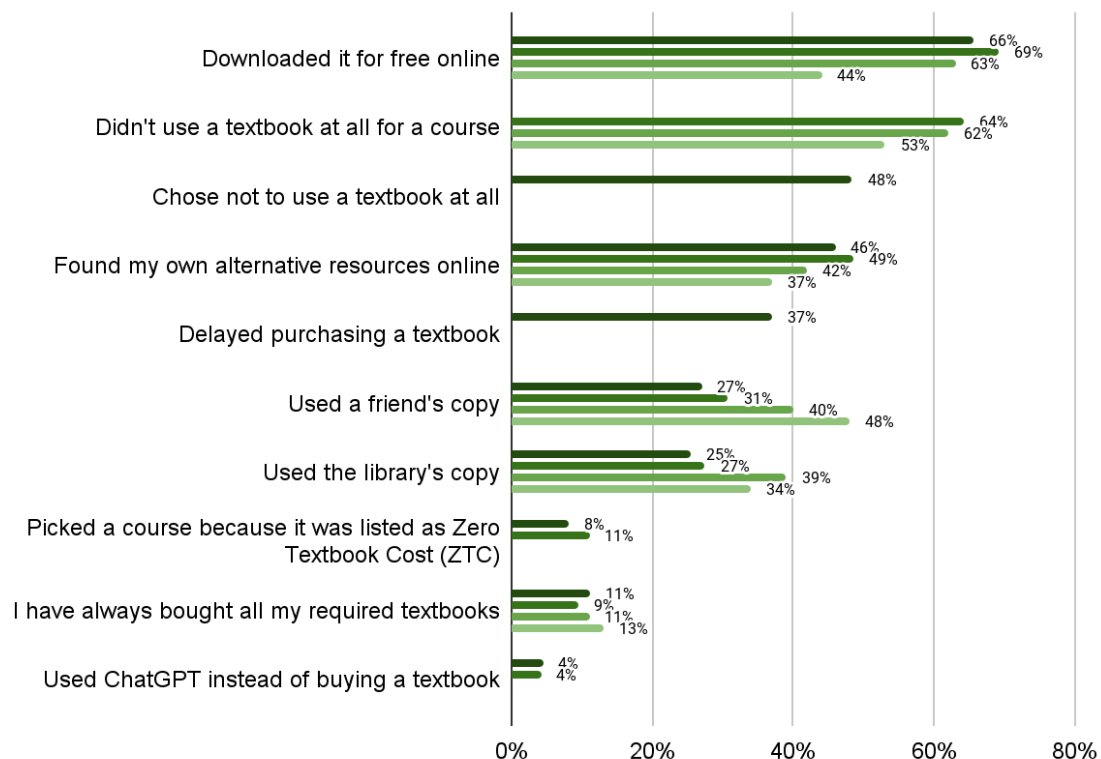


## "Have you ever done any of the following?"

This question saw very similar results to last year's survey and validates its findings. It used a different formulation of not using a textbook, to focus on student choices, and added a new option about delayed purchase.

## "Have you ever done any of the following?"

Sept 2024 (n=1,445) Sept 2023 (n=1,088) Oct 2020 (n=207) Jan 2018 (n=1,188)



"Are you aware of any resources or programs that help with textbook costs?"

- Yes, I'm aware: 26.6%
- Yes, and I've used them: 8.2%
- No, I'm not aware: 47.8%
- I'm not sure: 16.3%

"Have you heard of the UASU's Be Book Smart (bebooksmart.ca) resource to help find affordable alternatives for required materials?"

- Yes, I've heard of it: 15.4%
- Yes, and I've found affordable alternatives this way: 4.2%
- Yes, but it wasn't helpful: 5.4%
- No, I haven't: 67.8%
- I'm not sure: 6.1%

"Have you heard of the UASU's Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) initiative, which helps you filter courses in Bear Tracks that have no associated textbook costs?"

- Yes, I've heard of it: 26.3%
- Yes, and I'm enrolled in ZTC courses this semester: 6.6%
- Yes, but none of my courses were ZTC this semester: 12.1%
- No, I haven't: 47.5%
- I'm not sure: 6.4%

This result indicates there is room to grow in terms of OER adoption and publicization of the ZTC course indicator.

"What solutions would you like to see to address the issue of high textbook costs? (Check all that apply.)"

- More affordable textbook options: 63.5%
- More courses with no associated textbook costs: 60.1%
- Increased availability of digital or open-access textbooks: 72.0%
- More textbook rental programs: 27.8%
- Subsidies or financial assistance specifically for textbooks: 30.4%
- Improved textbook affordability through institutional policies: 48.7%
- I think the current state of things is fine: 5.0%