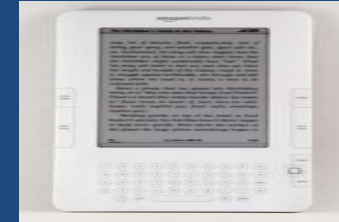




There Is No Such Thing As A Free Textbook



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- Introduction:** There are an increasing number of ways for students to access textbooks: traditional textbooks, mobile devices, e-texts (PDFs), free web editions, etc. This raises the question:

Does the way students access textbooks affect their grade?

- Methodology:** Students in an introduction to economics course were given four different ways to access the textbook (listed below). Choice was compared to grade in class using simple averages, OLS regression and IV regression.

Results:

Access choice	Average Grade (number of students)
Free access to online book (includes advertising)	71.0% (27)
Online book (ad-free)	73.7% (3)
Printable (PDF) version of ad-free book	82.1% (4)
Traditional paperback book	78.1% (24)
None	68.0% (11)



	OLS	IV (Laptop = free)
Variable	Coefficient (t-stat)	Coefficient (z-stat)
Free	-5.07** (2.00)	-9.79 (0.45)
Ad-free	-6.51 (1.29)	-8.89 (0.74)
Printable	5.21 (0.86)	3.41 (0.37)
None	-3.56 (1.08)	-6.29 (0.49)
Freshman	-3.58 (0.97)	-3.45 (0.81)
Sophomore	-0.20 (0.06)	0.91 (0.14)
Junior	-1.78 (0.41)	-0.98 (0.17)
GPA	8.20*** (3.04)	7.27 (1.55)
Intercept	55.43*** (5.61)	59.85*** (2.76)

Discussion:

- Students may have too many choices.



- Students may not understand their learning styles.



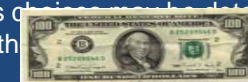
- A traditional textbook may be a physical reminder to study.



- Students may want to separate social and personal work.



- Students' access of choice may be determined by their ability to pay, or their ability to afford their education.



Conclusion: More research needs to be conducted into how different access choices affect student learning of