Using Talk Pages

Wikipedia editors use talk pages to communicate with each other. You'll use talk pages to interact with other students and editors, too. Here are tips to get started.

Talk pages are a critically important communication channel for Wikipedia Education Program participants.

Editors may leave suggestions for your article, offer help on learning a Wikipedia policy, or tell you that they appreciate your work. If you have a question about Wikipedia, leave a message on your course's talk page. Here's how!

Starting a new thread

To see a talk page, click on the "Talk" tab on the left of any article or user page, next to the Wikipedia logo. To see your own talk page, log in and click on "Talk" on the upper right corner.

- Start a new section by clicking on the "New section" link, which is between the "Edit" and "View history" tabs at the top of the talk page. Be sure to enter a section header in the "Subject/headline" line.

- Sign your post! When you post a message on a talk page, it's important to let other editors know who wrote it. At the end of your post, type four tildes (~~~~), which will automatically add your user name and the date.

- Enter your edit summary, and click "Save page".

Replying to an existing thread

Do you have a message you'd like to reply to?

- Click the "Edit" link, in blue. It's on the right of the headline of the section you want to reply to.

- Use a colon (:) to indent your message and create a threaded message. More colons mean further indents, so you can use them to show who you are responding to.

- Sign your post! Type four tildes (~~~~), which will automatically add your user name and the date.

- Enter an edit summary, and click "Save page".

Get email alerts for new messages

Wikipedia editors may need you to respond quickly to a message on your talk page, but you may not be checking your talk page frequently. If you haven't already done so, confirm your e-mail address with Wikipedia to be notified about posts on your page.

1. Log in to your Wikipedia account.

2. Click on the "Preferences" link in the top right corner.

3. On the "User profile" page, scroll down to the last section, called "Email options".

4. Enter your e-mail address in the box provided.

5. Click "Save".

6. You will receive an e-mail that asks you to confirm your email address. Click on the link in that email to confirm the change.

Remember!

- Sign your post with four tildes: (~~~~)

- If you leave a message on a talk page, check that page within a day or two to see if you've received a reply.

- Enable email notifications.

- For more information on using talk pages, visit: http://enwp.org/WP:TPHELP

Choosing an article

Choosing a Wikipedia article to work on can be a challenge, especially for new editors. Here are some strategies that other students have used.

What makes a good Wikipedia article? Before you start writing, think about how information is structured in encyclopedias, and how that style of writing might be different from a traditional research paper you've done in courses. It will also help to familiarize yourself with Wikipedia articles within your academic discipline, which can serve as guides for the types of sections you'll be expected to contribute.

Do

- Choose a topic that is well known in your discipline, but only weakly represented on Wikipedia. If you can find a lot of literature about a topic, but not very much information on Wikipedia, that is an ideal situation to work from.

- Look for articles considered "stub" or "start" class on Wikipedia's internal quality scale. You can see an article's rating by visiting its talk page.

- Try a few different variants on your search term before creating an article. A topic may already be covered under a different name.

- If you're updating an article and want to work in your sandbox, copy the existing text into your sandbox first. It's better to enhance the work of other editors instead of rewriting the entire article.

- Start with your own curiosity. If you've found a fascinating fact through reliable course readings, that's a great starting point for your search. It will also keep you motivated as you search for additional references to write your article.

Don't

- Don't try to improve articles on very broad topics, such as "law," or articles that are already of high quality on Wikipedia, such as "Featured Articles". These topics are more challenging to improve effectively.

- Don't start out by trying to improve articles on highly controversial topics, such as global warming, abortion, or Scientology. Even well-intended edits on contentious articles or emotional topics may leave you feeling frustrated. Consider working on an existing sub-article to bring more detail to a particular facet of the topic.

- Don't work on topics that aren't covered by good sources or sizeable literature. You'll have a hard time providing the references needed to create a Wikipedia article.

- Don't start articles with titles that imply an essay-like approach, such as "The Effects of the Recent Subprime Mortgage Crisis on Global Economics." Instead, start with something like "Subprime mortgage crisis." Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, a source for facts. Essays and persuasive writing are not appropriate.

- Don't rewrite or completely rework existing articles. Work with the existing text instead, editing or adding whatever is neccesary to build a stronger article. Articles built this way will benefit from true collaboration.

- Don't forget to check Wikipedia's Portal Directory for pages related to your discipline. Many disciplines have portals on Wikipedia that list articles in that subject needing improvement. Just type PORTAL:CONTENTS/PORTALS into Wikipedia's search bar. Portals may also break down articles into larger domains within your field, which could help you as you brainstorm.

Citing sources on Wikipedia

Citations are critical for making content on Wikipedia reliable. Here's how to cite sources in the articles on which you are working.

A core principle of Wikipedia is that facts added to the encyclopedia must be verifiable. In other words, everything you write on Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable source, like a peer-reviewed journal, a book, or a mainstream newspaper article.

In general, you should be citing at least once for each paragraph you contribute to Wikipedia, but any quotations, hard facts like statistics, or potentially contentious claims *must* be cited. Any information you add that is not cited to a source is likely to be deleted from Wikipedia, so it's important to add proper citations to your work.

Remember, Wikipedia doesn't allow original research. A Wikipedia article should never connect two pieces of information from different sources to reach a new conclusion. Instead, find a source that draws that conclusion on its own and cite that source. Take this sentence, for example: "The World Anti-Doping Agency was set up in 1990 [1], but doping in professional sports rose throughout the 1990s [2]." Each statement may be a fact from cited sources, but they shouldn't have been combined in a way that implies a connection.

Before you begin

Look for a few Featured Articles or Good Articles in the subject area in which you're writing, and see how the authors of those article cite sources. Some disciplines, such as the biomedical sciences, have additional sourcing requirements (type WP:MEDRS into the search bar to see them). Some favor in-text attribution, where you add a fact, and then add the name of the author into that sentence (see WP:INTEXT for more information).

There is no single acceptable style for citing your work on Wikipedia, such as MLA or APA style, as may be used in your university courses. You should, however, maintain a consistent style for citations throughout the article. If you are expanding an existing article, all references should be in the same style as what's already there. Take care to keep any citations previous editors have added to the article. One easy way to keep your citations consistent — and to add citations in general — is to use the citation toolbar. Here's how.

Using the citation toolbar

To access the toolbar, click the word "Cite" on the editing window toolbar. That will provide a dropdown that offers templates for websites, newspapers, books, and journals, the most common sources used on Wikipedia. If you click one of these, you will see a form asking you for the information to provide in your citation. Fill out the form.

In the box that says "Ref name", give a short name for this particular source. You can then use this short name as the citation every time you cite that source. To do so, put your cursor wherever you'd like to add the footnote, then click the "Named references" button on the toolbar. Select the short name you've given for that reference from the dropdown.

At the end of your article, add a section called ==References==. Underneath that section, type in: {{Reflist}}.

The tool will automatically format the full citations for every reference you've added along the way, as long as you've added them with the citation toolbar.

See also

For more information, see the following:

- What are reliable sources?
  http://enwp.org/WP:RS
- Referencing for beginners:
  http://enwp.org/WP:REFB
- More on citing sources:
  http://enwp.org/WP:CITE

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Avoiding plagiarism on Wikipedia

Wikipedia policy forbids close paraphrasing and copying and pasting from most sources.

Here's what you need to know to avoid running into trouble.

It's wrong to use someone else's words and claim them as your own; that's called plagiarism, and in most universities, it's a violation of your academic honor code. Wikipedia forbids plagiarism, too. This includes close paraphrasing, where your words follow the source too closely. Because of its collaborative nature — articles are written, revised, and rearranged by many different users — you must take extra care to avoid introducing plagiarism, lest others build their work on top of it.

Respect volunteer time

Cleaning up plagiarism takes up tremendous volunteer time that would otherwise go into building Wikipedia. Wikipedians deal with plagiarism by notifying the instructor and removing the student's contributions. If you plagiarize on Wikipedia, you will be caught, and there will be a permanent online record of plagiarism tied to your account.

Quotations

Large block quotations are less prevalent on Wikipedia than they are in academic writing. Take time to summarize and paraphrase the main ideas from the original author's work, with a citation. If a specific phrasing is important, a short quotation can be used.

Close paraphrasing

Paraphrasing without plagiarizing is a skill that takes some practice to master. If you have the source material in front of you, it can be easy to unconsciously mimic the structure and word choice of the original author.

But such copying of words, structure, or phrases from the original source — even when cited to the original source — violates Wikipedia's copyright policies and is a form of plagiarism. You'll need to be conscious of how you're writing to ensure you're not accidentally running afoul of guidelines.

An example of close paraphrasing

Original text: *Because the weather forecast called for rain, the league decided to switch the location of the game to an indoor facility.*

Close paraphrased text, not acceptable on Wikipedia: *The league switched the game's location to an indoor facility due to a weather forecast calling for rain.*

Acceptable text: *Forecasted rain caused the league to move the game indoors.*

Tips and tricks

• Material in your sandbox is still subject to Wikipedia's policies, so do not copy and paste information from your sources into your sandbox.

• Start by taking notes of key concepts, not phrases, from your sources, noting where each came from. Write the draft from your notes rather than from the original source, so you are not unconsciously mimicking the original author's structure or diction.

• The more sources you use, the better you'll gain an understanding of the topic and will be able to paraphrase and summarize in your own words.

• When you've finished your draft, read it with your sources close by. Ensure that everything you've written is substantially different in style from your sources.

Write responsibly

People are reading what you write, and that's a great thing. But remember that because your writing is going out into the world, others will see it and hold you accountable for what you share. While reaching the world outside of the classroom is the real pleasure of writing for Wikipedia, it also means keeping a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility toward your readers and the Wikipedia community.

For more information

See these pages on Wikipedia to learn more:

• http://enwp.org/WP:Close_paraphrasing
• http://enwp.org/WP:Plagiarism
• http://enwp.org/WP:Quotations

Moving out of your sandbox

When your article has a few solid, well-sourced paragraphs giving a good overview of your topic, it's time to move it into Wikipedia proper.

Wikipedia is all about setting your knowledge free into the community. You may be anxious, but don't spend too much time editing in your sandbox. Being part of Wikipedia means contributing and engaging with the community and its content.

It's also much easier to fix problems early, when an article is still small, than to try to repair problems in a large article that is added all at once. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the best time to share your work is shortly after you've started writing!

How to move your article

1. First, think of a title for your article. Look at similar topics to find an appropriate name. Don't use an essay format, or title it with a question. It doesn't even have to be a sentence. The best title is usually just the simplest statement of what the article is about!

Use natural English, blank spaces between words, and capitalize only the first letter and proper nouns. Don't omit words.

Good:
Family structure in the United States

Not good:
FamilyStructureInTheUnitedStates, Family_structure_united_states, A historic view of how family structures in the United States have changed through time

2. Go to your sandbox article by clicking "Sandbox" in the upper right navigation links. In the "More" pulldown menu, choose "Move".

3. You'll load a new page, with a box in the center. At the top of this box, it will say "Move page:" and the name of the page you are about to move, "YourUserName/sandbox". Beneath that, you'll see "To new title" and a dropdown menu. "User" is the default setting. You'll want to click it and change it to say (Article) instead.

4. Take the title you'd like your new article to have, and type it into the "To new title:" input box that currently says "YourUserName/sandbox".

5. In the "Reason:" box, explain the reason for the move. For example, "I'm moving my sandbox article into Wikipedia."

6. Click the gray "Move page" button. You're done!

Did it work?

To move a page into Wikipedia (or create a new article directly) your account must be at least 4 days old with at least 10 edits. If you aren't able to move the page yourself, you can ask another editor to do it for you.

Did you make a mistake?

If you find a typo in the headline of your article, or decide to change the title, you can't simply edit the page to fix it. You'll have to "move" the page again, following these same steps but adding a new, correct title to the "To new title" box. You can do this right away. Don't worry about your old page, it will automatically disappear.

What happens now?

Your page is now living on Wikipedia, where it can be found by anyone looking for the information you've contributed! Editors may appear and begin to help you build your article, or change what you've done. Don't panic! This is all part of Wikipedia's collaborative process. Other editors will be grateful for your contributions, and use them as a base to improve your article and the encyclopedia as a whole.

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Polishing your Wikipedia articles

The best Wikipedia articles have illustrations and images, link to other pages, and have other pages linking to them. Here's how to add those finishing touches.

Finding good images

Images used in Wikipedia articles are stored on Wikimedia Commons, which contains millions of photos and other media files that are available for use on Wikipedia and beyond.

Do some searches on commons.wikimedia.org to see if it has what you need. Browsing related Wikipedia articles can also be a good way to find relevant images.

You can add your own images, too. Our guide, "Illustrating Wikipedia", explains what kind of images you can share, and shows you how to add them to your article.

Adding an image to your article

Once you choose a file from Wikimedia Commons, you can insert it into an article using its file name (which begins "File:" and ends with an image extension like ".jpg").

The basic code for adding an image is:

[[File:Example file.jpg | thumb | This is your caption.]]

Add the image code above the paragraph where you want the image to appear.

Image captions should be concise, descriptive, and relevant to the accompanying article text. The "thumb" parameter is used for displaying the image in the standard Wikipedia format (at a default size, with a small border and a caption beneath).

For more advanced image display options (such as changing the size or location of the image), see: http://enwp.org/WP:PIC

Adding links from your article

Many of us have lost all track of time clicking links from one article to another and then another, and another. The value of a networked encyclopedia is the way it allows readers to draw these connections between the article they are reading and related articles that strike their interest. That's why creating "wikilinks" between the article you worked on and others is so important.

Think critically about what your reader might want to read about to deepen their understanding of your topic. Once you have a few ideas, find the first time each of those topics is mentioned in your article. Those should be the only places that you create links.

To make a link to another Wikipedia article (called a *wikilink*), simply add two brackets to either side of the text: [[Queen]]

If you want to add italics or bold the text, add your apostrophes outside of the brackets: "[[War and Peace]]" will appear as *War and Peace*.

If you want to link to an article, but display some other text for the link, you can add the pipe "|" divider (SHIFT + BACKSLASH on English-layout and other keyboards) followed by the alternative name. For example:

[[Queen (band) | Queen]] and [[Queen (chess) | Queen]] will both display as Queen, but link to very different articles.

Finally, you can make a link to a specific section of a page like so:

[[Target page#Target section | display text]]

Always check your links to ensure they point to the correct article! For example, Apple points to the article about the fruit, while Apple Inc. is the title of the article about the consumer electronics manufacturer.

Adding links to your article

To add links to your article from other articles, simply find an article you want to link to your own. Then, follow the process above. Be respectful, but don't be shy about branching out beyond your own article.

"Did You Know" submissions

The "Did You Know" (DYK) section of Wikipedia's Main Page features short facts taken from new or recently expanded articles. Here's how to submit your own work.

Did You Know (DYK) selects short, recently added facts from Wikipedia articles and includes them in a list on its main page. Being selected for this feature is a stamp of good work for the article as a whole, and brings a few thousand extra readers to your page.

Not every article will meet the criteria, and incomplete or erroneous submissions take away valuable volunteer time, so be sure to double check that your article meets the requirements before you submit.

How DYK works

Individual DYK entries are submitted to the DYK nomination page, usually by the person who wrote or expanded the article, to be checked by other editors. If problems are found, they must be fixed before the article can appear on the Main Page. Once you address these problems, your hook will make its way to the front of the queue — this usually takes several days — and it will appear on the Main Page for several hours, and permanently in the DYK archive.

Requirements for DYK eligibility

Eligible articles include newly created articles, and recently expanded articles that have grown by a factor of five.

An article is eligible for DYK if:

- it has at least 1500 characters of prose
- it was created or expanded 5-fold no more than 7 days ago
- it has reliable sources as references, including inline citations to the facts mentioned in your "hook"
- it conforms to the core policies of Verifiability, Biographies of Living Persons, Neutrality, and Copyrights.

Nomination procedure

To nominate an article, follow the instructions at the DYK suggestions page: http://enwp.org/T:TDYK.

1. Compose your "hook", the interesting fact that you want to appear on the main page. A good hook is cited in the article, grabs the reader's curiosity, and makes them want to read more.

It should have no more than 200 characters (including wiki markup). Write the hook to answer the question "Did you know...", with wikilinks to the nominated article in bold, and any other relevant articles. For example:

*Did you know ... that the Office of Noise Abatement and Control is responsible for fighting **noise pollution** in the United States?*

2. In the "How to post a new nomination" section, enter the title of your article and press "Create nomination", then fill out the template form and save the page. For example:

```
{{subst:NewDYKnomination
| article = Noise pollution in the United States
| hook = ... that the [[Office of Noise Abatement
and Control]] is responsible for for fighting '''[[noise
pollution]]''' in the United States?
| status = new
| author = PolicyRocker15}}
```

3. Edit the section of the nomination page for the day the article was created or expanded — not the day it was nominated! — and add the completed nomination to the top of the section, using the code {{Did you know nominations/Your article title}}.

4. Other editors will see your hook, and either recommend your article or suggest some changes. Check back on your nomination over the next few days to see if any problems are flagged to be fixed.

5. Once your article has been approved, check the queue to see when it will appear on the Main Page.

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