

Choosing course materials

Focus on your learning outcomes. Textbooks have lots of organized content, questions, activities, quizzes, texts, and even lecture slides. It can be very tempting to let them be the basis for your course, especially when time is of the essence. Resist the temptation to let the book drive the course. Instead, focus on finding materials that directly support your learning outcomes and supplement your teaching activities.

Consider other types of materials. Faculty often use textbooks as the default course material, but there are many other options. Consider articles, websites, and videos that can add value to your course. Sometimes a website or video can explain a concept better than a book or article.

Pay attention to deadlines. Faculty may be asked about their textbook choice long before they are thinking about their course. Ask your department admin or bookstore to share deadlines for ordering so you have plenty of time.

Consider cost. The average student spends \$800 a semester on books and course materials. Textbooks can cost hundreds of dollars, but so can course packets. Try to be price conscious when selecting materials.

Consider using older versions. If your book has multiple versions, and there isn't much difference, let students know the older (and cheaper) version works just as well.

Use chapters, articles, and library links in Blackboard. If you aren't using more than a chapter, this can be a great way to use multiple textbooks. To do this, however, the sections you use must be within the parameters of the "educational use" provisions of copyright law. Check out UTSA Libraries for more information.

Use library materials. The library has millions (yes, millions) of books, videos, articles and more that students have already paid a fee to use. Talk to your librarian for great ideas about what to choose.

Communicate with students. Whatever you choose, let students know what is required, what's optional, and, most importantly, how you plan to use them. Give advice on how you want students to interact with the material.

Make desk copies available at the library. You can put a copy (or more) of your book on reserve at the library. This allows students who forgot a book or just need some extra time to buy it to avoid falling behind.