

2023 NATIONAL SURVEY ON STUDENT COURSE MATERIAL AFFORDABILITY



Bay View Analytics®

The affordability of course materials is a topic that affects everyone in higher education – students, faculty, and administrators. This report provides national benchmark data and perspectives from 500 undergraduate students across the U.S., providing insight into how course materials costs transform the educational experience.

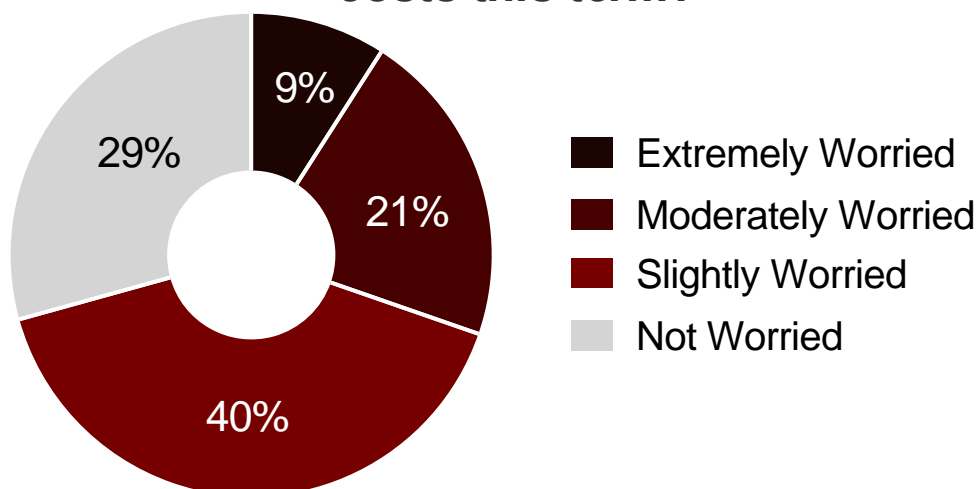
This national survey was done as part of [Pennsylvania's own Course Materials Survey](#) by Affordable Learning PA (ALPA), Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI), and Bay View Analytics in Spring 2023. This project builds on the work done by the [Virginia Course Materials Survey](#) and the [Florida Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey](#).

This project was made possible by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

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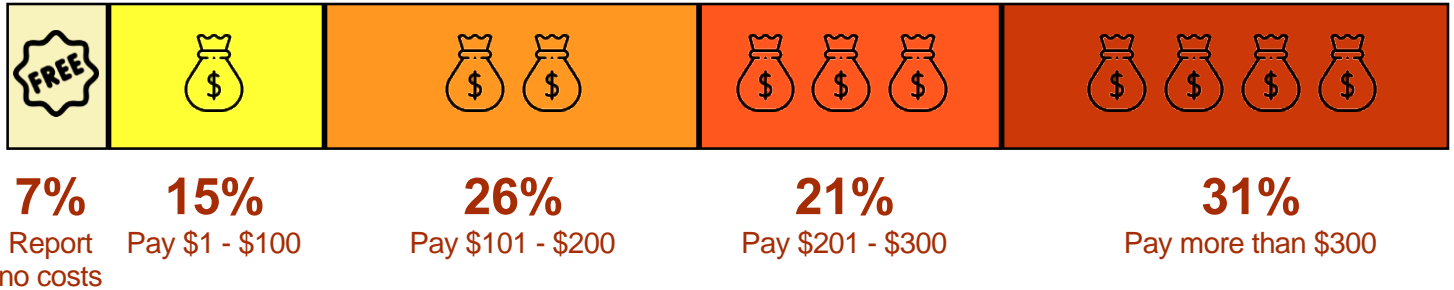
7 in 10 students are worried about meeting their course materials costs.

How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?



Over half of students report paying \$200 or more for their course materials for the term.

How much did you spend on course materials during this term?



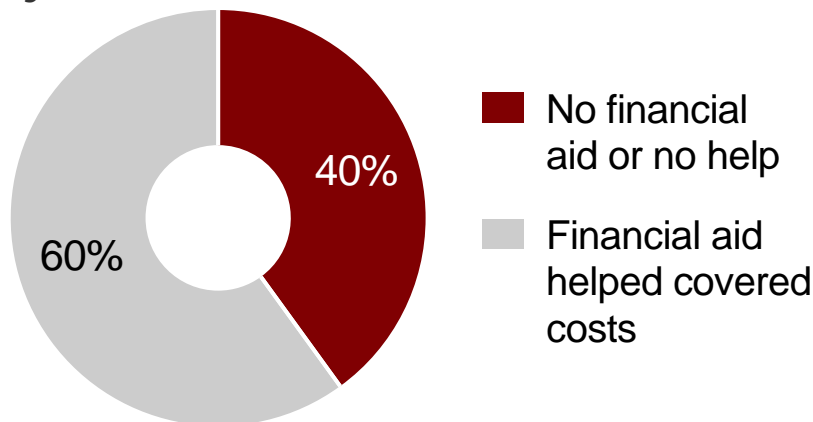
Student Voices

“The cost of my course materials have been very hard [to meet] even though I work 3 jobs.”

“I don't get as much financial aid so I have to be extremely selective on my courses.”

Financial aid only covers a portion of the costs, but not for all students.

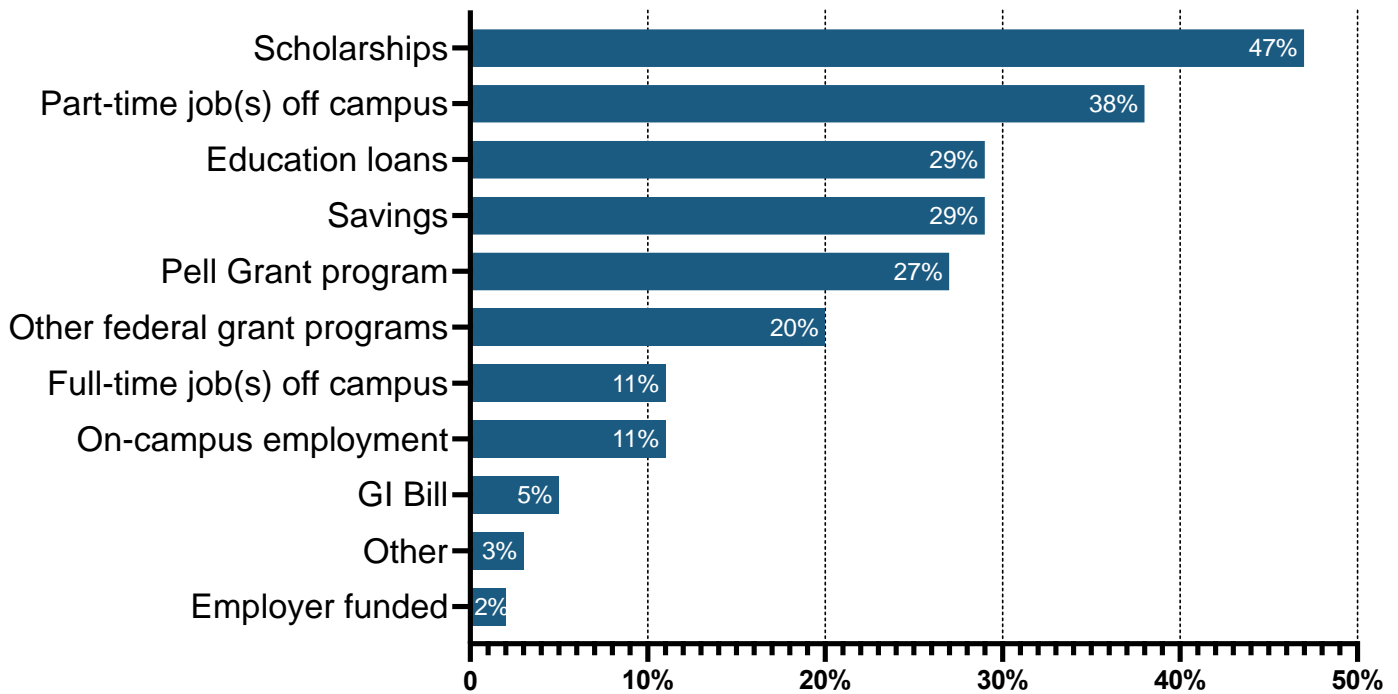
Does financial aid help cover any of your textbook costs for the term?



A quarter of students with financial aid report that it does not cover any course material costs. Just 1 in 3 students with financial aid say it covers more than 50% of their costs.

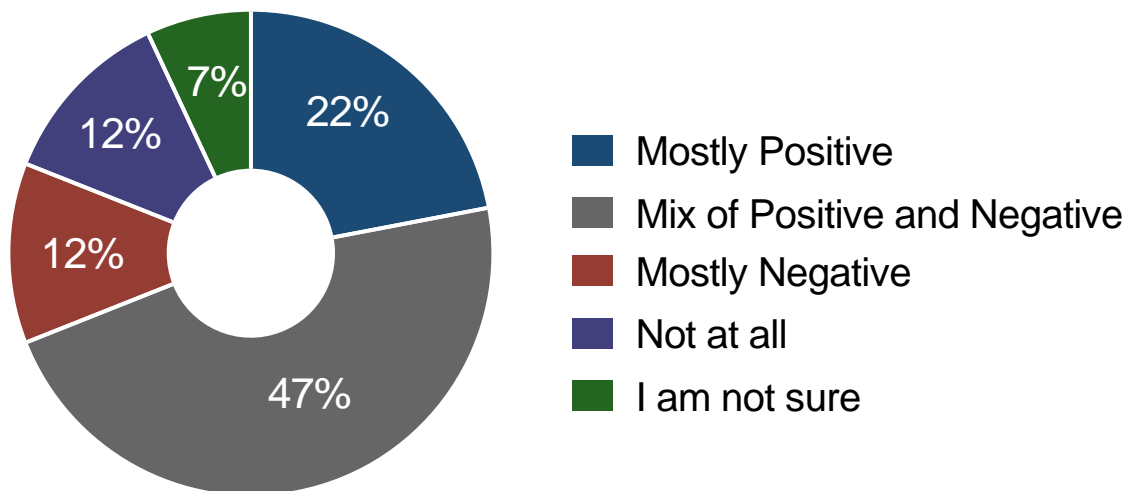
Students report using scholarships and off-campus jobs as their most common education funding sources.

Which of the following sources are you using to fund your education? (Select all the apply.)



Working students report employment has mixed impacts on their academic success.

How does your employment affect your academic success?



The cost of course materials affects community college students differently

Students at 2-year public institutions report...

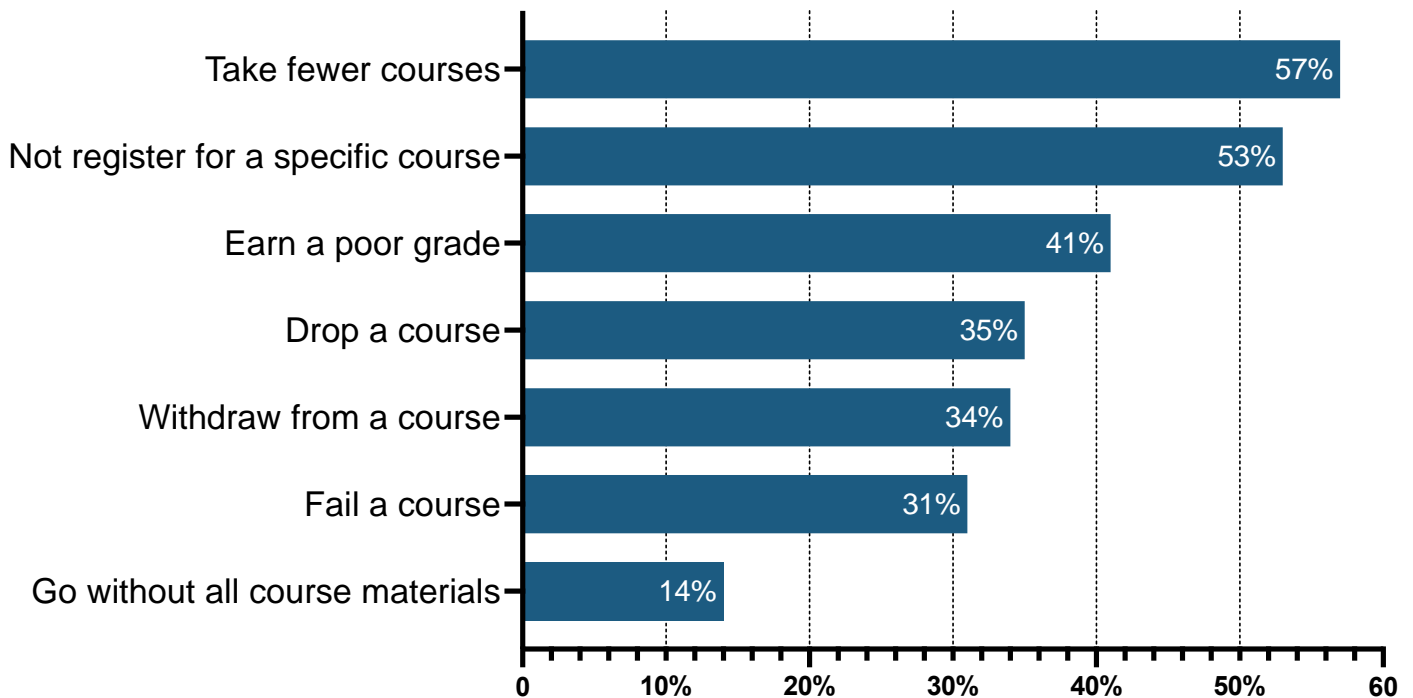
They are twice as likely to be “extremely worried” than those at 4-year schools.

They are more likely to choose their institution based on the cost of course materials.

They are more likely to report more courses with no required textbooks or ones offered at no costs.

The cost of course materials has directly and negatively impacted academic success.

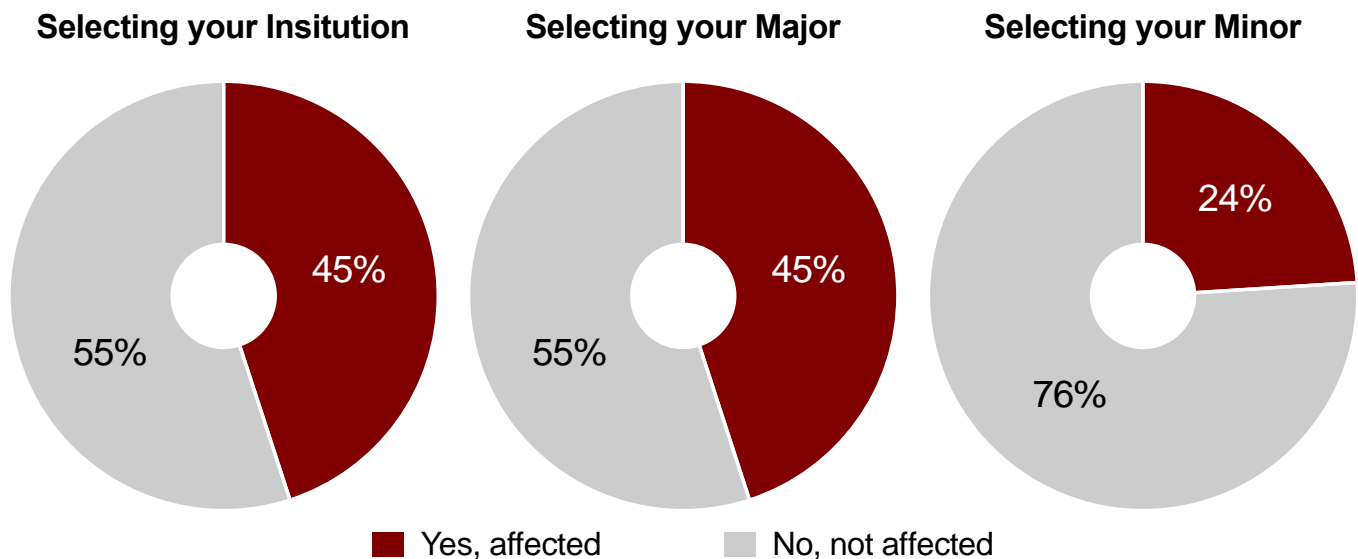
In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials caused you to:



Only 17% of students reported none of these negative impacts due to the cost of course materials.

Many students report the cost of course materials affected their institution, major, and minor choice.

In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials affected:



Student Voices

“I just get good grades, so I get a lot of grant money from the school.”

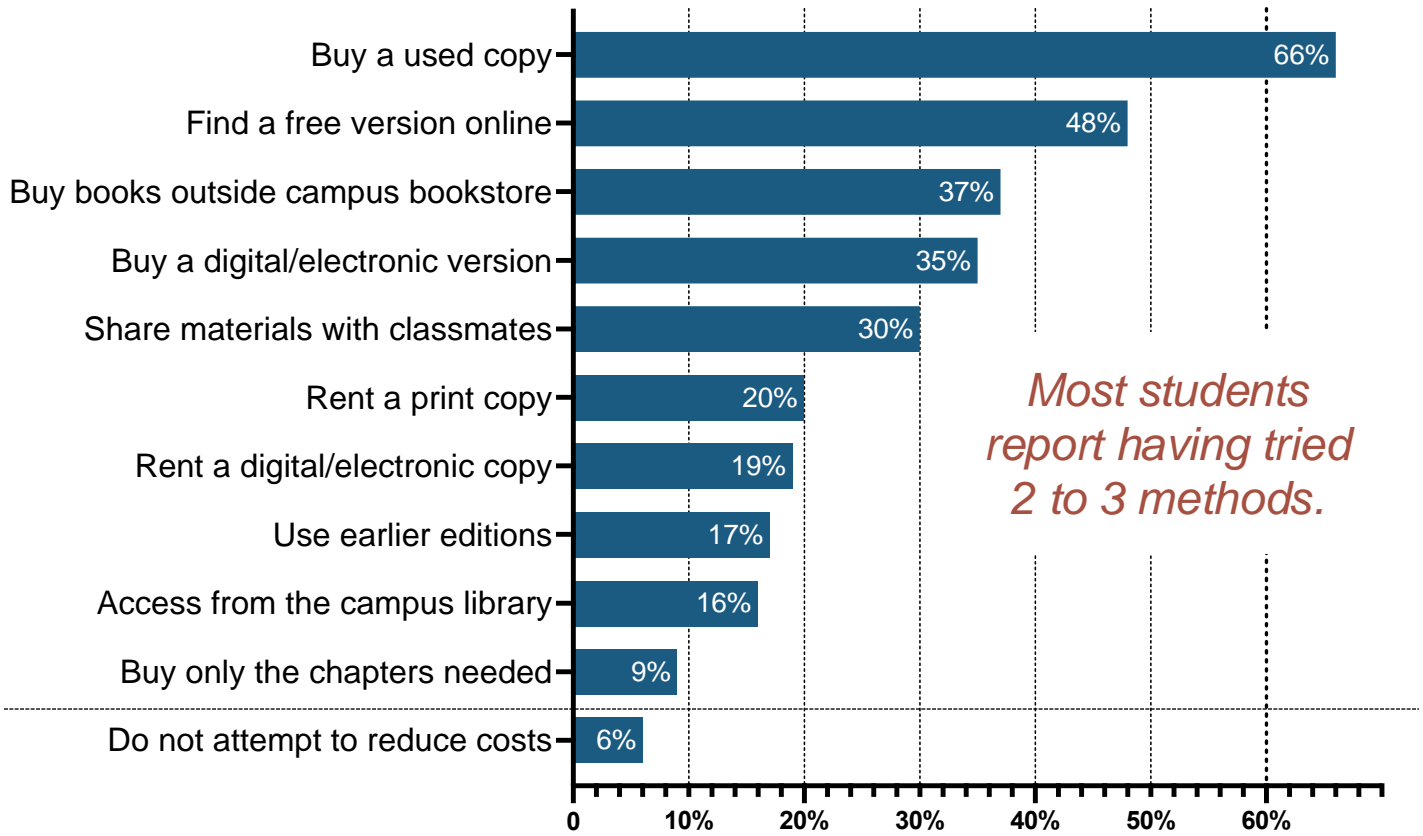
“[The cost] has made me choose between eating and buying course materials.”

“I definitely choose classes that don’t require a book or that require books that cost less than \$30.”

“The costs probably slowed me down. I could've been finished by now but had to take a year off.”

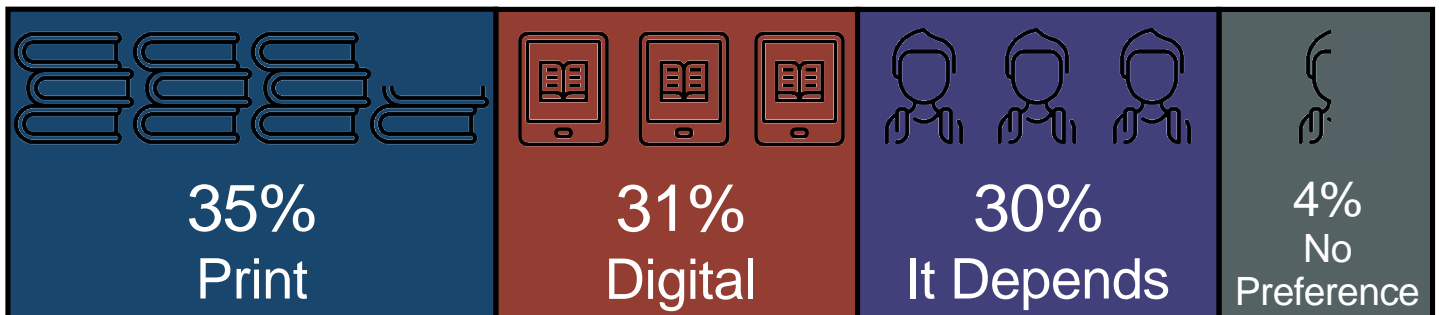
Almost all students reported trying at least 1 method to reduce cost.

What measures have you taken to reduce your required course material costs throughout your college career?



Student preferences are split between print and digital formats for their materials.

Which format do you prefer for your course materials?



Student Voices

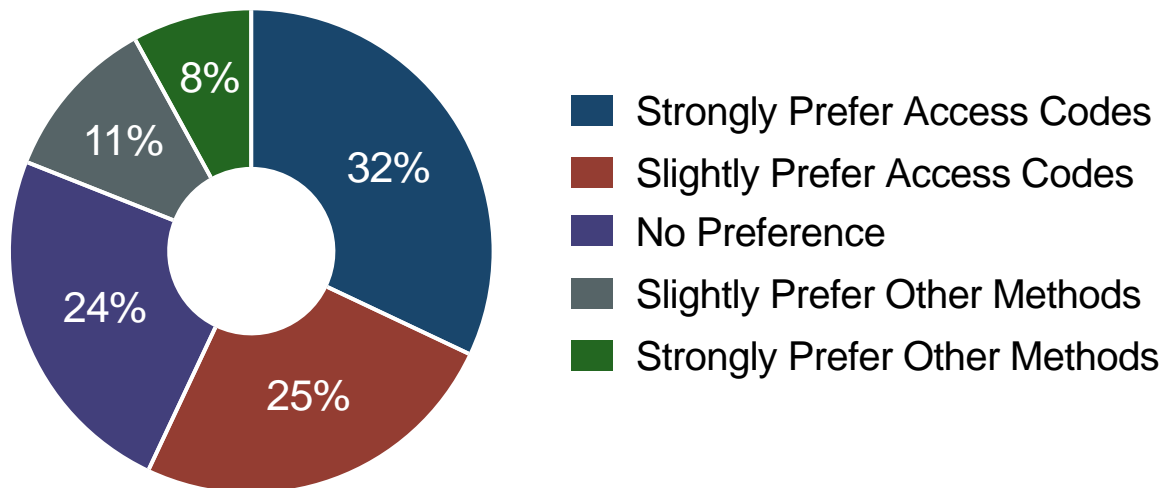
“Lately professors aren't using regular textbooks anymore and are instead using website subscriptions which makes it impossible to find cheaper options or loopholes. The prices for these subscriptions are outrageous and are only for one semester worth of access.”

“I learned fully online and most of the course materials are provided at no cost.”

“Buying textbooks has been a problem in the past. I often look online for free options, even if a couple years older. If I find nothing, I'll wait the class out and see if I actually need to find the book or if I can get by without it.”

Many students are aware of access codes and prefer them to obtain their course materials.

What is your preference for obtaining course materials?



85+% of students find these features of digital course materials “helpful” or “very helpful”

Ability to access them from anywhere (e.g., offline)
Ability to print content or access a print copy
Access on first day of class
Compatible with assistive technologies
Effective display via a cell phone or other small device
Interactive technology and exercises
Lifetime access