Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.

Jimmy Wales

Welcome to
Wikipedia

Wikipedia is the largest encyclopedia in the world. It is created and maintained by more than **80,000 contributors** from around the world. Every month Wikipedia receives more than **450 million unique visitors**. Wikipedia features more than **23 million articles in 280 languages**. It is free to use, free to edit, and free of advertisements.

(Data from August 2012)

After reading Welcome to Wikipedia, you will be able to:

» Understand how Wikipedia works

» Create a Wikipedia user account

» Understand Wikipedia's user interface

» List the different ways you can contribute to Wikipedia

» Communicate with other users through your My talk page

» Explain how an article evolves on Wikipedia

» Describe the attributes of a quality article

» Create a new article

Hi! My name is Sara. I use Wikipedia whenever I need to learn more about a topic. But lately I have been wondering, who writes these articles? Why do articles change sometimes? I have read that anyone can edit Wikipedia. Can I do that too? How?

How does Wikipedia work?

Everything on Wikipedia has been written by people like you. In fact, Wikipedia would not be the world's largest online encyclopedia without people continuously contributing information, images, and data. Wikipedia grows by nearly **9,700 articles per day** and more than **12 million contributions per month**.
(Data from August 2012)

Many contributors (Wikipedians) share an aspiration to provide free knowledge to everyone. That is the reason why people all over the world volunteer their time to protect and improve the quality of Wikipedia articles. By allowing everyone to access, download, and reuse content, Wikipedia provides many options for sharing knowledge.

But who decides what gets published? An editor-in-chief, somewhere?

Wikipedians create so many new articles and edit existing articles so often that it would be almost impossible to have a team large enough to review and validate every single change made to the encyclopedia. Instead, Wikipedia relies on input from contributors around the world to create the world's largest repository of encyclopedic content.

Most people who participate in making Wikipedia better find that it is both an entertaining and rewarding exercise. While the social aspect of working toward a goal is fun, most active users are driven by their passion to distribute free knowledge to the world.

Helping everyone across the world get access to free content makes a lot of sense to me. Tell me more. Where can I start?

Try it!
Who can edit existing articles in Wikipedia? Select the correct answer.

- Only experienced editors
- Wikipedia's Editor-in-chief
- Anyone who has access to the Internet

Answers to this question and other quizzes can be found on the back of this reference guide.

Create a Wikipedia account

Creating a **user account** is a good first step when you begin contributing to Wikipedia. An account allows you to create new articles (pages), upload images, and rename pages. You also get access to special features such as **My watchlist**. A watchlist lets you follow the articles that you are editing and bookmark other interesting pages. To add an article to your watchlist, click the star icon at the top of the article.

More importantly, since all your edits are assigned to your account username, you have an identity on Wikipedia. This helps you interact with others who edit the same articles and helps you become a trusted member of the community. As you get accustomed to Wikipedia, you will find that you have more to say in discussions and you might help others solve problems.

You can edit Wikipedia without having an account. However, without an account, your edits are assigned to your computer's Internet protocol (IP) address. The Wikipedia community tends to distrust edits from an IP address, especially if it is traced to a school or company network where unregistered users may make edits based on their biased interests. Editing articles where it might be hard to remain impartial is considered a conflict of interest on Wikipedia. For example, if a student edits an article about her school, she may have a biased perspective on the school's national importance.

It is easy to create a Wikipedia account and you are not required to provide any personal information:

1. Click **account**, located at the top right side of the page.
2. Choose your **Username**.
3. Select your **Password**.
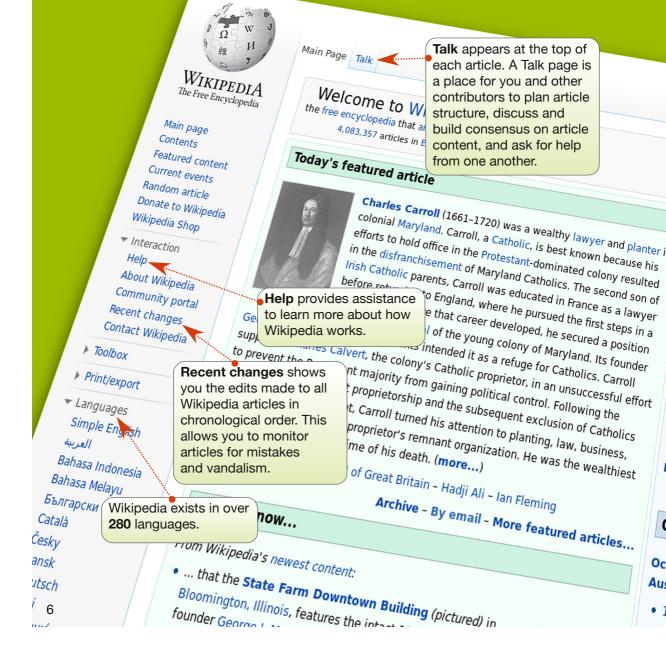4. Click **Create account**.

That was quick! Now that I have an account, I can contribute to creating quality articles.

Wikipedia user interface

The Wikipedia **Main Page**.

Main Page Talk

Talk appears at the top of each article. A Talk page is a place for you and other contributors to plan article structure, discuss and build consensus on article content, and ask for help from one another.

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Welcome to W...
the free encyclopedia that a...
4,083,357 articles in E...

Main page
Contents
Featured content
Current events
Random article
Donate to Wikipedia
Wikipedia Shop

▼ Interaction
Help
About Wikipedia
Community portal
Recent changes
Contact Wikipedia

▶ Toolbox

▶ Print/export

▼ Languages
Simple English
العربية
Bahasa Indonesia
Bahasa Melayu
Български
Català
Česky
ansk
utsch
i

Help provides assistance to learn more about how Wikipedia works.

Recent changes shows you the edits made to all Wikipedia articles in chronological order. This allows you to monitor articles for mistakes and vandalism.

Wikipedia exists in over **280** languages.

Today's featured article

Charles Carroll (1661–1720) was a wealthy lawyer and planter i colonial Maryland. Carroll, a Catholic, is best known because his efforts to hold office in the Protestant-dominated colony resulted in the disfranchisement of Maryland Catholics. The second son of Irish Catholic parents, Carroll was educated in France as a lawyer before ret... to England, where he pursued the first steps in a Ge... e that career developed, he secured a position supp... l of the young colony of Maryland. Its founder ...arles Calvert, the colony's Catholic proprietor, in an unsuccessful effort to prevent the ...nt majority from gaining political control. Following the ...t proprietorship and the subsequent exclusion of Catholics ...t, Carroll turned his attention to planting, law, business, proprietor's remnant organization. At the ...me of his death. (**more...**)

of Great Britain – Hadji Ali – Ian Fleming

Archive – By email – More featured articles...

...now...

From Wikipedia's newest content:

• ... that the **State Farm Downtown Building** Bloomington, Illinois, features the intact ... founder George L. M...

Who wrote this article? I really like it! I am not sure I can write an article as good as this one.

Create account, at the top right of the page, gives you access to all features of Wikipedia and helps build your online profile.

Read   View source   View history   Search

Create account   & Log in

- Arts
- Biography
- Geography
- History
- Mathematics
- Science
- Society
- Technology
- **All portals**

In t| **View history** allows you to view and compare past versions of the page.

- Six
accused of "falsely reassuring" the public of the
2009 L'Aquila earthquake's unlikelihood, are
convicted of manslaughter.
- The Union O
governing b
Search takes you to the article that
(pictured) of
matches your query. If the article
does not exist, it displays the articles
- Guillaume, F
in which the word(s) appears.
Countess Stéphanie de Lannoy.
Duke of Luxembourg, **marries**
- Lebanese intelligence chief Wissam al-Hassan is assassinated in
a car bomb attack in Beirut that killed eight people and injured
more than 100 others.
Recent deaths: Russell Means – Yash Chopra – George McGovern

Syrian civil war – Wikinews – **More current events...**

On this day...

tober 26: First day of **Eid al-Adha** (Islam, 2012); National Day in
stria (1955); feast day of **Saint Demetrius of T**
1341 – The Byzantin

Try it!

1 Click **View history** for any article and study the page. Notice how each edit is time stamped and attributed to a specific user or IP address. Observe how some contributors explain their edits. Explaining an edit is a good practice because it helps others understand why you made the edit.

2 Sara's friend, Josh, just started editing and finds that he needs information about Wikipedia policies and guidelines, community standards, and general help for editors. Where can he find assistance?

Select the correct answer.

- ☐ Recent changes
- ☐ Help
- ☐ Search

How can I contribute?

Did you know that there are many different roles you can play on Wikipedia? Writing is just one of the many options. Here are some of the roles and what they do:

Maintainer: Monitors articles for biased edits and corrects them. A maintainer watches out for changes made by contributors with a personal agenda or political/philosophical point of view, and ensures that factual accuracy is maintained in the articles.

WikiGnome: Makes minor edits, for example, spelling corrections. Suggests article improvements by leaving messages for the authors by clicking the article **Talk** page.

Copyeditor: Improves the language and grammar in an article.

Illustrator: Uploads images, photographs, maps, and visual aides relevant to the article.

Mediator: Moderates discussion on controversial topics, helps resolve disputes, and provides guidance on contributor behavior.

Formatter: Structures or "wikifies" articles, using wiki markup, so they are easier to read.

Author: Adds information to articles from books, websites, newspapers, and other credible sources. An author also initiates the creation of new articles.

> I just corrected an historical fact about Lahore, a city in Pakistan, and guess what? My edits went live as soon as I saved the page. How exciting!

User page and My talk page

There are thousands of contributors who edit Wikipedia each day. Some edits are not verifiable or are made with a biased perspective. That is why some Wikipedians monitor almost all edits using **Recent changes** (under **Interaction** in the left menu bar). This feature provides an overview of all edits made in a particular language version of Wikipedia. Because some Wikipedians monitor huge numbers of edits they may sometimes delete an edit that is accurate but not well-written. To prevent that from happening to you, it is important that you write factual information and reference reliable sources.

Add information about yourself and your interests to your **User page**. Maintaining your User page is a good way to build trust and provide authenticity to your edits. Every account has a User page and a **My talk** page. You can find the links for the User page and the My talk page at the top right of your screen. Your User page is accessed by clicking on your username, which appears next to the bust icon. Click **Edit** to write about yourself. Then click **Save page** at the bottom of the screen when you are finished writing.

What just happened? The edit I made to the article is gone. Did someone take it out? Why would someone do that?

Try it!
Sara likes to take pictures of the places she visits. If she contributes her pictures to Wikipedia, which role is she in:

☐ Illustrator

☐ Author

☐ Mediator

☐ Formatter

On your User page you can write about yourself, your special knowledge, and your interest in particular articles. This is also a place where you can mention your affiliations or if you have a potential conflict of interest. For example, it might be hard for you to remain neutral if you edit an article about the organization where you work. However, you can use your in-depth knowledge of your organization to list verifiable sources of information. That way, when you read information about your organization that is inaccurate or outdated, you could leave a message on the article's Talk page citing the discrepancy and leading article authors to your User page. The authors can then evaluate your sources and use them to update the article on Wikipedia.

My talk is a place where other contributors can leave messages for you and you can respond. Many contributors leave welcome greetings to new users. Others might use the space to start a conversation to get to know you or better understand your edits.

Every article also has a Talk page. This page is used by Wikipedians to plan how they will collaborate on the content and resolve conflicts. If someone wonders why you have made an edit, or would like to recommend another article to you, they will use the article's Talk page. The article's Talk page is also a good place to ask for help with the article.

Try it!

Click your username and then click **Edit**, in order to edit your User page.

Explore the various options in the editing toolbar…

𝔹 (**Bold**), 𝐼 (**Italics**), and 🔗 (**Link**).

Click **Advanced** to see the format tools.

Wiki markup quick reference is available at the back of this reference guide.

Oh, someone just left a note on my talk page. The message explains that my edits were reverted because I had not cited a source. Since the fact is mentioned on the government website, I will make the edit again. This time I will include the source in the references section below the article itself. That should work.

Life of an article

Although the articles in Wikipedia should be detailed and well written, no one is expected to write a comprehensive article in just one draft. Articles typically start small and then mature through extensive collaboration, often following a pattern like this:

> Most successful articles start small and consist of a summary of the topic (overview), a statement that tells why the topic is noteworthy ("the first...", "the biggest...", "the capital of...", etc.), and a source outside Wikipedia confirming the existence and importance of the topic (a credible publication or website). This basic article is called a stub. If any of the three items are missing, the community may assume the topic is not important and delete the article.

> As other users add text and images to an article, it matures from a topical overview to a more detailed article that captures various perspectives such as historical (for example "in 1923, new factors..."), or global (for example "in Europe, this was viewed as..."). More active contributors might nominate their article for a **Wikipedia peer review process**. The Wikipedia peer review process involves close scrutiny of the article's quality from a broad group of Wikipedians. The process is applied to articles that have undergone extensive work. The review process involves addressing comments, questions, and suggestions from the peer reviewers. Based on the feedback, the writers plan an improvement strategy using the article's **Talk** page.

Finally, an article reaches a level where it is so well-written, sourced, and comprehensive, that only experts can add much value to it. These articles might be designated as **good articles**. A few articles could be recognized by the community as being of the highest quality. These are designated as **featured articles**. Featured articles are displayed on the Wikipedia main page. It takes time and effort to write articles at this level. Collaborating to create a featured article is gratifying and also enhances your status in the Wikipedia community. Just as all other articles, a featured article continues to be edited.

I dream about contributing to an article that appears on the main page of a website with millions of readers.

Try it!
What does the Wikipedia peer review process involve? Select the correct answer.

☐ Review of article quality by a group of Wikipedians

☐ Review of article quality by a group of experts

☐ Review of article quality by the Wikimedia Foundation

What makes a quality article?

A quality Wikipedia article is the result of a well defined structure, encyclopedic content, and an active community:

> **Structure:** Providing a clear article structure helps readers find information and assists editors in keeping all aspects of a topic well organized. One way to learn about structure is to study featured articles, Wikipedia's finest articles. You can access all featured articles by going to the Wikipedia main page. At the bottom of **Today's featured article**, click **More featured articles**. Then scroll down to **Contents** and select the subject that interests you.

Most quality articles have the following structure:

> **Lead section** that summarizes the key points covered in the article. Note that the lead section is without a header.

> **The body** of the article follows the lead section and includes specific headers and subheaders. A geographic location, for example, might have the following headers: history, geography, climate, economy, civic administration, demographics, and culture.

> **Appendices** and **footnotes** appear after the body of the article. These may include bibliographies, links to other Wikipedia articles, notes and references, relevant publications, and websites.

Try it!

1. The body of an article has no headers. Select the correct answer.

   ☐ True

   ☐ False

2. What aspects should a quality encyclopedic article have? Select the correct answers.

   ☐ Verifiable sources

   ☐ Neutral point of view

   ☐ How-to instructions

   ☐ Summary, body, footnotes

❯ Content: Many Wikipedians consider content the most important factor in judging an article's quality. To ensure consistent quality, the Wikipedia community created these four guidelines.

> **❯ Provide Sources:** Writers are encouraged to provide sources for further information. Every fact should be verifiable by a reliable source.

> **❯ Neutral Point of View:** Articles must be written fairly, without bias, and present previously published notable views.

> **❯ No Promotional Content:** Promotional material, how-to instructions, resumes, and sales catalogs do not belong in Wikipedia.

> **❯ No Original Research:** It is not appropriate to include your own new ideas on a subject (Wikipedia calls this original research), or your personal opinions about a subject.

❯ Community: All contributions to Wikipedia are freely licensed to the public. That means that no editor owns any article. All contributions can and will be heavily edited by many different users. In other words, everybody can join in the decision making process. The community also uses Talk pages to agree on the content structure for the article. For times when consensus is hard to reach, check out the various options available by going to the page **Wikipedia:Dispute Resolution**. Some writers and editors have years of experience with Wikipedia and their experience can be a valuable resource for resolving conflicts.

I cannot find an article about this subject. Should I wait for someone else to start the article?

Create a new article

There are many topics that do not have an article on Wikipedia. If you think a topic is missing from Wikipedia, search variations of the topic name. For example, try different spellings. Also check if the subject is mentioned in closely related topics. An island, for example, may be mentioned in an article about its country. If the topic is not mentioned in Wikipedia, maybe it is too obscure to write about, such as a garage band or an unknown person with a blog. However, if you feel that the topic should genuinely be included in Wikipedia, consider creating the article yourself.

Search the article title. If the article does not exist, you will see the article title in a red hyperlink. Click the hyperlink to start editing a new article.

Your new article will get a good start if you remember to provide the following three elements:

1. Summary of the topic
2. Reason why the topic is notable
3. Reference to a credible source about the topic

My very first Wikipedia article is now online! It will be exciting to see how the community comes together to expand this article.

When you start your article you will need a place to work. Create your own workspace or "sandbox" where you can edit your article until it has the three elements.

To use your sandbox, click **My sandbox** at the top right.

You can use this page to draft your article. Do not forget to click **Save page** when you are done editing. When you are ready, find another Wikipedia editor who might be interested in the topic. One way to find an editor is to look at the **View history** tab of an article on a similar topic and see who has contributed to that article. Leave a message on that editor's **Talk** page with a request to review your article. When you are ready, use the **Move** button, available from the pulldown menu next to the Search box, to move your sandbox page into the encyclopedia. In the "new title" pulldown, select "(Article)," then put the article title in place of the name of your sandbox page, explain what you are doing in the "Reason" box, and click **Move page**.

Now, that you have created a new article, do not stop here. Link your article to other articles where your topic is mentioned.

Try it!
What are the three elements to incorporate in your new article? Select the correct answer.

☐ A summary, its notability, and a source

☐ A summary, a picture, and a link to another article

☐ A name, its notability, and a source

A Wikipedian

Before my trip to Morocco next month, I will use Wikipedia's **Create a book** feature. I will collect articles that I need and print a personal travel guide. Wikipedia has many more features than I first thought.

Well, time sure flies! I just clicked **My contributions** at the top of the page to discover that I have more than 100 edits. I have so much fun connecting with other Wikipedians, writing quality articles, and spreading knowledge that can be accessed for free!

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This location also houses source files that allow you to translate, customize, and reuse Bookshelf materials.

Try it! answer key

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Who can edit articles for Wikipedia?

☑ Anyone who has access to the Internet

Wikipedia user interface
Sara's friend, Josh, just started editing and finds that he needs help with Wikipedia policies and guidelines, community standards, and general help for editors. Where can he find assistance?

☑ Help

How can I contribute
Sara likes to take pictures of the places she visits. Sara can contribute to Wikipedia as an:

☑ Illustrator

Life of an article
What does the Wikipedia peer review process involve?

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What makes a quality article
1. The body of an article has no headers.

☑ False

2. What aspects should a quality encyclopedic article have?

☑ Verifiable sources

☑ Neutral point of view

☑ Summary, body, footnotes

Create a new article
What are the three elements to incorporate in your new article?

☑ A summary, its notability, and a source

Are you one of the millions of people who use Wikipedia each day?

Every day, people all over the world use Wikipedia to help with school projects, business plans, personal research, and planning travel. They use it to spark new ideas and to brainstorm concepts. They use it to explore distant lands, ancient cultures, fine art, civic leaders, and recent events.

Welcome to Wikipedia is a reference guide for anyone who wants to take the next step and help gather and share the sum of all human knowledge.

Follow Sara as she makes her first edits on Wikipedia. In the process, you will learn key concepts, guidelines, information, and tools to get you to start contributing to Wikipedia.

More materials: **http://bookshelf.wikimedia.org**

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WIKIMEDIA
FOUNDATION