



National Association of College Stores
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FAQ on Bundles

What are “bundles?”

Bundles are packages that contain a textbook along with some combination of add-ons such as study guides, CD-ROMs, and web site pass codes all held together by shrink wrap. Given the additional materials, the price of a bundle is typically higher than the price of a textbook alone.

Most bundles are prepared for classes that serve first and second year students.

Is the use of bundles increasing?

Because the number of faculty adopting (or requiring) bundles for their classes is increasing, the use of bundles in college courses is expected to continue and even grow.

What is the impact of bundles on the textbook market?

Currently it's estimated that bundles comprise about 10-20% of a typical college stores' inventory.¹ More specific sales data for bundles (i.e. an annual dollar amount) is unavailable, but it's widely expected that the use of bundles in higher education will increase.

How do students feel about bundles?

According to a 2003 *Student Watch*TM survey, 50% of students said they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that course materials are more valuable when packaged with other materials like study guides or computer software.

Do bundles pose any unique challenges for students or college stores?

The widespread use of bundles is relatively new to the collegiate market and consequently many issues surrounding their distribution are being worked on. In a 2003 study on issues related to bundling², college stores observed that:

- **The number of different products contained in some bundles can lead to confusion when stores attempt to identify each individual component for inventory management purposes. This in turn can lead to costly errors for the store, poor customer service, faculty dissatisfaction, and customer refund issues.**
- **Because few publishing companies accept opened bundles for return, it makes it difficult for college stores to refund students on returns, and leaves the store liable for any opened product that may be left on the shelf.**
- **Bundled items are often not available separately, which can lead to increased costs for students if all of the items are not needed for class.**
- **Substitution of materials and/or delays encountered with any particular item can be a significant problem for students and faculty. Sometimes what arrives at the store isn't what was expected when the order was placed, leading to dissatisfaction with the store, and frustrations in the classroom.**
- **Shelving of bundles in spaces designed to hold textbooks can be a significant challenge for smaller college stores, especially during the first few weeks of classes.**

¹ Bundling in the College Textbook Marketplace, Bill McKenna (study commissioned by NACS), 2003

² Bundling in the College Textbook Marketplace, Bill McKenna (study commissioned by NACS), 2003

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What are college stores doing about bundles?

Despite the challenges of working with bundles, college stores believe the use of bundles will likely increase. College stores are working in collaboration with publishers to find mutually beneficial solutions to the challenges of providing bundled course materials for students. Many stores also work with faculty to ensure that only *necessary* materials are included in bundles; this helps students save money.

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