

Wikipedia:Simplified ruleset

Various shortcuts redirect here. You may be looking for [Wikipedia:Avoid self-references](#), [Wikipedia:Soft redirect](#), or [Wikipedia:Simple English Wikipedia](#).

Wikipedia is a free, volunteer-created **encyclopedia**, consisting of articles written in a particular style. Wikipedia is a continuous process with no end. If you write something good, *it could be around for centuries and read all over the world*. It might also be improved or incorporated into new revisions by other editors. Part of the fun and challenge of editing here is watching what happens to your contributions over time.

The Wikipedia community continues to evolve as well. Over time, policies and customs have developed which reflect the experience of thousands of editors who are constantly learning and refining how to create balanced, well-sourced, informative articles, and how to work with others and resolve conflict when it arises. While there are rules or guidelines that cover almost any situation, a few are really important. If you learn about our policies and practices, you will likely be treated with kindness and respect.

A great place to start learning is with Wikipedia's approach to sources. Wikipedia does not have its own views, or determine what is "correct". Instead, editors try to summarize what good sources have said about ideas and information. Differing views are presented **objectively and without bias** as they are reported in **reliable sources**—sources that have a reputation for being accurate. Good sources are the base of the encyclopedia, and anyone must be able to realistically **check** whether contributions can be backed up by one. This is generally done by **citing** where you found information. With reliable sources at the center of what we do, editors' **original ideas, interpretations, and research** are not appropriate here.

Don't worry too much if you don't understand everything at first. And don't hesitate to ask questions. As time goes on, you'll learn how to be a great contributor to Wikipedia!

1 Core principles

Further information: [WP:Principles](#)

While theoretically anything can be changed, the community up to this point has been built on certain principles.

Much thought has been put into them, and they are unlikely to change in the future. They've worked for us so far, so give them a fair shake before attempting radical reform or leaving the project.

1. **Five pillars:** The foundations of the Wikipedia community are summarized in 5 simple ideas: Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia; it has a neutral point of view; it is free content that anyone can edit and distribute; all Wikipedians should interact in a respectful and civil manner; and Wikipedia does not have firm rules.
2. **Founding principles:** The Wikimedia Foundation, the global organization that oversees Wikipedia and other projects like it, is based on important common ideas as well: Neutrality is mandatory; anyone can edit (most) articles without registration; we make decisions through the "wiki process" of discussion; we want to work in a welcoming and collaborative environment; our content is freely licensed; and we leave room for particularly difficult problems to be resolved by an authority. On English Wikipedia the Arbitration Committee (ArbCom) has power to make certain binding, final decisions.
3. **Copyright:** Wikipedia uses opensource licensing under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike license and the GNU Free Documentation License. Content on Wikipedia can be used and re-used freely, as long as attribution is given; it can even be modified and used for profit, as long as all future re-users can do the same. Everything editors contribute must be compatible with Wikipedia's licenses and cannot violate others' copyrights, except under very particular circumstances.
4. **Ignore all rules (IAR):** Rules on Wikipedia are not fixed in stone. The spirit of the rule trumps the letter of the rule. The common purpose of building an encyclopedia trumps both. This means that any rule can be broken for a very good reason, if it ultimately helps to improve the encyclopedia. It doesn't mean that anything can be done just by claiming IAR, or that discussion is not necessary to explain one's decision.

2 Creating and editing articles

Further information: [Wikipedia:Core content policies](#)

1. **Neutral point of view:** Write from a neutral point of view. Make a fair representation of the world as reliable sources describe it. All articles should be balanced to convey an impression of the various points of view on a subject. Some views may get more attention than others, depending on the attention they receive in reliable sources. Wikipedia has no “opinion” of its own; it just accurately summarizes reliable sources.
2. **Verifiability:** Articles should contain only material that has been published by reliable sources. These are sources with a reputation for fact-checking and accuracy, like newspapers, academic journals, and books. *Even if something is true* our standards require it be published in a reliable source before it can be included. Editors should cite reliable sources for any material that is controversial or challenged, otherwise it may be removed by any editor. The obligation to provide a reliable source is on whoever wants to include material.
3. **No original research:** Articles may not contain previously unpublished arguments, concepts, data, or theories, nor any new analysis or synthesis of them if it advances a position. In other words, you can't make a point that hasn't already been directly made somewhere else in a reliable source. You can summarize, but it has to be based in the sources.
4. **Be bold** in updating pages! Go ahead, it's a wiki! No mistake can break Wikipedia, because any edit can be undone. Encourage others, including those who disagree with you, to likewise **be bold!** If you find yourself disagreeing with someone's boldness, or they with yours, discuss it on the talk page.

3 Getting along with other editors

Further information: [Wikipedia:Expectations and norms of the Wikipedia community](#)

1. **Be civil** to other users at all times. If you have a criticism, comment about content and specific edits, don't make negative remarks about other editors as people.
2. **Assume good faith:** Do please try to consider the person on the other end of the discussion as a thinking, rational being who is trying to positively contribute to Wikipedia. Even if you're convinced that

they're an [insert insult of your choice], still pretend that they're acting in good faith. Ninety percent of the time you'll find that they actually *are* acting in good faith (and the other ten percent of the time a negative attitude won't help anyway). Be gracious. *Be liberal in what you accept, be conservative in what you do.* Try to accommodate other people's quirks as best you can, while trying to be as polite and straightforward as possible.

3. **Discuss contentious changes on the talk page:** Mutual respect is the guiding behavioral principle of Wikipedia. Although everyone knows that their contributions may be edited by others, it is easier to accept changes when you understand the reasons for them. Discussing changes on the article's talk page before you make them can help reach consensus even faster, especially on controversial subjects. **We have all the time in the world**, so always make an effort to explain changes to other editors, and feel free to ask them to do the same.
4. **Undo others' edits with care:** Undoing someone's work is a powerful tool, hence the three-revert rule that an editor should never undo the same content more than three times in twenty-four hours (ideally, even less). Try not to revert changes which are not obvious vandalism. If you really can't stand something, revert once, with an edit summary like “I disagree, I'll explain why on Talk”, and immediately take it to the accompanying talk page to discuss. If someone reverts your edits, do not just add them back without attempting discussion.
5. **Try to understand why your article or edit was deleted:** Many topics do not meet our inclusion guidelines. Some of the same bad article ideas show up and get deleted frequently through processes such as articles for deletion, proposed deletion and speedy deletion. New editors may benefit from the [Articles for creation helper](#). Other contributions are often just not neutral or just not well-sourced. In general, finding better, more reliable sources and summarizing them neutrally is almost always the best response.
6. **Resolve disputes:** Disagreements are common but they need not be ugly. Find out what others think about an issue and try to address it. If you still disagree, seek input from other editors informally, or through a third opinion, mediation, or an open request for comment.

4 Working efficiently together

Further information: [Wikipedia:Etiquette](#)

1. **Use clear edit summaries** to allow others to understand your thinking—and even you may need a reminder months later. Please state *what* you changed and *why*. If the explanation is too long, use the Talk page.
 2. **Sign your posts** on talk pages (using ~~~~, which changes to your username plus a timestamp when you hit “save page”). But *don't* sign in articles themselves.
 3. **Preview your changes** with the *show preview* button before saving. Follow on edit fixing errors in earlier edits clutters the *page's history*, which makes it hard for others to see what, overall, you changed.
 4. **Use noticeboards to get input:** Certain kinds of issues have designated noticeboard where editors often discuss related topics. If you are unsure what to do, or run into conflict with another editor, use them. WP:NPOVN is for neutrality issues, WP:RSN is for reliable sources, WP:ANI is for specific issues needing administrator input; others are listed at the noticeboard page and at the bottom of this page as well.
 5. **Join the community:** Find out what's going on in the community. The Community Portal is a good starting place, where you can find ongoing community discussions, the weekly Wikipedia newspaper, and plenty of tasks that need work. There are also mailing lists which feature project and organization-wide discussions, and internet relay chat for a variety of topics. WikiProjects are places editors gather to work on specific areas of the encyclopedia; they're also good places to ask for input. New ideas are often put forth at the *Village pump*, and hot-topics at Jimbo's talk page.
 6. **Ask for help:** You are almost surely not the first person to have a particular question, idea or problem. You can ask for help anytime by placing {{help me}} on any talk page along with an explanation of your problem. Great places for assistance are the new contributor's help page, the Help Desk, and help chat. Also, WP:Questions and WP:FAQ for the most common areas and queries.
- **Manual of Style contents** – a comprehensive descriptive list of the pages which make up the Manual of Style.
 - **Community standards and advice** – a quick directory of community norms and related guidance essays.
 - **Advice pages** – about advice pages written by WikiProjects.

Related essays

- Wikipedia:Simplified Manual of Style
- Wikipedia:The rules are principles
- Wikipedia:Reasonability Rule
- Wikipedia in Brief
- Wikipedia:Trifecta
- Wikipedia:Writing better articles

5 More information

- **Contributing to Wikipedia** – a page that provides information and resources on the basics needed to use, comment on, and contribute to Wikipedia.
- **List of policies** – a comprehensive descriptive list of policies.
- **List of guidelines** – a comprehensive descriptive list of guidelines.

6 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

6.1 Text

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