

A Parent's Guide to

Textbook Matters

2016





Preamble

Textbooks are one of the many learning and teaching resources. Appropriate use of quality textbooks enhances student learning. This Guide aims to provide parents with useful information on buying textbooks in a “Question and Answer” format and explain to them the textbook policy of the Education Bureau (EDB).

Purchase of Textbooks

1. When is the most suitable time for buying textbooks?

- Towards the end of school term, schools will distribute textbook lists of the forthcoming school year. Upon receiving the school textbook list, **parents should buy the textbooks required at the earliest possible time.** Bookstores usually have more stock available in July and some bookstores also **provide reservation service** if individual textbooks are out of stock (this service may require full payment in advance). Textbook publishers will reprint textbooks to meet the demand as necessary.

2. What should parents take note of when buying textbooks?

- To avoid buying the wrong textbooks, parents should note the following information on the school textbook list:
 - the title, edition, name(s) of author(s), publisher and year of publication of each textbook (**check carefully the year of publication and the edition** when buying second-hand textbooks);
 - whether old edition textbooks can be used; and
 - whether it is necessary to buy reference books or learning materials which are marked “for reference only”, such as dictionaries and atlases.

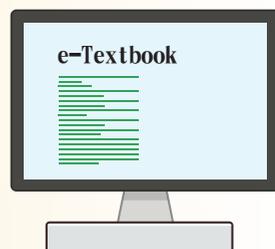


- Buying an e-textbook is practically subscribing to the right to use the e-textbook and the related services but not obtaining a physical book, so in theory there are no “second-hand” e-textbooks. Parents should note the following when subscribing to e-textbooks:

- subscription methods (such as direct online subscription or bulk subscription through the school);
- validity period of the user’s account (such as one or three years, including all updates during the subscription period for free); and
- technical specifications (such as the accessible operating systems and the hardware / software required).

- Parents may also visit the EDB’s “Recommended e-Textbook List” (www.edb.gov.hk/ertl) and click on the web links provided by the publishers for information about the e-textbooks and their subscription methods.

[Remarks: The EDB issues a circular memorandum to schools annually to remind them to distribute the textbook lists for the forthcoming school year to parents before the end of school term and inform publishers of the textbooks selected to facilitate early printing arrangements. Schools should also state clearly on the textbook lists the applicable editions of the textbooks to facilitate the recycling of second-hand textbooks (for printed textbooks).]



3. On some occasions, parents may not be able to purchase all the textbooks required before the start of the new school year. How can they seek help?

■ Parents may not be able to purchase all the textbooks required before the school term starts due to the following reasons:

- textbooks are out of stock in individual bookstores or districts;
- publishers are not able to print the new edition textbooks on schedule;
- publishers are unable to accurately forecast the demand for textbooks, hence they cannot print additional copies timely;
- individual publishers are inclined to print textbooks for use in the second term at a later date; or
- the updating of e-textbooks or the associated servers cannot be completed on schedule.



■ If parents and students have difficulty in purchasing any books on the book list, they can **approach the publishers and / or the bookstores that help the schools to print their school textbook lists (if applicable) directly**. Details of publishers' contacts have been uploaded to the EDB's website (<https://cd.edb.gov.hk/rtl/publisherlist.asp>).

[Remarks: The EDB has urged publishers to inform schools and take remedial actions if they cannot supply sufficient copies before the start of school term in September. Such actions include arranging direct ordering services for schools and providing students with part of the content of textbooks free of charge so as to avoid affecting student learning.]



4. Is it compulsory for parents to use the textbook ordering service provided by schools?

- No. Parents are free to decide whether to use the textbook ordering service provided by schools. Generally speaking, ordering textbooks through the schools can save parents the time of visiting bookstores and a larger discount is usually offered through bulk purchase.

Textbook List

5. How do schools compile the textbook list?

- Towards the end of school year, schools will form textbook selection committees to select textbooks of different subjects in accordance with the related curriculum guides and the “Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks” issued by the EDB. When compiling the textbook list, schools will also take various factors into consideration, such as students’ abilities, learning needs and affordability of parents, so that the most appropriate textbooks and supplementary learning materials for students are selected.



6. Do schools have to select textbooks from the Recommended Textbook List / Recommended e-Textbook List?

- The EDB provides the Recommended Textbook List (RTL) and the Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) to ensure that schools would have appropriate textbooks to use when they implement various subject curricula. Schools can make reference to the two lists when selecting textbooks and learning materials, but it is not a requirement. Teachers can exercise their professionalism to prepare learning materials or select textbooks or curriculum resources not on the RTL / eRTL to meet students' learning needs. When a school selects any form of teaching / learning materials, it should take into consideration factors that are most favourable to student learning, and make the final decision in accordance with the quality of the textbooks, the school curriculum and students' learning needs.



7. How do schools select textbooks and other learning materials (e.g. supplementary exercises) for students? How can parents express their views to the schools on the selection of textbooks and other learning resources?

- Generally speaking, when selecting learning resources, schools will take into consideration the educational needs and abilities of their students as well as the affordability of parents. Special attention will also be paid to the selection of supplementary exercises because mechanical drills and / or examination practices are not effective for learning and using such exercises may diminish students' learning interest.



- Parents may approach the school on matters about the textbook selection procedures and criteria. They can also express their views on the selection of textbooks and learning materials through the parent-teacher association and parent representatives on the School Management Committee (SMC) / Incorporated Management Committee (IMC), etc.

Textbook Review

8. Does the EDB review all textbooks?

- Though it is not compulsory for publishers to submit textbooks to the EDB for review, if publishers intend to have their textbooks included on the EDB's "Recommended Textbook List" (RTL) / "Recommended e-Textbook List" (eRTL), they have to submit textbooks for review. The EDB accepts submission of learning resources in printed format for kindergartens and printed and e-textbooks for most subjects at primary and secondary levels. However, textbooks of certain subjects (such as Liberal Studies at senior secondary level) are not accepted for review as the EDB does not recommend schools to use textbooks as the main learning and teaching resources for these subjects. In addition, apart from the practical books for science subjects, the EDB does not accept submission of workbooks and supplementary materials for review.



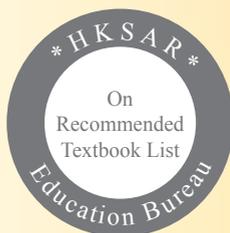
9. How does the EDB review textbooks?

- To ensure the quality of textbooks, the **EDB has drawn up a set of rigorous textbook review procedures**. Textbooks are reviewed by the Textbook Review Panels, which comprise subject officers from the EDB, frontline teaching staff and academics from tertiary institutions. Textbooks are vetted in the areas of content, learning and teaching, structure and organisation, language as well as textbook layout (for printed textbooks), pedagogical use of e-features, accessibility and operational design (for e-textbooks).

- After the review, textbooks that have reached the required standard will be included on the EDB's "Recommended Textbook List" (RTL) / "Recommended e-Textbook List" (eRTL) which serve as a reference for schools when selecting textbooks and learning materials.



- From 2002 onwards, all **printed textbooks** which have undergone review and been included on the RTL bear the following logos:



- All **e-textbooks** which have undergone review and been included on the eRTL bear the logo “**On eRTL – Approved Version**”:



通過評審版本： 1.0
日期：2016年11月

Approved Version : 1.0
Date : November 2016

- When the approved **e-textbooks** have completed the required amendments and been checked by the EDB, the logo “**On eRTL – Checked Version**” will replace the previous “Approved Version” logo.



通過評審版本： 1.0
通過覆檢版本： 1.1
日期：2017年2月

Approved Version : 1.0
Checked Version : 1.1
Date : February 2017

10. What are “Recommended Textbook List” and “Recommended e-Textbook List”?

- Printed and e-textbooks as well as kindergarten learning resources that are listed on the “Recommended Textbook List” (RTL) and the “Recommended e-Textbook List” (eRTL) are written in line with the respective syllabuses / curriculum guides / curriculum and assessment guides compiled by the Curriculum Development Council. They have been vetted by the EDB as acceptable in terms of content, learning and teaching, structure and organisation, language as well as textbook layout (for printed textbooks), pedagogical use of e-features, accessibility and operational design (for e-textbooks). The EDB Textbook Committee Secretariat will update the RTL and the eRTL as appropriate.

- To facilitate schools in making appropriate choices of textbooks and learning materials, the RTL and the eRTL for various levels and subjects have been uploaded onto the EDB webpages (www.edb.gov.hk/rtl) and (www.edb.gov.hk/ertl) respectively. These include:
 - titles, publishers and authors of the textbooks;
 - textbook prices, information on the comparisons and changes of prices;
 - weight and number of pages (for printed textbooks);
 - the number and the date of the approved and checked versions, operating systems and the download size of the offline version (for e-textbooks);
 - general comments on the core vetting criteria for the textbook review; and
 - web-links to the publishers’ webpages on information about the pricing of learning and teaching materials debundled from textbooks, subscription modes and technical specifications of e-textbooks, etc.



Textbook Revision

11. Can publishers revise their textbooks every year?

- No. To avoid imposing an undue financial burden on parents, **starting from the 2010/11 school year, publishers have to observe the “five-year-rule of no revision” for printed textbooks.**

Five-year-rule
of no revision



- For printed textbooks that have been included on the “Recommended Textbook List” (RTL) for more than five years, if publishers intend to apply for revision, there must be strong justifications in their applications. These books must also be assessed by the EDB as having significant improvement over the old editions before approval can be granted. Hence, **it is not possible for the same textbook to be revised every year.**

[Remarks: Except for textbooks of “Life and Society” at junior secondary level, application for the revision of printed textbooks which have been included on the RTL for less than five years is not accepted.]

12. Are “Reprinted” and “Reprinted with minor amendments” textbooks regarded as “Revised edition” textbooks? (for printed textbooks)

- No. “Reprinted” and “reprinted with minor amendments” textbooks are **NOT** regarded as “revised edition” textbooks. **Students can still use the old editions.**



13. What are the differences between textbooks that are “Reprinted” and “Reprinted with Minor Amendments”? (for printed textbooks)

■ “Reprinted” textbooks involve correction of typographical errors only. Such textbooks do not have to undergo the textbook review procedures.

“Reprinted with minor amendments” textbooks involve minor amendments to the content. Such textbooks must be submitted to the EDB for vetting and approval before reprinting.

■ Publishers should not make any changes with regard to the appearance, including the design of front and back covers, the title, the number of pages and size of paper of the “reprinted” and “reprinted with minor amendments” textbooks. However, they should provide supplementary information and amendments in the form of “corrigenda” or “appendices” free of charge to students using the old edition textbooks via schools. **Schools should also state clearly on their booklists that the old edition can still be used. Parents should pay attention to this when purchasing textbooks.**



14. Is the revision of e-textbooks allowed at any time as it does not involve printing procedures?

■ In line with the rapid development of information technology, e-textbooks can make timely updates for technical enhancement as well as information and data amendment. Users can get the updated versions of the e-textbooks concerned for free within the subscription period. If the updating of the e-textbooks involves the subject content, learning and teaching activities and teaching methodologies, publishers are required to apply for revision. The revision of e-textbooks will be approved only when it is assessed by the EDB as having significant improvement as a whole over the previous version.

Textbook Prices

15. How does the EDB monitor textbook prices?

- Publishers set textbook prices based on market demand and their development costs. Under the free market principle, it is inappropriate for the EDB to over-interfere in publishers' commercial decisions. Despite this, the EDB has adopted the following measures to stabilise textbook prices:

Request publishers to

- follow the “Policy of Debundling Textbooks and Teaching / Learning Materials for Pricing” implemented by the EDB to rationalise the practice of bundling the sale of textbooks with teaching materials;
- refrain from providing schools with free on-site services (except for those essential post-sales technical support for e-textbooks) or donations, or offering teachers advantages or luxurious entertainments during textbook promotion; and
- adopt printing methods with low cost features as recommended in the “Guiding Principles for Printing of Textbooks”.



Remind schools to

- avoid soliciting from publishers complimentary learning and teaching materials (apart from the free inspection copies of textbooks and on conditions free teacher’s handbooks);
- avoid accepting any advantages or donations from publishers, and take into account the factors of quality and prices when selecting textbooks;
- collaborate with parent-teacher associations, alumni associations, student unions, and/ or other environmental protection / voluntary agencies in launching various kinds of textbook recycling / donation programmes; and
- use the various school grants provided by the EDB to purchase learning and teaching resources according to actual needs under the user-pays principle.



Encourage teachers to

- exercise their professional judgement in preparing learning and teaching materials to meet the needs of their students; and
- make good use of the free learning and teaching resources offered by the EDB on the Internet, e.g. “EDB One-stop Portal for Learning and Teaching Resources” at www.hkedcity.net/edbosp to reduce their reliance on the teaching materials provided by publishers.

Weight of Textbooks (for printed textbooks only)

16. What measures have been taken by the EDB to reduce the weight of textbooks?

■ The EDB has developed the “Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks” and “Guiding Principles for Printing of Textbooks” to advise publishers on practical methods for reducing the weight of textbooks. The suggestions include:

- publishing textbooks in separate volumes / modules according to topics;
- printing textbooks and workbooks separately;
- using lighter paper for printing textbooks and reducing the margins of each page; and
- using loose-leaf binding.

To reduce the weight of school bags, **parents should help children develop the habit of packing their school bags every day.** Parents may refer to the EDB webpage (www.edb.gov.hk/perc) for various feasible measures to reduce the weight of school bags.



Textbook Recycling (for printed textbooks only)

17. How does the EDB promote textbook recycling?



■ “The design should facilitate the reuse of textbooks” has been stated as one of the criteria in the vetting of textbooks. Similar criteria have also been included in the “Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks” for reference by schools in the selection of textbooks. Moreover, the EDB conducts seminars and issues circular memoranda to schools annually, urging them to promote textbook recycling, for example, through launching textbook donation or second-hand textbook sales programmes, as well as buying reference books and story books for students to borrow.

■ To further promote textbook recycling among schools and the public, the EDB launched the “Textbook Recycling Repository” on the EDB “Textbook Information” webpage (www.edb.gov.hk/textbook) in October 2013. The repository contains useful information on the EDB’s policy on textbook recycling, how to promote textbook recycling through home-school co-operation as well as various good practices from schools.

■ In 2015, the EDB produced two textbook recycling promotional videos to further disseminate good practices of textbook recycling in primary and secondary schools respectively. The videos have been uploaded on the EDB YouTube Channel for public access. We will continue to collect and disseminate the good practices of schools and look forward to more creative and effective textbook recycling ideas coming to light.

18. What are the advantages of textbook recycling programmes? How can schools and parents work together to promote textbook recycling?

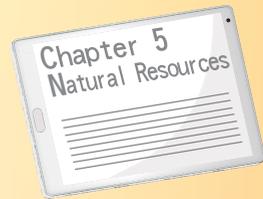
- Textbook recycling programmes not only help parents reduce the expenditure of buying textbooks, but also cultivate students' positive attitudes such as being thrifty, conserving Earth's resources and not to deface textbooks. To roll out a successful textbook recycling programme, support from parents is essential. We encourage parents to actively participate in textbook donation, second-hand textbook sales as well as other forms of textbook recycling programmes launched by the schools, parent-teacher associations, alumni associations, etc so as to act as a role model for their children.



**Electronic Textbooks
(e-textbooks)**

19. Is the digital form of a printed textbook (such as in PDF format) considered an e-textbook?

- e-Textbooks listed on the Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) are not printed textbooks in digital form (such as in PDF format). They are written in line with the curriculum requirements and provide appropriate multi-media materials, interactive learning and assessment activities, as well as learning tools which facilitate self-directed learning (for example, bookmarking, highlighting and note-taking tools). They are also accessible with various common contemporary operating systems.



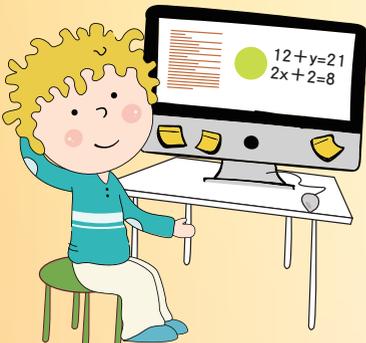
20. Will the EDB recommend schools to completely switch to e-textbooks?



- Whether a school adopts e-textbooks is entirely a professional and school-based decision. At the current stage, the EDB has no plans to require all schools to completely switch to e-textbooks. However, using e-textbooks to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching is a future trend in education. We will provide schools with appropriate support taking into consideration the related development.
- We suggest that schools firstly assess various factors, including views and expectations of different stakeholders, teachers' knowledge as well as their skills in applying information technology, and then draw up the implementation plan and entry point of adopting e-textbooks in accordance with the curriculum requirements and students' learning needs.

21. Do students need to own a tablet computer in order to use e-textbooks?

- e-Textbooks listed on the “Recommended e-Textbook List” (eRTL) can run on the common contemporary computer operating systems, students can therefore browse through and use the e-textbooks with regular desktop, notebook or tablet computers in both online and offline environments.



22. Can students use second-hand e-textbooks?

- As e-textbooks are commonly sold in the form of user right subscription, students do not actually own a physical book but they can use the e-textbook with their personal account as well as obtain all the system and information updates within the subscription period. The e-textbook's e-learning functions will also record the student's personal notes and learning profiles, so it is not feasible to use second-hand e-textbooks.

School Textbook Assistance Scheme

23. How to apply for school textbook assistance ?

- The School Textbook Assistance Scheme of the Student Finance Office (SFO) provides assistance to needy students in primary and secondary schools to cover the costs of essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses. It provides assistance at the rate of full grant or half grant. For details, please visit the SFO website at www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/eng/schemes/fts.htm or enquire with the schools.

Other Information

24. How can parents express their views on textbooks?

- If parents identify any doubtful information or have any comments on textbooks, they may reflect their views direct to the relevant publishers for follow-up. Alternatively, they may also contact the school or the EDB's Textbook Committee Secretariat.



Useful Websites

Textbook Information: www.edb.gov.hk/textbook

Recommended Textbook List: www.edb.gov.hk/rtl

Recommended e-Textbook List: www.edb.gov.hk/ertl

Feasible measures to reduce
the weight of school bags: www.edb.gov.hk/perc

Student Finance Office: www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo

Contact :

Textbook Committee Secretariat

Education Bureau

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