Is Your Company Ready for Wikipedia?

Everything you ever wanted to know about Wiki for business

The Writers for Hire, Inc.

Introduction: Why We Wrote this Book

The idea for this eBook came about one afternoon after a lengthy discussion with one of our Wikipedia consulting clients. This client had come to us with a draft of a Wikipedia article about his company. He asked for our help editing it to meet Wiki's standards. What he had written was very good, from a technical point of view. It was engaging. It was written in a distinctive voice that matched the company's hip, modern tone. It was clear. It was interesting.

And, much to our client's dismay, it was utterly wrong for Wikipedia.

To be fair, by the time we were finished with our edits and suggestions, it was barely recognizable. We'd taken his engaging article and reduced it to its essentials: just the facts, plain and simple. No unnecessary words. No overly descriptive phrases. To make matters worse, we'd even done a little additional research and added some new information that our client thought was less-than-positive.

"You've taken all the personality out of this," our client said. "And you added a whole section about my company getting sued last year -- I don't want that in there! I asked you to edit my article for Wikipedia, not rewrite the darn thing! I thought you were supposed to be on my side!"

When our client calmed down, we were able to explain to him that, as writers, we actually really liked the draft he gave us. But he didn't hire us as writers. He hired us as Wikipedia consultants. And eventually, after we walked him through some of Wikipedia's rules and regulations, we were able to convince him that we really were on his side – which is exactly why we had done such extensive edits on his article. In order to ensure that his article "stuck" once it was posted, we had to do everything we could to make sure that it was Wiki-appropriate and unlikely to get flagged for conflict of interest; bias; lack of neutrality; or any of the other issues that can lead to rewrites or deletions by the (very) active community of Wikipedia editors.
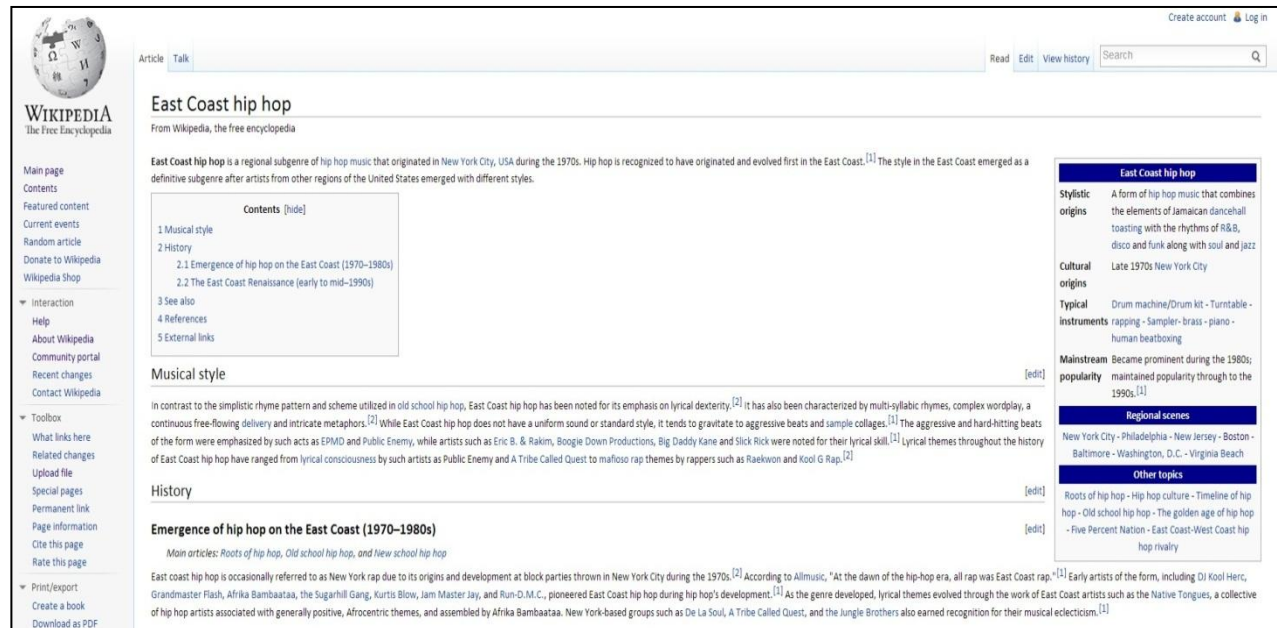
Eventually, he acquiesced and allowed us to post our edited version of his article. It's been added to a bit since it went up, and he probably still likes his original, Wiki-inappropriate version better. But his article is still there, and he was able to play a critical role in determining how his company's Wiki presence would take shape.

We created this eBook as a guide for anyone who is considering creating or editing Wikipedia. We created it for anyone interested in learning more about the rules of Wikipedia. It doesn't cover everything, of course (that would take hundreds, if not thousands, of pages to do) – but it covers the basics. The rules. The essential guidelines that everyone should know before they set about writing a Wiki article.

Enjoy!

Chapter 1: What is Wikipedia?

Wikipedia has become a standard, go-to resource for all kinds of facts: Want to know everything there is to know about the giant squid? Need a list of every Nobel Prize winner, organized by country? Interested in the history of Microsoft? Ever wondered about the difference between East Coast and West Coast hip-hop?

A sample Wikipedia page.

Wikipedia is a great example of the awesome things that can happen when people get together and pool their knowledge and expertise. Anyone with a laptop and an Internet connection can contribute to Wikipedia.

But this doesn't mean Wikipedia is a free-for-all. Yes, anyone can contribute a new article or edit an existing one -- but if you want your contribution to "stick," you've got to follow a ton of rules regarding content, sources, neutrality, and notability.

So, what makes a "good" Wikipedia article? Does your product, service, or company belong on Wikipedia? What happens if your article gets flagged? And what does "flagged" mean, anyway?

Wiki can be complicated (and even a little intimidating) to the uninitiated.   That's why we decided to create an eBook that covers some important Wikipedia basics – like rules about content, neutrality, and sources.

First things First: Defining Wikipedia

Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia – but what does that mean? Here's a good definition, from Wikipedia itself:

> # Wikipedia:Wikipedia in brief
> From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
>
> **Wikipedia aims to be a *neutral compilation of verifiable, established facts.***

Basically, everything you need to know about Wikipedia is in the above sentence:

- ✓ **Wikipedia is "neutral."** In other words, it doesn't represent one single viewpoint on any subject.

- ✓ **Wikipedia contains "verifiable, established facts."** As in, facts that have been published by an uninterested and reliable third party. Facts that you can verify by checking a couple of sources, such as reputable newspaper or magazine articles.

We'll take a more in-depth look at both neutrality and sources in future posts. But right now, let's just focus on the big picture.

So, now that we know what Wikipedia is, let's take a second to discuss **what Wikipedia isn't**. And there are a whole lot of things that Wikipedia isn't. In fact there's a whole page on Wikipedia dedicated to this topic, and it's pretty long.

Essentially, though, it boils down to this:

Wikipedia is not a blog/fansite/personal website.

So you can't write in first-person, and you can't write whatever you want. It's not a place for ranting about politics or enthusing about your favorite movie or TV show. That's not to say that your favorite TV show doesn't deserve a Wikipedia page. It probably does. But it still has to conform to Wikipedia's standards.

In other words, like this:

Star Trek

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from Star trek)

This article is about the Star Trek franchise. For other uses, see Star Trek (disambiguation).

Star Trek is an American science fiction entertainment franchise created by Gene Roddenberry and currently under the ownership of CBS.[Note 1] The franchise began in 1966 with the television series *Star Trek* later referred to as *Star Trek: The Original Series*. This series, its spin-off shows: *Star Trek: The Animated Series*[Note 2], *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, and *Star Trek: Enterprise*, as well as the film series make up the core of the franchise's mythos. While the critical response of much of the franchise varies, many individual *Star Trek* episodes and films have won awards and honors including Emmy Awards, Hugo Awards, and an Academy Award.

Westerns such as *Wagon Train* along with the novel *Gulliver's Travels* inspired Roddenberry when he created the first *Star Trek*. *The Original Series*, followed the interstellar adventures of James T. Kirk and the crew of an exploration vessel of a 23rd century galactic "United Federation of Planets"—the Starship *Enterprise*. This series debuted in 1966 and ran for three seasons on NBC. These adventures continued in the short-lived *Star Trek: The Animated Series* and six feature films. Four spin-off television series were eventually produced; *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, followed the crew of a new Starship *Enterprise* set a century after the original series; *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, set contemporaneously with *The Next Generation*; and *Star Trek: Enterprise*, set before the original series, in the early days of human interstellar travel. Four additional *The Next Generation* feature films were produced. In 2009, the franchise rebooted[Note 3] in the film *Star Trek* featuring a new cast portraying the crew of the original *Enterprise*. A sequel of the this film, *Star Trek into Darkness*, is scheduled for the summer of 2013.
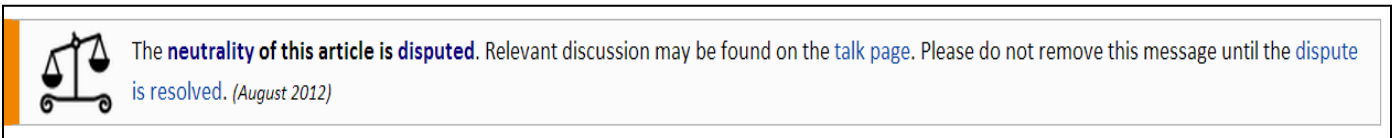
Not this:

Wikipedia is not a place to publish your original research/inventions/discoveries.

Let's say you just discovered a new planet or invented a super-cool new iPhone app. This is fantastic – but it's not Wiki-appropriate. Because Wikipedia is a place for "established" facts, it's not a place for your original work or research . . . yet.

(We say "yet" because if an established, third-party publication like Newsweek or the Wall Street Journal writes an article about you and your new planet or iPhone app, you might actually be Wiki-eligible. But more on that later.)

Wikipedia is not a place for advertisements/self-promotion.

Again, we'll get much more in-depth with this later, but when writing about a company, product, or service you have to be extra-careful not to sound biased. Wiki pages that sound like they were written by a company's PR department quickly get flagged for neutrality/conflict-of-interest issues, which looks like this:

The **neutrality** of this article is **disputed**. Relevant discussion may be found on the talk page. Please do not remove this message until the dispute is resolved. *(August 2012)*

That doesn't mean that your product, service, or company doesn't belong on Wikipedia. It just means that, if you want your Wiki page to "stick," you have to follow the rules.

So what makes a topic, person, or company "Wiki-eligible"? To be eligible, a topic must meet two major criteria: It needs to be **notable**, and it needs to have received **significant coverage by neutral, reputable third-party sources**.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at the first criteria: Notability.

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Chapter 2: Determining Notability

In chapter 1, we talked about Wikipedia in general – we explained a bit about what Wiki is (a neutral repository of established, documented facts) and isn't (a blog, a soapbox, or a vehicle for free advertising). And as we mentioned at the end of chapter 1, determining whether a topic is eligible for Wikipedia really boils down to the answers to two very important questions:

Question 1: *Is your topic notable?*

Question 2: *Has your topic received significant coverage by neutral, reputable third-party sources?*

In this chapter, we're going to focus on the first question.

Before we go on, it's important to be clear about we mean by "notable." For our purposes, a "notable" topic is:

- ✓ Of interest to the general public, not just you or a few people in your industry.
- ✓ Something you might read about in a newspaper or magazine.
- ✓ A topic that has been written about by journalists, rather than PR or advertising copywriters.
- ✓ Culturally, historically, or socially relevant in some way.

Notability: A Few Examples

Let's take a look at a sample Wikipedia page of a notable person, British fantasy novelist Terry Pratchett:

The red boxes indicate details that make Pratchett notable: He's written a 40-novel series; he is a best-selling author in the U.K. and in the U.S -- heck, the guy's even been knighted for his "services to literature"!

And if you scroll down to the "References" section, you can see a list of the more than 100 newspaper and magazine articles; websites; television and radio interviews that were used in the creation of Pratchett's article, which means that he has definitely received "significant media coverage" from reliable sources (more on sources later, though):

Here's an example of a Wiki page for a notable company:

Again, the things that make Subway notable are outlined in red: it's one of the fastest-growing franchises in the world; it's the largest single-brand restaurant chain globally and the second largest restaurant operator globally; it's got over 37,000 locations in 100 countries, and so on.

Also, notice that this page isn't written like an advertisement. It gives you the facts: What Subway is, where it does business, notable rankings and statistics. But it doesn't read like something that came from the company's PR department, and there's even a section called "Controversy" that talks about a few not-so-positive details, such as lawsuits and instances of negative publicity associated with the chain.

If you look at the page's "References" section, you can see that Subway has indeed received significant media coverage:

A Few More Examples

Of course, you don't have to be a knighted, best-selling author or one of the world's most popular fast-food chains to be notable enough for a Wikipedia page. There are tons of pages about people and companies that are somewhat less famous – but still notable and Wiki-appropriate.

Here are just a few examples of the types of people and companies you can find on Wikipedia:

Person/Company/Product	Notable because . . .
Josephine "Jo" Foxworth, American copywriter	• Elected to the Advertising Hall of Fame in 1997 • Created a jingle for a large supermarket chain
Zhang Jun, Chinese track and field athlete	• Won several medals for shot put • Currently a record holder in both indoor and outdoor categories
H-E-B, a Texas-based grocery store chain	• Ranked # 12 on Forbes' 2011 list of "America's Largest Private Companies." • Has more than 315 stores throughout Texas and northern Mexico.

Robert B. Cohen, American businessman	• Founder of Hudson News, the world's largest airport newsstand retailer.
Sprecher Brewery, a Wisconsin-based beer and soda microbrewery	• Produces a nationally recognized, award-winning root beer.

While they may not all be household names, all of these people and companies have at least one notable thing about them: They've won awards; they hold world records, and so on.

Checklist: Determining Notability

So, how do you know if your topic is notable? Here are a few questions to use as a starting point:

	Yes	No
Has my topic been the subject of a newspaper or magazine article?		
Has my topic won any awards/recognitions?		
Is there enough (good) information available about my topic to write a fully sourced, article length Wikipedia entry?		
Can I find information about my topic in a published book?		
Is my topic historically/socially/culturally relevant in some way?		

If you can answer "yes" to at least four of these questions, you might have a Wiki-eligible topic on your hands.

Of course, notice that we said "might."

The next step in determining Wikipedia eligibility? A review of your available sources.

In the next chapter, we'll take an in-depth look at neutral, third-party sources and "significant coverage."

Chapter 3: Sources, Citations, and Verifiability

As we mentioned in Chapter 2, a topic's Wikipedia eligibility is (mostly) based on the answers to two important questions:

> **Question 1:** *Is your topic notable?*
>
> **Question 2:** *Has your topic received significant coverage by neutral, reputable third-party sources?*

Now that we've discussed notability, we're going to spend this chapter discussing sources and "significant coverage."

What is a "Third-Party" Source?

A third-party source is a **source that is not directly related to you**, your company, or your product.

A third-party source IS:	A third-party source IS NOT:
• A newspaper article • A magazine article • A government website • A (published) book, textbook • A scholarly journal	• A press release • A blog or personal website • Diaries or journals • A personal letter • An original document • A sales brochure • A corporate website

When we do Wiki consults, we ask our prospective Wiki clients to provide us with a list of 5 to 10 neutral, third-party sources on their topic. Although there's no hard-and-fast rule about how many sources a topic must have to be Wiki-eligible, we recommend using as many as possible to create your article. We strongly recommend having at least 3-5 good sources.

If a prospective client can meet this requirement, we're happy to get started on their Wiki project. If they can't meet this requirement, we turn the assignment down.

This is not our rule. It's Wikipedia's. Check out the text in the red box below:

Policies and guidelines requiring third-party sources   [edit]

The necessity of reliable, third-party sources is cemented in several of Wikipedia's policies and guidelines:

- Wikipedia's policy on both *Verifiability* and *No original research* states that *"If no reliable, third-party sources can be found for an article topic, Wikipedia should not have an article on it."*
- Wikipedia's policy on *Verifiability* states that *"Articles should be based upon reliable, third-party published sources with a reputation for fact-checking and accuracy."*
- Wikipedia's guideline on *Reliable sources* states that *"Wikipedia articles should rely primarily on reliable, third-party, published sources"*.
- Wikipedia's guideline on *Notability* states that *"If a topic has received significant coverage in reliable sources that are independent of the subject, it is presumed to satisfy the inclusion criteria for a stand-alone article."*

In other words: no sources = no article.

What is "Citing a Source"?

Citing a source is basically just a way of saying, "Hey, I didn't make this up. I can prove it. If you want to verify it for yourself, you can check out this article/magazine/book." And because Wikipedia has a strict "no original research" rule, any information you include in a Wiki article must be easily verified.

In other words, sources and citations help keep the Wiki community honest.

What should you cite when writing a Wikipedia article? Pretty much **everything that's not common/general knowledge**.

Let's look at a few examples.

Example 1: Cite claims about being the first at anything.

Any time you make the claim that a person or company was the first to do something, win something, or discover something, you definitely need to back that statement up with proof from a reliable third-party source.

Here's an example. The citation is circled in red:

The above example is taken from the Wikipedia article for award-winning science fiction author Octavia E. Butler. In the introductory paragraph, we learn that Butler was the first sci-fi writer to receive a MacArthur Genius Grant.

The citation provides proof that this claim isn't just made up. If we wanted to verify this information, we could take a look at the source material – in this case, a critical essay about Butler and her work.

Example 2: Cite opinion statements.

Opinion statements are acceptable on Wikipedia as long as they are clearly presented as opinions and backed up with citations. The example below is taken from the Wiki page about sleeved blankets. In the second section, the Snuggie is referred to as a "pop culture phenomenon." This statement is backed up with an article from USA Today:

Example 3: Cite dates and other details.

The example below tells you everything you ever wanted to know about Monty Python's classic "The Lumberjack Song" – including the date that the song was released in the UK. According to the citation information, these facts can be verified in a book:

Of course, these are just a few examples of the type of information that needs to be cited on Wikipedia – if we addressed each one, this would be a much longer book.

Before we move on, we'll leave you with a quick and easy guideline from Wikipedia's editors:

Avoiding "Original Research"

The Wikipedia community is very strict about the use of reliable third-party sources – if you can't provide a source that backs up a claim, you shouldn't post it. Wikipedia is also very strict about its role as a repository of **existing information** – meaning, information, statistics, and facts that have been documented and written by third-party sources.

What does this mean for you? Well, if you use a fact and you can't cite it, Wikipedia will flag that fact as "original research." If you want your fact to "stick," you'll need to attribute that fact to a third-party source. And if you can't attribute a fact to a third-party source, you shouldn't put it on Wikipedia -- even if you know it's true.

Wiki articles that don't have sources end up "flagged" by Wikipedia editors.

Let's look at a couple of examples.

Example 1: Needs Citations

The screenshot below is from the "Home video" section of the Wikipedia entry on the 1980s movie "The Goonies." Note that there's a little "needs additional citations" icon at the top of the section. This is because there's only one source cited on the entire page. We've put blue boxes around the information that should probably be cited:

Home video [edit]

This section needs additional citations for verification. (March 2011)

← this is one type of Wikipedia flag.

VHS and laserdisc [edit]

says who? ⬇   how do we know this? ⬇   how do we know? we need to cite this. ⬇

The Goonies was first released on VHS video in the United States in March 1986 and the laserdisc and CED versions also debuted that year. Warner Home Video released a theatrical widescreen laserdisc on January 29, 1992.

DVD [edit]

Warner Home Video released *The Goonies* in widescreen on Region 1 DVD on August 21, 2001. The DVD featured several notable extras, including:

P., Ken (2003-12-23). "IGN Interviews Sean Astin". ← This is the only source that is cited in the entire section.

1. Commentary by actors Ke Quan, Feldman, Astin, Green, Plimpton, Cohen, Brolin, and director Donner. This option frequently switches back and shows ... watching the film while recording the commentary. Midway through the film, Sean Astin had to leave, much to the puzzlement of his costars, and without ever getting to say a personal message to Cyndi Lauper that he intended to. He left a Samwise Gamgee action figure in his place, however. In an interview with IGN.com, Astin explained that the recording session started late, which resulted in him having to leave early to honor a prior commitment ... astmate), Joe Pantoliano.[12]

who says it's notable? ⬇

2. A 7-minute behind-the-scenes documentary called "The Making of The Goonies"
3. The 12-minute, 2-part "The Goonies 'R' Good Enough" music video by Cyndi Lauper. The video is notable in its casting of some 80s wrestlers, like André the Giant and Captain Lou Albano. The video was directed by Steven Spielberg.
4. Deleted scenes:
   - A scene where Data tried out his gadgets, including the "Pinchers of Peril" and "Spy Eyes", outside of the Fratelli hideout. The boys then realize the map can be folded like a MAD Magazine.
   - The octopus attack (where the "Eight Arms to Hold You" song can be heard) that Data describes to a reporter at the end of the film.
   - The convenience store scene (which explains why the map, which was intact in the Walshes' attic, is singed later in the film). The convenience store scene, however, cuts about 15 seconds short, not showing Mouth retrieving the map from Brand's pocket and the boys fleeing the store with Brand chasing.
   - A scene with Sloth and Chunk, where Chunk talks about his friend Joey who only goes out to play at night.
5. The theatrical trailer.

Most of the information in blue isn't particularly controversial or contentious – which is probably why this section isn't flagged for "original research." All this needs is a couple of good sources that tell us when the different home video versions were released.

Example 2: Original Research

Below is a section from the Wikipedia page about ham. In this case, the section has been flagged for containing original research.

There's only one source cited in this entire section (it's at the very end) – but nearly every sentence contains a claim that should be cited. Again, we've put boxes around all of the statements that need sources:

Tinned ham [edit]

Tinned ham (more commonly known in the United States as "canned ham") is a meat product that is sold exclusively in tins (or cans). The ham itself is usually formed from smaller cuts of meat, cooked in the can, and is often covered in an aspic jelly during the canning process. Two versions are available, perishable and shelf-stable. Tinned ham is usually sold in supermarkets and convenience stores.

Curing process [edit]

This section may contain original research. Please improve it by verifying the claims made and adding references. Statements consisting only of original research may be removed. (January 2012)

Ham is uncooked preserved pork. It is cured (a preservation process) usually in large quantities of salt and sugar. Then hot smoked (hung over a hot, smokey fire but out of direct heat) to preserve it more. This process keeps the pink hue of the uncooked meat. Standard pork, like chops, are raw and unpreserved. When heat is applied to the meat a chemical reaction happens that turns the hemoglobin white. This also happens when an acid is applied to meats.

The pink color of ham develops in the curing process which involves salt and usually either nitrites or nitrates. The nitrate cure is used for product that will either be kept a long time or at room temperature like dry salami. Most hams are cured with nitrite and salt today.

The cure prevents the growth of unhealthy bacteria (maybe deadly) before enough moisture is withdrawn by the salt. This is particularly important if the product is to be smoked above 40F when these bacteria grow. The "danger zone" for uncured product is between 40F and 140F.

There is confusion in the words curing and brining. Brining is done with salt and usually sugar and only alters the product color a little. Curing is done with salt and nitrates.

Sodium nitrite is used for the curing of meat because it prevents bacterial growth and, in a reaction with the meat's myoglobin, gives the product a desirable dark red color. Because of the toxicity of nitrite (the lethal dose of nitrite for humans is about 22 mg per kg body weight), the maximum allowed nitrite concentration in meat products is 200 ppm. Under certain conditions, especially during cooking, nitrites in meat can react with degradation products of amino acids, forming nitrosamines, which are known carcinogens.[26]

See also [edit]

This section makes all kinds of claims about food safety and processes – and almost none of the "facts" presented here are cited. Even if the statements in the orange boxes are true, they still need to be cited – otherwise the entire section may be deleted from the article.

How to Find Sources

Let's say you want to improve this Wikipedia article. How do you find sources to cite?

Well, for starters, you could try a quick Google search on "ham curing process":
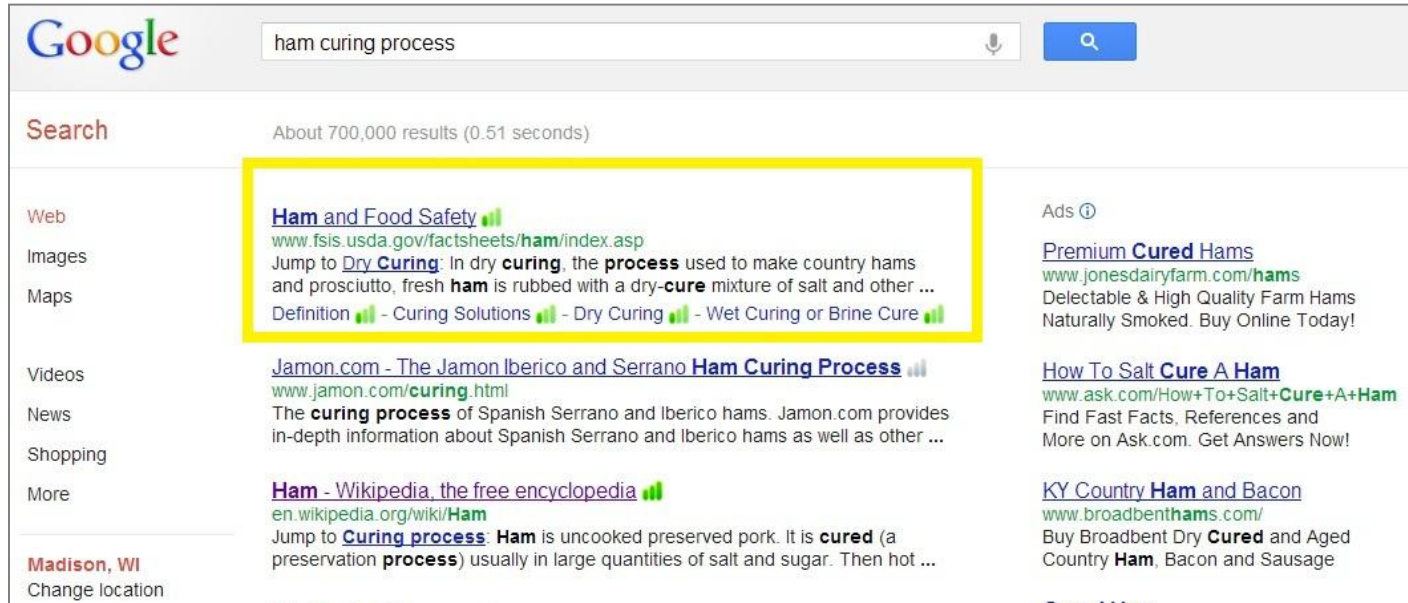
The first result that comes up is the USDA's page on food safety. And, if you click on the link, you'll find tons of facts about the curing process:

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A Google search also turns up a few magazine articles on the subject.

Like this one:

Both the USDA website and the *Saveur* magazine article are appropriate sources for a Wikipedia article. If you wanted to improve the Wikipedia article, you could verify and/or edit the content of the "Curing Process" section and you could cite both of these as sources.

The Internet is a great tool if you're trying to find sources. Just make sure you stick to newspapers, magazines, and government websites – avoid using blogs or personal websites as sources.

Gray Area: Company websites

Earlier in this chapter, we mentioned that corporate websites weren't considered neutral, third-party sources. That said, they aren't totally off limits, either.   Corporate websites can be used – *very sparingly* -- in a few very specific ways.

Let's say you're writing a Wiki article about XYZ Company. You've got six news articles about XYZ company from reputable, third-party sources. The only thing you can't find is the date that XYZ Company was founded.

In this case, it would be okay to cite the XYZ Company's "About Us" website page.

If you've got a well-sourced article, you can use a company website as a source for **small pieces of non-controversial information**, such as:
- Product release dates
- Product descriptions/specs
- Information about the company's locations

In general, **company websites should be used as a last resort** when you absolutely can't find the necessary information anywhere else.

Wikipedia Sources: The Essentials

Let's sum up what we've learned about sources:

- ✓ All Wikipedia articles must be written using **existing information** from **neutral, third-party sources** such as magazines, newspapers, or government websites.
- ✓ Every fact, date, conclusion, opinion, and quote in a Wiki article must be cited.
- ✓ Wiki articles without citations may be flagged for lack of sources and/or "original research."
- ✓ A Google search is a good way to find sources.
- ✓ Company websites can be used – sparingly – as long as you rely primarily on good, neutral third-party sources.

That's it for sources.

Next up: We'll take a look at neutrality.

The Writers for Hire, Inc.

Chapter 4: Neutrality

Now that we've discussed notability and sources, it's time to take a look at another major component of Wikipedia policy: **Neutrality.**

A neutral point of view is one that doesn't promote a particular opinion or take a side on a controversial issue. A Wiki article written in a neutral point of view will give equal voice to all major views on a subject, instead of just one.

Here's what Wikipedia says about neutrality:

Explanation of the neutral point of view   [edit]

Achieving what the Wikipedia community understands as *neutrality* means carefully and critically analyzing a variety of reliable sources and then attempting to convey to the reader the information contained in them fairly, proportionately, and as far as possible without bias. Wikipedia aims to **describe disputes, but not engage in them.** Editors, while naturally having their own points of view, should strive in good faith to provide complete information, and not to promote one particular point of view over another. As such, the neutral point of view does not mean exclusion of certain points of view, but including all notable and verifiable points of view. Observe the following principles to achieve the level of neutrality that is appropriate for an encyclopedia.

Policy shortcut:
WP:YESPOV

- **Avoid stating opinions as facts.** Usually, articles will contain information about the significant opinions that have been expressed about their subjects. However, these opinions should not be stated in Wikipedia's voice. Rather, they should be attributed in the text to particular sources, or where justified, described as widespread views, etc. For example, an article should not state that "genocide is an evil action", but it may state that "genocide has been described by John X as the epitome of human evil."
- **Avoid stating seriously contested assertions as facts.** If different reliable sources make conflicting assertions about a matter, treat these assertions as opinions rather than facts, and do not present them as direct statements.
- **Avoid presenting uncontested factual assertions as mere opinion.** Uncontested and uncontroversial factual assertions made by reliable sources should normally be directly stated in Wikipedia's voice. Unless a topic specifically deals with a disagreement over otherwise uncontested information, there is no need for specific attribution for the assertion, although it is helpful to add a reference link to the source in support of verifiability. Further, the passage should not be worded in any way that makes it appear to be contested.
- **Prefer nonjudgmental language.** A neutral point of view neither sympathizes with nor disparages its subject (or what reliable sources say about the subject), although this must sometimes be balanced against clarity. Present opinions and conflicting findings in a disinterested tone.
- **Indicate the relative prominence of opposing views.** Ensure that the reporting of different views on a subject adequately reflects the relative levels of support for those views, and that it does not give a false impression of parity, or give undue weight to a particular view. For example, to state that "According to Simon Wiesenthal, the Holocaust was a program of extermination of the Jewish people in Germany, but David Irving disputes this analysis" would be to give apparent parity between the supermajority view and a tiny minority view by assigning each to a single activist in the field.

When you write or edit a Wiki article, you are required to adhere to Wikipedia's standards of neutrality: **Stick to facts instead of opinions, present all viewpoints, and don't use judgmental language.**

Sounds easy, right? Well, it is easy. Sort of.

Our Wiki clients are often surprised when we tell them that parts of their proposed Wikipedia article need to be rewritten to avoid being flagged for neutrality issues. That's because neutrality isn't always so easy to identify – especially when you're close to a particular subject.

Facts vs. Opinions

The first and most important rule of Wikipedia is, you can't treat opinions like facts. This does not mean that opinions have no place on Wikipedia. It does mean, however, that they must be

presented as opinions rather than facts. They must also be attributed to neutral, third-party sources.

Here are a few examples of how to balance fact and opinion on Wikipedia.

You can't say:

> *"The Walking Dead* is the best show on television."

But you can say:

> *The Walking Dead* premiered on October 31, 2010 on the cable television channel AMC in the United States.[3] Based on its reception, AMC renewed the series for a second season of 13 episodes, which premiered on October 16, 2011.[4][5] Two episodes into the second season, AMC announced that the show would return for a third season, airing on October 14, 2012.[6]
>
> The series has been well received[7][8] and has received many award nominations, including a Writers Guild of America Award nomination and a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Television Series Drama.[9][10] The series has also attained strong Nielsen ratings, beating various records for a cable series, including receiving 10.9 million viewers for its season three premiere to become the most-watched basic cable drama telecast in history.[11]

See the difference? Both examples basically say the same thing: *The Walking Dead* is a darn good show.

But the first example is purely an opinion statement. **The second example provides "proof" that this opinion is held by a whole bunch of people**. The show has gotten generally positive reviews from critics; it's won several awards; it gets good ratings, etc. These statements are presented in a neutral way – and each statement contains a citation.

Let's try another one.

You can't say:

> "Stephen King is a good writer."

But you can say:

> Stephen Edwin King (born September 21, 1947) is an American author of contemporary horror, suspense, science fiction, and fantasy. His books have sold more than 350 million copies[9] and have been adapted into a number of feature films, television movies and comic books. King has published 50 novels, including seven under the pen-name of Richard Bachman, and five non-fiction books. He has written nearly two hundred short stories, most of which have been collected in nine collections of short fiction. Many of his stories are set in his home state of Maine.
>
> King has received Bram Stoker Awards, World Fantasy Awards, British Fantasy Society Awards, his novella *The Way Station* was a Nebula Award novelette nominee,[10] and his short story "The Man in the Black Suit" received the O. Henry Award. In 2003, the National Book Foundation awarded him the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.[11] He has also received awards for his contribution to literature for his whole career, such as the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement (2004), the Canadian Booksellers Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2007) and the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America (2007).[12]

King's Wikipedia page doesn't directly state that he is a good writer (or a bad one, for that matter).   Instead, the page presents facts about awards he's won, critical response to his work, and so on.

Differing Points of View

Another big component of Wikipedia neutrality is including several points of view – even points of view that are negative and contradictory. This also means giving space to not-so-positive aspects of your topic, such as lawsuits or controversies associated with it.

This is why there are Wikipedia pages like this one:

Criticism of Walmart

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from Criticism of walmart)

Wal-Mart has been subject to criticism by various groups and individuals. Among these are some labor unions, community groups, grassroots organizations, religious organizations, environmental groups and Wal-Mart customers. They have protested against Wal-Mart, the company's policies and business practices, including charges of racial and gender discrimination. [1][2][3] Other areas of criticism include the corporation's foreign product sourcing, treatment of product suppliers, environmental practices, the use of public subsidies, and the company's security policies.[4] Wal-Mart denies doing anything wrong and maintains that low prices are the result of efficiency.[5][6][7]

In 2005, labor unions created new organizations and websites to influence public opinion against Wal-Mart, including Wake Up Wal-Mart (United Food and Commercial Workers) and Walmart Watch (Service Employees International Union). By the end of 2005, Wal-Mart had launched Working Families for Wal-Mart to counter criticisms made by these groups. Additional efforts to counter criticism include launching a public relations campaign in 2005 through its public relations website,[8] which included several television commercials. The company retained the public relations firm Edelman to interact with the press and respond to negative media reports,[9] and has started interacting directly with bloggers by sending them news, suggesting topics for postings, and sometimes inviting them to visit Walmart's corporate headquarters.[10]

Economists at the Cato Institute suggest that Wal-Mart is a success because it sells products that people want to buy at low prices, satisfying customers' wants and needs. However, Wal-Mart critics argue that Wal-Mart's lower prices draw customers away from other smaller businesses, hurting the community.[11][12]

Notice that this page doesn't appear to take one side or another. It simply tells us that some people criticize Walmart for certain reasons – and it also points out that Walmart has refuted these criticisms.

Here's another example. This is from the Wikipedia page about another large retail chain, clothing store Abercrombie and Fitch:

Legal issues [edit]

The company has been involved in legal conflicts over its employment practices, treatment of customers, and clothing styles.

Employment practices [edit]

In a 2004 lawsuit *González v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, the company was accused of discriminating against African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and women by preferentially offering floor sales positions (called Brand Representatives or Models) and store management positions to whites and men.[60] The company agreed to a settlement of the class-action suit, which required the company to (1) pay $4 million to African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and women who applied and were not hired or worked in certain store positions, (2) revise its hiring, performance measurement, and promotion policies, (3) revise its internal complaint procedures, (4) appoint a Vice President of Diversity, (5) hire 25 recruiters to seek out minority applicants, (6) discontinue the practice of recruiting employees at primarily white fraternities and sororities, (7) include more minorities in marketing materials, (8) report to a neutral court-appointed monitor twice per year regarding its progress in those areas, and (9) report to the court once per year.[16][18]

In June 2009, British law student Riam Dean, who had worked at A&F's flagship store in London's Savile Row, took the company to an employment tribunal. Dean, who was born without a left forearm, claimed that although she was initially given special permission to wear clothing that covered her prosthetic limb, she was soon told that her appearance breached the company's "Look Policy" and sent to work in the stock room, out of sight of customers. Dean sued the company for disability discrimination, and sought up to £20,000 in damages.[61] In August 2009, the tribunal ruled the 22-year-old was wrongfully dismissed and unlawfully harassed. She was awarded £8,013 for loss of earnings and wrongful dismissal.[62][63]

In a lawsuit filed in September 2009 in U.S. District Court by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 17-year-old Samantha Elauf said she applied, in June 2008, for a sales position at the Abercrombie Kids store in the Woodland Hills Mall, located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The teen, who wears a hijab in accordance with her religious beliefs, claims the manager told her the headscarf violates the store's "Look Policy".[64]

In 2010, a Muslim woman working at a Hollister store in San Mateo, California, was fired. Before being dismissed, Hani Khan had refused Abercrombie & Fitch's human-resources representative's demand that she remove her hijab. The representative reportedly stated that the headscarf, which Khan wears for religious reasons, violated the company's "Look Policy". The civil liberties group Council on American-Islamic Relations has stated that the dismissal is a violation of nondiscrimination laws, and filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.[65]

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Again, this section doesn't appear to take one side or another. The information is presented matter-of-factly, and we can draw our own conclusions about the company.

Differing Points of View: To Include or Not to Include?

Wikipedia's neutrality guidelines suggest including all "notable and verifiable" points of view on a topic. But what does "notable and verifiable" mean?

While this can get pretty complicated, a good general rule is, **you should include negative/alternative/critical information if the information has received significant coverage in the news media**, or **if the information can be found with a simple Google search**.

And, of course, this information should be presented in a neutral, disinterested tone.

Accentuate the Positive . . . And Manage the Not-So-Positive

At this point, you might be wondering, "Why the heck would I want to put negative information on my Wikipedia page?"

Because if you don't, someone will.

Let's say you want to write a Wikipedia page for Company XYZ. You know that Company XYZ was sued for discriminatory hiring practices a few years ago – it was a national news story. And, it's something that everyone at Company XYZ would love to forget.

While it would be extremely tempting to simply not mention the negative stuff – it's a really bad idea.

Remember that anyone – anyone at all – can edit Wikipedia. This means that the minute your page is published, absolutely anyone can add or delete information – even negative and not-so-positive information. As long as that information is supported by significant coverage in neutral, third-party sources, that is.

By including the negative information from the get-go, you are controlling how that information is presented. And, by including the good and the bad, you're much less likely to end up getting flagged due to a perceived conflict of interest, which looks like this:

A major contributor to this article appears to have a close connection with its subject. It may require cleanup to comply with Wikipedia's content policies, particularly neutral point of view. Please discuss further on the talk page. *(November 2012)*

Staying Neutral

Sometimes neutrality can be difficult – especially when the subject is something you're particularly knowledgeable or passionate about.

We could probably write an entire book about neutrality – but in the interest of keeping things brief, we wrote a checklist instead. If you're concerned about neutrality, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Avoid opinion statements. Let the facts speak for themselves.
- ✓ Acknowledge differing points of view.
- ✓ Avoid sales jargon and stick to neutral, clear language.
- ✓ Don't include anything that you can't prove with citations from neutral, third-party sources.
- ✓ Include all relevant information – positive and negative.

That's it for neutrality. And, now that we've covered the most important Wikipedia "rules," we're going to take an in-depth look at content – what to put in, what to leave out, and how to decide length.

Chapter 5: Content

By this point, you've probably got a pretty good grip on the rules of Wikipedia articles: You know how to determine a topic's Wiki-appropriateness. You also know how to find good, third-party sources, and you understand how to keep things neutral.

So, now what? Now we talk about content.

Determining Length

Wikipedia is funny: You could practically write a book about all of the rules governing sources, notability, and neutrality. But when it comes to article length, there's not much to go on. There are a few general guidelines, but there's very little in the way of hard-and-fast rules.

Wikipedia's general rule on length is that articles should be "neither too big nor too small."

Other than that, the Wiki community has no official rules about article length. On one hand, this lack of rules is good – you have the freedom to make your article as long as it needs to be. On the other hand, though, this freedom can be a little daunting: How do you know what to include? How do you know what to leave out? How big is "too big," exactly? How small is "too small"?

What to Put In, What to Leave Out – and How to Format It

There's no single answer or magic formula that can help you figure out exactly how long your Wiki article should be – but you can use some of the following guidelines to help you decide what information to include, and how to organize it.

Start with a helpful lead section.

A "lead" is an introduction or overview that should summarize the contents of the article. A lead can be anywhere from a sentence or two to a few paragraphs in length, depending on the topic and the length of the article.

Let's look at an example. This is the lead paragraph for a TV series:

Firefly is an American space western television series created by writer and director Joss Whedon, under his Mutant Enemy Productions label. Whedon served as an executive producer, along with Tim Minear.

The series is set in the year 2517, after the arrival of humans in a new star system, and follows the adventures of the renegade crew of *Serenity*, a "Firefly-class" spaceship. The ensemble cast portrays the nine characters who live on *Serenity*. Whedon pitched the show as "nine people looking into the blackness of space and seeing nine different things".[1] The show explores the lives of some people who fought on the losing side of a civil war and others who now make a living on the outskirts of society, as part of the pioneer culture that exists on the fringes of their star system. In addition, it is a future where the only two surviving superpowers, the United States and China, fused to form the central federal government, called the Alliance, resulting in the fusion of the two cultures. According to Whedon's vision, "nothing will change in the future: technology will advance, but we will still have the same political, moral, and ethical problems as today".[2]

Firefly premiered in the United States on the Fox network on September 20, 2002. By mid-December, *Firefly* had averaged 4.7 million viewers per episode and was 98th in Nielsen ratings.[3] It was canceled after eleven of the fourteen produced episodes were aired. Despite the series' relatively short life span, it received strong sales when it was released on DVD and has large fan support campaigns.[4][5] It won an Emmy in 2003 for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series. The post-airing success of the show led Whedon and Universal Pictures to produce a film based on the series, *Serenity*.[4] The *Firefly* franchise expanded from the series and film to other media including comics[6] and a role-playing game.[7]


When we read this, we get all the important information: We know what *Firefly* is, we know who wrote it, and we know what kind of show it was. We can read on to get more in-depth about the episodes, cast, critical responses, and so on. But if we didn't read any farther than the lead, we'd walk away with at least a basic knowledge of the topic.

Include important, relevant details.

Remember that Wikipedia is an encyclopedia. Although the online format allows for longer articles than you'd find in a traditional, printed volume, it's best to stick to notable details that are appropriate for a general-interest audience.

Still not sure about what to include or what to leave out? Before you create a new article, you should check out a few Wiki articles on similar topics, people, or companies. It's always helpful to look at examples before getting started.

Use the search field in the top right of the page, or browse Wikipedia's categories until you find something similar:
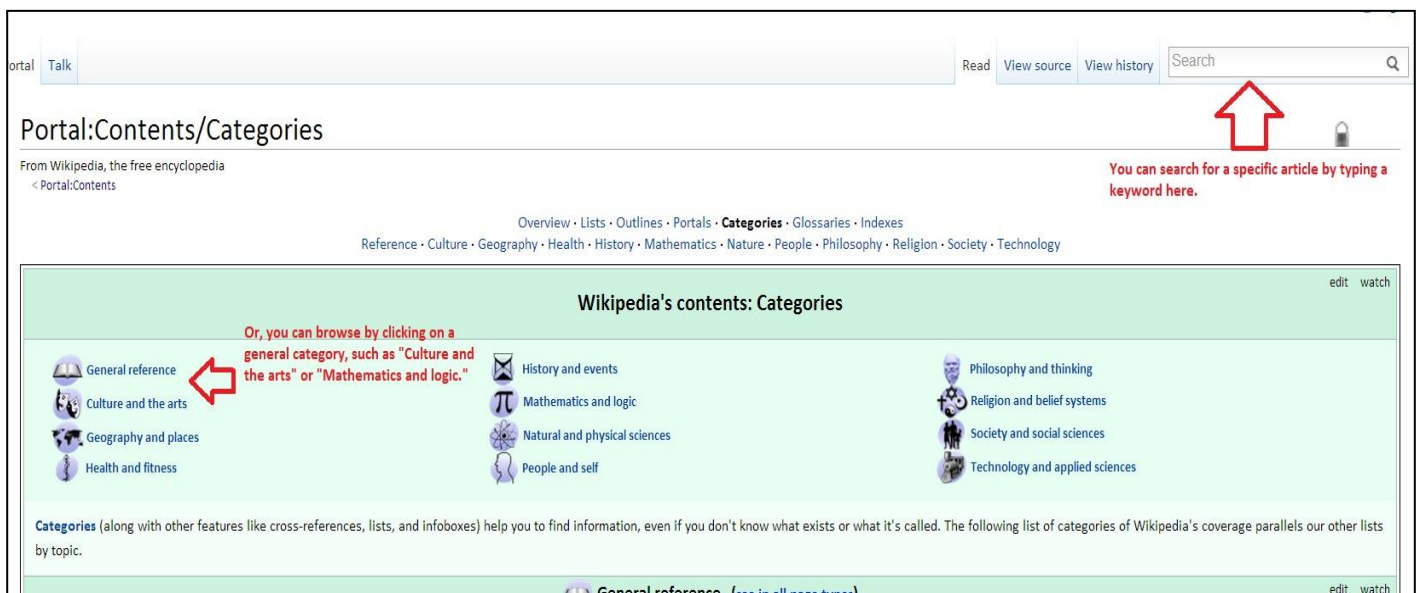
Use sections and headers to group information.

Putting information into sections is a good way to keep your Wiki article from feeling too long. Plus, because most people will be reading your Wiki article on a screen, headers and sections will make your article easy to scan.

Below is the table of contents for the Wikipedia page about Seattle, Washington. Seattle is a huge topic, and the page is broken up in to several sections, such as "Geography," "Culture," and "History":

Use bullets and/or tables when appropriate.

Although Wikipedia articles should be primarily written in prose, a bulleted list or two within an article can make lengthy lists easier to read and understand. When you've got a long list of information – such as a list of awards won, positions held, published works, etc. – you can avoid the "wall-of-text" look by using bullet points.

Here's an example from the Wikipedia page on hip-hop artist/actor Mos Def. Bulleted lists make it easy to quickly view all of his various award nominations:

You can also use tables to organize more complex lists of information. In the example below, the climate data for the city of Houston, Texas is organized into an easy-to-scan table:

Climate [edit]

Main article: Climate of Houston

Allen's Landing after Tropical Storm Allison, June 2001

Houston's climate is classified as humid subtropical (*Cfa* in Köppen climate classification system). While not necessarily part of "Tornado Alley" like much of the rest of Texas, spring supercell thunderstorms do sometimes bring tornadoes to the area. Prevailing winds are from the south and southeast during most of the year, bringing heat across the continent from the deserts of Mexico and moisture from the Gulf of Mexico.[49]

During the summer months, it is common for the temperature to reach over 90 °F (32 °C), with an average of 99 days per year above 90 °F (32 °C).[50] However, the humidity causes a heat index higher than the actual temperature. Summer mornings average over 90 percent relative humidity and approximately 60 percent in the afternoon.[51] Winds are often light in the summer and offer little relief, except near the immediate coast.[52] To cope with the heat, people use air conditioning in nearly every vehicle and building in the city; in 1980 Houston was described as the "most air-conditioned place on earth".[53] Scattered afternoon showers and thunderstorms are common in the summer. The hottest temperature ever recorded in Houston is 109 °F (43 °C), which was reached both on September 4, 2000 and August 28, 2011.[54][55]

Winters in Houston are mild. The average high in January, the coldest month, is 63 °F (17 °C), while the average low is 43 °F (6 °C). Snowfall is very rare. Recent snow events in Houston include a storm on December 24, 2004 when one inch (2.5 cm) fell and more recent snowfalls on December 10, 2008. This was the earliest snowfall ever recorded in Houston. In addition, it set another milestone marking the first time in recorded history that snowfall has occurred in two consecutive years, and was the third accumulating snowfall occurring in the decade of 2000–2010. The coldest temperature ever recorded in Houston was 5 °F (–15 °C) on January 23, 1940.[56] Houston receives a high amount of rainfall annually, averaging about 50 inches (1,270 mm) a year. These rains tend to cause floods over portions of the city.

Houston has excessive ozone levels and is ranked among the most ozone-polluted cities in the United States.[57] Ground-level ozone, or smog, is Houston's predominant air pollution problem, with the American Lung Association rating the metropolitan area's ozone level as the 8th worst in the United States in 2011.[58] The industries located along the ship channel are a major cause of the city's air pollution.[59] In the past, Houston's air quality has been compared to that of Los Angeles.[60]

Climate data for Houston (Intercontinental Airport), 1981–2010 normals,													[hide]
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °F (°C)	87 (31)	91 (33)	96 (36)	95 (35)	99 (37)	105 (41)	105 (41)	109 (43)	109 (43)	99 (37)	89 (32)	85 (29)	109 (43)
Average high °F (°C)	62.9 (17.2)	66.3 (19.1)	73.0 (22.8)	79.6 (26.4)	86.3 (30.2)	91.4 (33.0)	93.7 (34.3)	94.5 (34.7)	89.7 (32.1)	82.0 (27.8)	72.5 (22.5)	64.3 (17.9)	79.7 (26.5)
Average low °F (°C)	43.2 (6.2)	46.5 (8.1)	52.5 (11.4)	59.4 (15.2)	67.6 (19.8)	73.5 (23.1)	75.1 (23.9)	74.8 (23.8)	69.8 (21.0)	60.9 (16.1)	52.1 (11.2)	44.6 (7.0)	60.0 (15.6)
Record low °F (°C)	5 (–15)	6 (–14)	21 (–6)	31 (–1)	44 (7)	52 (11)	62 (17)	54 (12)	45 (7)	29 (–2)	19 (–7)	7 (–14)	5 (–15)
Precipitation inches (mm)	3.38 (85.9)	3.20 (81.3)	3.41 (86.6)	3.31 (84.1)	5.09 (129.3)	5.93 (150.6)	3.79 (96.3)	3.76 (95.5)	4.12 (104.6)	5.70 (144.8)	4.34 (110.2)	3.74 (95)	49.76 (1,263.9)
Avg. precipitation days (≥ 0.01 in)	9.6	9.2	8.8	6.8	8.0	10.6	9.1	8.3	8.0	7.9	8.2	9.5	104.1
Percent possible sunshine	45	50	54	58	62	68	70	68	66	64	52	51	59
Source #1: NOAA [61], Average Percent Sunshine through 2009 [62]													
Source #2: ThreadEx (records, 1889–last full calendar year)[63]													

Most importantly, use good judgment.

There really is no set length when it comes to Wikipedia articles. The best way to ensure that your article isn't "too short" or "too long" is to use common sense and good judgment. In other words, your article should be as long as it needs to be to get the point across.

To sum things up:

- ✓ Don't worry about length. When writing a Wiki article, think "quality" rather than "quantity."
- ✓ Browse Wikipedia and look at existing pages to get ideas.
- ✓ Focus on presenting useful, neutral information.
- ✓ Focus on finding good, reliable sources. The best Wiki articles are easy to read, unbiased, and well-organized.
- ✓ Use bulleted lists or tables when presenting lists of information or data.

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Chapter 6: A Few Final Tips

We thought we'd wrap things up with a few odds and ends; random tidbits; and FAQs that didn't quite fit into any of the other chapters.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I want to write a Wikipedia article about my company – but we were sued for discrimination last year and it was all over the news. Do I have to include that in my article?

A: If it's notable, you should include it. Wikipedia is supposed to be a source of neutral and unbiased information – and it's supposed to include **all** relevant facts, not just the facts that make your topic look good. You can choose to omit a scandal, if you really want to. But remember that **literally anyone can edit your article**. Chances are good that someone will find the information and add it in – and you won't be able to do anything about it. What's more, an article that is too blatantly positive might get flagged for neutrality issues or a conflict of interest – and that could put your article and your entire Wiki account at risk.

Q: Can you guarantee that my Wikipedia article will stay up and/or remain intact?

A: No. We can review your sources and tell you if your topic is Wiki-eligible. We can help you make sure that your article is neutral, unbiased, and properly sourced. But because anyone can edit Wikipedia, we can't offer any type of guarantees that your page will remain as-is.

Q: What do you mean, "Anyone can edit Wikipedia?"

A: We mean exactly that: Absolutely **anyone can create or modify a Wikipedia page** – as long as they follow the rules about neutrality, notability, and sources.

Q: What if someone vandalizes my page? Does that happen?

A: Vandalism *can* happen, but it's rare. Fortunately, the Wikipedia community is fairly vigilant about spotting – and more importantly, correcting – cases of outright vandalism. That said, it's unlikely that your page will be vandalized.

But when vandalism – or even bad, nonsensical editing – does happen, it doesn't stick around long. Here's an example of a type of almost-vandalism that Wikipedia calls "patent nonsense":

Ham

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the cut of meat. For other uses, see Ham (disambiguation).

Ham is a cut of meat butter milk with cheese with people sauce on animals and pants, especially pigs.[1] Nearly all hams sold today are fully cooked or cured.

Contents [hide]

1 Etymology

2 Regional use

   2.1 Belgium

   2.2 Bulgaria

   2.3 Croatia

   2.4 China

   2.5 France

   2.6 Germany

   2.7 Greece

   2.8 Italy

wait -- what??!! *pants?*

Ham with cloves

This may or may not be straight-up vandalism. Someone could have accidentally "published" a test edit, or this could be the result of a language barrier or a (really, really) bad translation. Whatever the case, this . . . *unusual* . . . lead paragraph didn't last long at all.

The vandalism – or whatever it was – was quickly cleaned up:

Article | Talk   Read | Edit | View history

Ham

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the cut of meat. For other uses, see Ham (disambiguation).

Ham is a cut of meat from the thigh of the hind leg of an animal, especially pigs.[1] Nearly all hams sold today are fully cooked or cured.

Contents

1 Etymology

2 Regional use

   2.1 Belgium

   2.2 Bulgaria

   2.3 Croatia

   2.4 China

   2.5 France

   2.6 Germany

   2.7 Greece

no gibberish. or pants.

Ham with cloves

Q: Why can't this letter/diary entry work as a source for my Wiki article?

A: Wikipedia articles must be created using information from **secondary sources** – magazine and/or newspaper articles, books, and some websites. Letters and diaries are considered

primary sources – and therefore not suitable to use as sources for your Wikipedia article. If you want your Wikipedia article to stick, you have to follow the rules.

Q: Who made you the boss? Why do you get to tell me what I can and can't put on my Wikipedia page?

A: Nobody made us the boss. We don't have an agenda. We don't work for Wikipedia. As Wikipedia writers/editors/consultants, our job is to know the rules and standards – and help our clients follow those rules and standards. Our only goal is to help you create a well-written, neutral, properly sourced article that doesn't get flagged. In other words, we're sticklers about following the rules because we want your page to stick. We're sticklers because it's our job.

Q: Why do I need to cite this fact? It's true – I promise!

A: We believe you. But you still have to cite the information – it's Wikipedia policy:

Q: Is my company/topic/product Wiki-eligible?

A: That depends. To be eligible for a Wikipedia page, a topic has to be notable – in other words, it has to have received some amount of media coverage. If your company/product/topic has appeared in a newspaper or magazine, you might be eligible.

Q: Can I write a Wiki page about myself or my company/product?

A: Technically, yes. However, Wikipedia does have fairly strict guidelines about avoiding conflicts of interest. If you decide to create your own Wiki article, though, you have to be especially careful to avoid sounding biased. Neutrality can be difficult when you're very close

to a particular topic. Remember to include all viewpoints – including criticism or negative stuff. Also remember that Wikipedia is not a sales tool. Stick to facts.

Four Ways to Flag-Proof Your Wiki Page

Want to make sure your Wikipedia page remains free of flags? Here are four ways to help create a page that sticks:

1. Use citations from neutral, third-party sources such as newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, or government websites.

2. Avoid stating opinions as facts. Use neutral language to describe conflicts or differing viewpoints.

   Good: *"In 2011, a former employee sued Company XYZ for unfair treatment."*
   Bad: *"Company XYZ treats its employees unfairly."*

   Good: *"According to a study by XXX, Company XYZ makes the best widgets."*
   Bad: *"Company XYZ makes the best widgets."*

3. Don't omit negative/controversial details just because you don't like them. If the information is out there, you should include it.

4. Use neutral words and a disinterested tone. State facts and let the reader draw his or her own conclusions:

   Good: *"Senator Smith was elected 5 consecutive times."*
   Bad: *"Senator Smith was popular and well-liked by her constituents."*

   Good: *"Senator Smith sponsored 20 pieces of legislation related to education and children's issues."*
   Bad: *"Senator Smith was a champion of education and children's issues."*

Conclusion: What Now?

So, there you have it. Maybe it wasn't *everything* you ever wanted to know about Wikipedia, but if you've stuck with us through this whole book, you probably have a pretty darn good idea about how to create a neutral, well-organized, and properly sourced Wiki article.

So, what now?

Now, you're ready to contribute to Wikipedia.

Creating a Wiki Article

Before you create a Wikipedia article, it's a good idea to do a quick search to make sure that there isn't a page about your topic already.
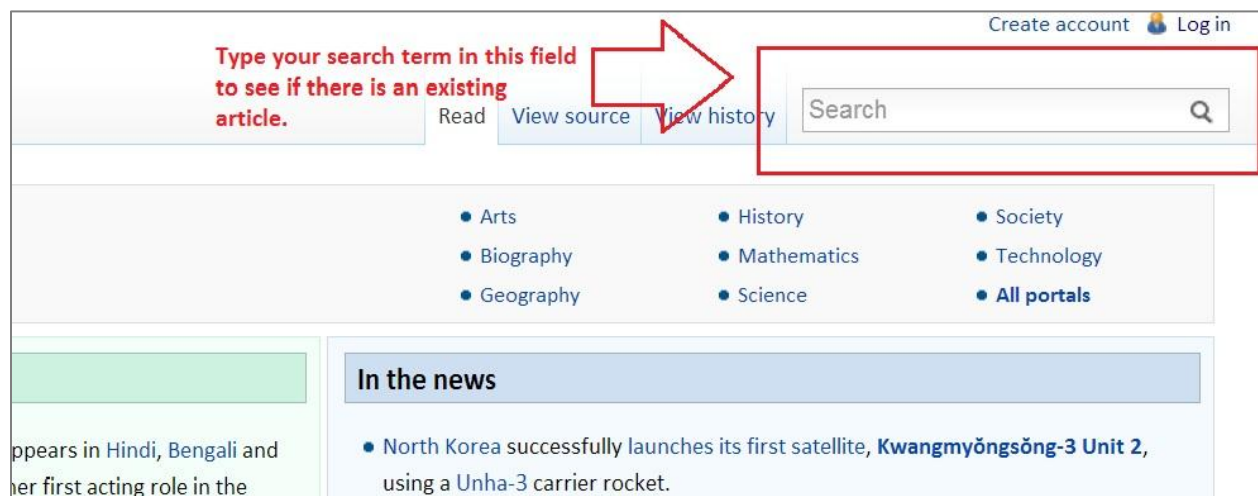
If there's not an existing Wiki page about your topic, you have three main options for creating an article:

Option1: Submit a Request

If you don't want to write the article yourself, you can submit a request for article creation. When you submit a request, you are basically asking the existing Wiki community to create a page. This is fairly easy to do.

Step 1: Go to the "Requested Articles" page, which looks like this:

Step 2: Scroll down and find a list of categories:
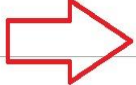

Step 3: Click the appropriate category and write a brief description of the article you would like the Wiki editors to create.

Let's say that you want to create an article that's related to engineering. You'd click on the "Engineering" category, and then you'd add your request to the list, like so:

The biggest benefit of requesting an article is that it takes almost no time and requires very little work. All you have to do is submit the request, and experienced Wiki editors will do all of the legwork, from determining notability to finding sources to writing and posting the article.

There are a couple of drawbacks to this approach: One drawback is that you have absolutely no control or influence over how the article is written. We've already mentioned that all Wiki articles must be neutral and unbiased – and this is true regardless of who writes the article. But when you create your own article, you have a (tiny) degree over how information is presented. This is not the case when you leave the writing to the Wiki community at large. The other major drawback is that there's no telling when your article will be created. Typically, there are way more requests than there are available Wiki editors. You might have to wait months before your request is reviewed.

The bottom line is, this is a good option if you aren't in a hurry and you don't have any major concerns about how the article is written. If time is of the essence, or if you'd like to try to manage any negative or contentious information, you might want to look at your other options, which brings us to . . .

Option 2: Do it Yourself

If you want a bit more control over how – and when – your article is written, you might want to consider creating an article yourself. There are two ways to do this.

The Article Wizard. If you're fairly new to the process, we suggest you use Wikipedia's super-helpful "Article Wizard." It walks you through virtually every step of the process, from determining notability to finding sources.

Here's what the Article Wizard looks like:
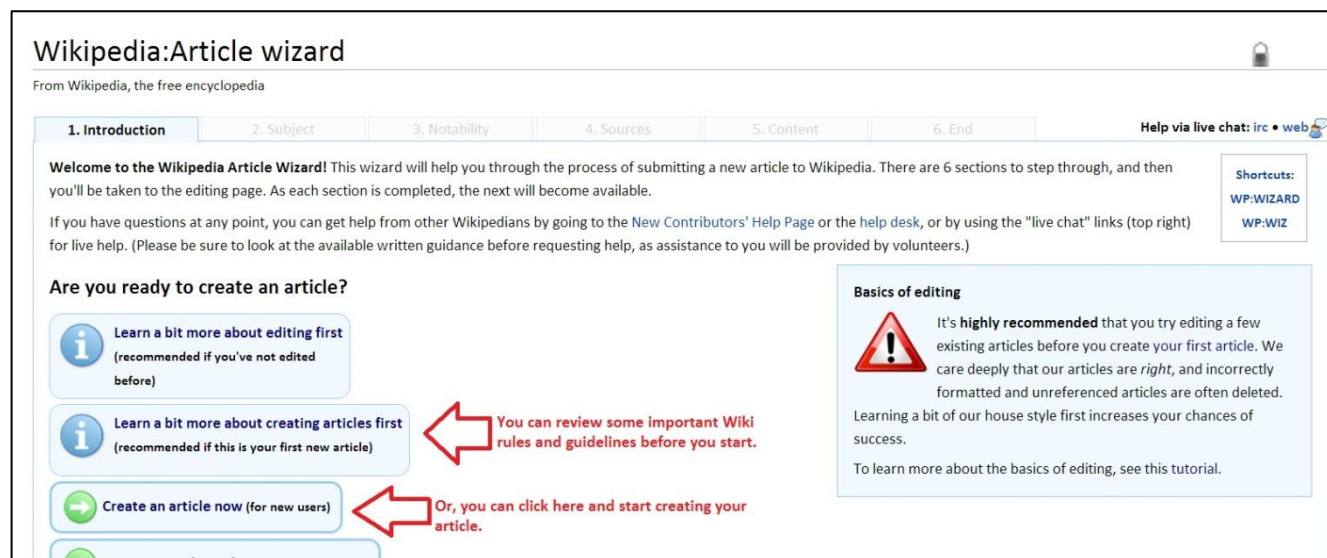
Once you choose "Create an article now," the Wizard will walk you through a few more steps designed to help you determine notability, assess your sources, and think about content. At the very end, you will have the option to create a draft and either save it for later or submit it for review by one of Wiki's editors.

Create an account and upload your article directly. If you feel fairly confident that you "get" Wikipedia's rules and guidelines, you can create an article and post it to Wikipedia without having it reviewed by Wiki editor beforehand.

To do this, you have to create an account first. Start by clicking "Create account" on the main Wiki page:


Once you create an account, you will have access to an extra feature called "Sandbox," which appears on the main page when you are logged in:

Your sandbox is the place where you can type your article (or paste it from a Word document). Sandboxes have special tools for formatting and inserting citations and photos. All user sandboxes are private, and you can save the contents of your sandbox as often as you'd like.

Here's what a Wiki sandbox looks like:
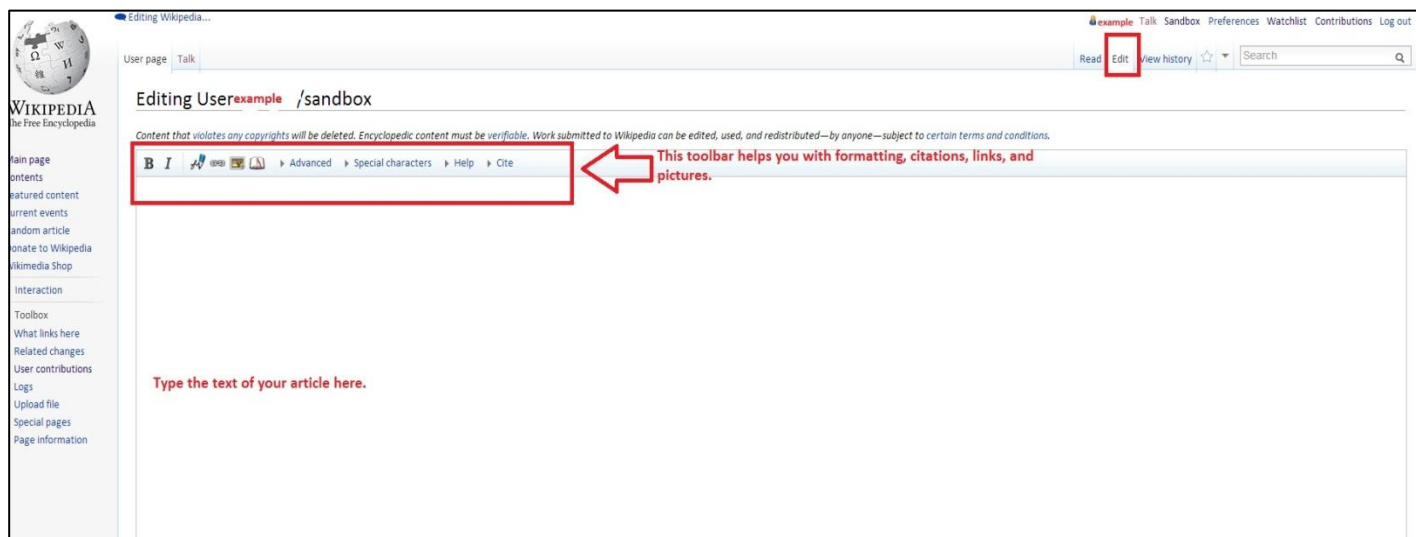
It's fairly easy to publish your article to Wikipedia directly from your sandbox – there's no need to have it reviewed by anyone first.

Once your article is published, however, anyone may edit your article (as long as the edits adhere to Wiki's rules). And, if your article is biased or has any issues with sources or neutrality, it may be flagged.

The DIY option is a good one if you're willing to put in the time to really learn Wikipedia – and if you're sure that your article is unbiased and that it conforms to all standards and policies. This option is much more labor-intensive, and there is a learning curve – but it's easy once you get the hang of it.

If you don't want to wait for someone else to do it – but you don't feel totally comfortable going it alone, you might want to consider the third option.

Option 3: Hire a Writer/Editor/Consultant

If you like the idea of getting your article done relatively quickly – and you don't want to try to do it all on your own, a Wikipedia writer/editor/consultant might be a good middle ground. A good Wikipedia writer should be able to handle all aspects of creating a Wikipedia article, from determining notability to assisting with research to posting the final article.

A good Wikipedia writer/editor can write your Wiki article from scratch – or they can simply review your existing material and help you ensure that it's neutral, properly sourced, and free of original research.

Try Googling "Wiki writing service" or "Wiki consulting" to find a good editor.

Or, check out our Wiki consulting page. We'd be happy to discuss your Wiki project.

Whatever option you choose, we hope this eBook has helped.

Thanks for reading!