



FREE

the textbook

Shake off the fine print.

This is no ordinary asterisk. Because this is no ordinary fact sheet. If you're reading this, it's probably because you've heard that automatic billing programs, also called "Inclusive Access," "Instant Access," "Day-one Access," or other brand names, have some fine print. We're unpacking the fine print right here so you can know what to look out for and make informed decisions.

These organizations are
working to Free the Textbook:



openstax™



Student
PIRGs

The Massachusetts
Department of Higher Education



CCC/OER
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CONSORTIUM FOR OER



SPARC*

DECODE AUTOMATIC TEXTBOOK BILLING

Automatic textbook billing is a type of contract and program where students are charged for digital textbooks when they register for classes. Students are automatically opted in to the program and the bill for their books goes into their tuition and fees.

Before automatic textbook billing, instructors assigned the books and students made their own choices about how and when to get them and how much to spend on them. With automatic textbook billing, the decision is made for students.

DECODE THE HISTORY

Textbook costs have been out of control for decades, increasing at 3x the rate of inflation.** Publishing companies created automatic billing programs because they were under pressure to improve. Instead, they've locked institutions into contracts and limited student choice.

DECODE THE SIGNS

Before, students could at least keep their expensive textbooks, resell them, or share with a friend. With automatic billing programs, students are paying somewhat less, with more limitations.*** The biggest? Limited access periods that end after every class. Oh, and ALSO:



Students only have around 2-3 weeks to opt-out of these programs. If they do, they could risk hurting their grades, as the online homework components of the program could be impossible to find elsewhere.



If you need a print textbook, your cost with a publishing company will be sky high.

DECODE THE ISSUE

11% of students skip meals to pay for course materials and 17% of students reported skipping buying an access code. 90% of students are worried foregoing these course materials would negatively affect their grade.** Automatic textbook billing does lower some costs for students and institutions, but the students with the most need have to choose between \$100 for course materials and paying for their family's next meal.

So there you have it. If this doesn't feel inclusive to you, we completely get it. It doesn't to us, either. And with COVID-19, we don't have time for anything but real solutions.

The good thing is that we're not doing this alone—students, faculty, librarians, nonprofit leaders, and administrators around the nation are asking for more and breaking free of the code. **Will you join us?**

CHOOSE FREE FIRST

at wefreethetextbook.org

#FreetheTextbook

     @openstax

This issue is way more complicated, but we've covered the most important things you may need to know right now. To get more involved or get more information, visit wefreethetextbook.org. See the latest media buzz and discover real student stories.

**This double asterisk is calling your attention to a statistic referenced in the most recent U.S. PIRG report, "Fixing the broken textbook market," (Cailyn Nagle and Kaitlyn Vitez, U.S. PIRG Education Fund).

***This triple asterisk refers to a report by U.S. PIRG on automatic billing programs, "Automatic textbook billing: An offer students can't refuse?" (Kaitlyn Vitez, U.S. PIRG Education Fund).