Regardless of your personal feelings about Wikipedia, it's being used by students every day.

In a recent Pew Internet survey (Purcell, 2012), teachers indicated that Wikipedia was the second most frequently used online tool behind Google. Even though some teachers continue to ban its use for particular assignments, Wikipedia use has increased steadily overall (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2011).

Launched a dozen years ago, Wikipedia currently contains millions of articles written by volunteers like you. Articles by new users are reviewed prior to posting and can be edited by others to improve their quality. A community of users has established a set of principles to follow in adding content and guidelines for resolving conflicts.

Wikipedia

English
The Free Encyclopedia
4,110,000+ articles

Español
La enciclopedia libre
940,000+ articles

Русский
Свободная энциклопедия
940,000+ статьей

Italiano
L'enciclopedia libera
990,000+ articoli

Português
A enciclopédia livre
780,000+ artigos

Deutsch
Die freie Enzyklopädie
1,510,000+ Artikel

Français
L'encyclopédie libre
1,300,000+ articles

Polski
Wolna encyklopedia
940,000+ artykułów

中文
自由的百科全书
610,000+ 词条

Search • Suchen • Rechercher • Zoeken • Ricerca • Buscar • Поиск • 搜索 • Busca • 搜索
Tim Kînîn • Tsuchiya • Cerca • Zark • Haku • Hidetani • Karasawa • 宮崎 • Cari • تبع • Cerca • 検索 • 検索
Hüfâdí • Sâg • Serum • Přerovská • Poaldí • Cara • anam • Twosome • Happy • Blitu • Sûk • Birgla • ترجمة

WICKED OR WONDERFUL?

In the early days, scholars charged that Wikipedia was full of inaccuracies, bias beyond belief, and even harmful to young minds. However, over the years, research has proven these naysayers wrong. Goldsborough (2012) stated that "though it's often pooh-poohed by teachers and editors for its lack of academic rigor, Wikipedia has a self-correcting mechanism that eliminates much inaccuracy" (68).

Policies. Three core content policies guide content creation on Wikipedia, a collaboratively edited, free Internet encyclopedia run by the nonprofit organization Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. First, articles must present a neutral point of view. Second, the content must be verifiable. Third, original research should not be posted.

Vandalism. Although vandalism continues to plague this resource, an army of volunteers helps to keep entries accurate. About 7 percent of edits to Wikipedia are vandalism, and almost all of these edits are made by anonymous users (Potthast, 2010). Users who violate rules—such as posting false information, promoting a product, or adding inappropriate content—are blocked from editing. In addition, the development of user access levels ensures that the most important articles are protected.

Authorship. Active article creators and editors are known as Wikipedians. While some are amateurs, others are experts in the areas where they post articles. Many professionals pay close attention to the articles on topics related to their area of expertise. For instance, the day Pluto was reclassified from planet to dwarf planet, the Pluto page (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto) was buzzing with activity from those actually participating in the International Astronomical Union vote on the issue.

Sources. Most websites, including Wikipedia, aren’t primary or secondary sources. However, this doesn’t mean they aren’t valuable. Most of us grew up using tertiary sources such as World Book Encyclopedia. Tertiary sources collect existing knowledge rather than generating new information. Article content is only as good as the sources cited.

Reliability. The reliability of Wikipedia compared with other encyclopedias has been studied extensively over the past decade. One of the most controversial studies compared the accuracy of Wikipedia with Encyclopedia Britannica head to head. It found that they were similar in accuracy (Giles, 2005). A more recent study comparing the two encyclopedias on the topic of mental disorders found that Wikipedia was as good or better than Britannica (Reavley, 2012). Ragagopalan (2009) also found that Wikipedia was as good as Britannica in quality, volume of content, and links to other resources.
discovered that inaccuracies were rare in Wikipedia, and Haigh (2011) concluded that Wikipedia was of sufficient quality for nursing students. While Rector (2008) found Wikipedia to be less accurate than other sources, Brown (2011) noted that Wikipedia was almost always accurate.

Academic Research. While it’s not appropriate to cite Wikipedia in most academic research, Wikipedia is an excellent starting point for student inquiries and is particularly useful when investigating emerging topics not covered through other sources. Wikipedia should be only one of many sources used in the triangulation of evidence. By using multiple forms of evidence, the student can ensure the validity and reliability of findings. Many educators suggest teaching student to use Wikipedia properly rather telling them not to use it (Harouni, 2009; Murley, 2008).

The key is using Wikipedia effectively is understanding how the resource is constructed.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

School librarians often find themselves in the middle of the Wikipedia debate dealing with misconceptions and misuse of this resource.

Let’s explore a dozen things you should know about Wikipedia to prepare for this debate.


- Wikipedia is an encyclopedia.
- Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view.
- Wikipedia is free content that anyone can edit, use, modify, and distribute.
- Editors should interact with each other in a respectful and civil manner.
- Wikipedia does not have firm rules.

Closely Monitored. From celebrity gossip to mass shootings, Wikimedians closely monitor breaking news and strive to post accurate information quickly. However, they sometimes protect pages that are likely to be vandalized by restricting users who can edit these pages. A biographies of living persons policy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Biographies_of_living_persons) stresses the importance of taking great care when reporting on living people.

Protected Pages. Some articles allow only restricted editing. This protection may include full protection, pending changes protection, or even permanent protection. The Martin Luther King, Jr. article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.) and Area 51 entry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_51) are examples of semiprotected pages. The protection is intended to reduce vandalism and encourage reliable information.

Go to the Abraham Lincoln article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_lincoln) and try to edit the page. This is a semiprotected page, so only user accounts with a particular level of access can change this page.

Message Boxes. Many Wikipedia articles contain message boxes at the top of the page indicating an issue that should be addressed to improve the article. These messages may dispute the neutrality of article, question the factual accuracy, or note the need for additional citations for verification. Pay careful attention to these warnings before using information from a page with multiple issues. Better yet, help make the article better by contributing information.

Neutrality. Wikipedia articles are intended to provide a neutral point of view (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view). A student discussion of neutrality is a wonderful opportunity to explore the topic of fact versus opinion. Ask students to explore a controversial issues article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_controversial_issues) and look for matters of neutrality. For instance, an article dealing with water stagnation (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_stagnation) may view stagnant water as a danger or as an important habitat for living creatures. In some cases, pages have been created to focus on a particular debate, such as the-

Verifiability. One of Wikipedia's core content policies relates to the use of reliable sources to support information posted in an article. Many articles contain a message box at the top of the page indicating the need for citations. Talk with students about the importance of using reliable sources. Ask them to evaluate an article and determine whether the information meets the verifiability guidelines ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability)).

Permanent Links. Many Wikipedia pages have been updated many times. The article you read last week may change this week. Think about how many times an article on a topic like climate change ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change)) has been revised over the past decade. If you want to cite an article as it existed the moment you read it, use the permanent link in the sidebar navigation. It will provide an address for the current revision of the page.

Portals. Although most searches are done using the search box, consider using a portal for major categories of information related to a subject. A portal is a topic starting point that provides readers with key articles, images, and categories. The portal content page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Contents/Portals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Contents/Portals)) provides a master list of topics such as literature, arts, geography, health, history, mathematics, science, social studies, and technology.

News. The portal current events page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Current_events](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Current_events)) provides accurate, concise, current information from around the world. The articles often cover topics that are overlooked by the mainstream media. However, keep in mind that Wikipedia is intended to be an encyclopedia, not a newspaper. A sister website called Wikinews ([http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page](http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page)) provides in-depth news.

Fictional Worlds. You may think of Wikipedia as an information resource for social studies or science topics, but it's also a great place to explore a wide range of topics. From an article on Tolkien's Shire of Middle Earth ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shire_(Middle-earth)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shire_(Middle-earth))) to details on C.S. Lewis's Narnia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narnia_(world)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narnia_(world))), Wikipedia provides a wonderful resource to explore the fictional worlds found in literature.

Spoken Word Project. Wikipedia has a spoken word program. Go to the spoken articles page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Spoken_articles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Spoken_articles)) for a master list of articles with a spoken word version. The audio recording for Saturn ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturn)) can be found near the top of the page on the right-hand side. The spoken word option is particularly useful for topics such as Greek mythology ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology)), which contain words that are difficult to pronounce.

Guidelines. For those interested in editing or creating articles, a set of guidelines ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_guidelines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_guidelines)) has been established to represent best practices. These are helpful in knowing how to behave when collaborating on articles, editing and creating content, and addressing style requirements.

**APPROPRIATE USES OF WIKIPEDIA**

The effective use of information resources like Wikipedia is an important twenty-first-century skill and connects directly with the research skills outlined in the Common Core curriculum. Let's explore a dozen ways you can weave information skills into Wikipedia activities.

Use Wikipedia. Go to Wikipedia ([http://www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). Define encyclopedia and discuss the purpose of using a tertiary source. Talk about the importance of citations as evidence in an article. Look at the notes and use the further readings links to location the primary and secondary sources cited.

For example, read the Yellowstone National Park page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone_National_Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone_National_Park)) for background information, then scroll to the bottom of the page. Examine the references that were used in the article to support the content. Also notice the external links. These are places you can find quality information, such as the official Yellowstone National Park page ([http://www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)).

Remind students that Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, so it's helpful in providing background information about a topic such as the Asperger syndrome page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asperger_syndrome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asperger_syndrome)). However, for class research projects, they should be using the references and external links provided on the Wikipedia page, such as the National Institutes of Health ([http://www.nih.gov/](http://www.nih.gov/)) or OMIM ([http://omim.org/](http://omim.org/)) from Johns Hopkins University to access original research findings and summaries.

**Evaluate and Rate an Article.** Search for a topic that relates directly to student experiences or knowledge, such as your town or city. Talk about whether they think the information in the article is factual. Also discuss the citations used as evidence. Then
scroll to the bottom of the page and discuss how pages can be rated. Use the process of evaluating and rating a page as a culminating activity at the end of a subject-area assignment, such as the study of the social issues or government structures.

Some outstanding articles have been identified as featured articles within the Wikipedia community. These pages contain a gold star near the top of the article. Those under consideration as featured articles contain a green icon with a plus inside.

Cross Reference Articles. An easy way to get started with editing is by finding words in articles that can be linked to other articles. For instance, an article on the Pythagorean theorem (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagorean_theorem) might mention Pythagoras but fail to link to the Wikipedia article on this noted mathematician. Rather than editing anonymously, take the time to create a login so you can go back and see all the edits you've made over time.

Add Citations to an Article. Anyone can contribute to Wikipedia. A good way to begin is by adding a citation to support a statement found on a Wikipedia article. Locate information online, in books, or on historical documents. Take notes and be sure to cite the source, for example:


Seek out article that contain message boxes indicating the need for citations. For instance, the fictional worlds article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fictional_worlds) contains a note indicating that additional references and online citations are needed.

Adopt an Article. Search Wikipedia for articles related to class topics. For instance, you might search for information about a geographic location such as Thousand Lake Mountain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thousand_Lake_Mountain). Does this page need to be updated or expanded? If so, a class could adopt this article. It's not a formal adoption—you simply choose an article and dedicate yourself to editing and expanding the resource. For instance, you might correct typos, add new information, or supply citations.

Have Some Fun. Adopt a page like Milne's Hundred Acre Wood (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Acre_Wood) and provide citations related to the locations found in the Winnie the Pooh series.

Create an Article. It's possible to get new pages approved, but it's an involved process. The guidelines are fairly strict. The Wikipedia community is interested in articles that go beyond local connections, so strictly local content may not be approved. An article must meet the notability test (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability). In other words, the subject must be worthy of notice. In addition, original research articles (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research) are not allowed. Students

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JUNIOR FICTION

PLANS AND ADVENTURES

Bearn, Emily. Tumtum and Nutmeg: The Rose Cottage Tales. Little, Brown, 2010. 398p. $16.99. 978-0-316-08599-1. Grades 3-6. Tumtum and Nutmeg defeat a mouse bully to save Christmas for Arthur and Lucy, the human children from Rose Cottage, and then have a treasure-hunting adventure (and a few close calls) at the seaside.


Korman, Gordon. Hideout. Scholastic Press, 2013. 288p. $16.99. 978-0-545-52018-8. Grades 3-7. When a vengeful crook tries to take back the abandoned attack dog Samantha adopted, she and her friends decide to hide the dog at summer camp. No way is that crook getting him back!

Mlynowski, Sarah. If the Shoe Fits (Whatever After, Bk. 2). Scholastic Press, 2013. 176p. $14.99. 978-0-545-41567-5. Grades 3-7. This time, Abby and Jonah's trip through the magic mirror in their basement dumps them into Cinderella's life, not Snow White's. Can they get home without another mirror—and without ruining another fairy tale?
should not be posting the results of their science fair projects.

If you need ideas, go to the WikiProject requested articles area (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Re-
quested_articles). Individuals can post articles they would like to see created.

Create Video Content. Wikipedia has expanded to include open-source audio and video content. The Wikiproject Lights Camera Wiki (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Lights_Camera_Wiki) encourages the production of short videos in specific content areas. The architecture initiative focuses on exploring historic architectural sites such as Grand Central Terminal (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Central_Terminal) in New York City.


Seek Assistance. New Wikipedia article creators are encouraged to seek help building their skills. The Teahouse (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:TEAHOUSE) is an area where new editors can ask questions and develop online relationships with other writers. If you'd like some one-to-one mentoring, visit the adopt-a-user page (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:ADOPT). New and inexperienced users are paired with more experienced Wikipedians. If you want help using Wikipedia in the classroom, join the online ambassadors program (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Online_Ambassadors). This experience supports teachers and their classes working on Wikipedia projects.

Use Wikimedia Sister Projects. Besides Wikipedia, the Wikimedia Foundation hosts a range of other free content projects. If you're looking for free, open content, use textbooks and manuals from Wikibooks (http://en.wikibooks.org) and or texts from Wikisource (http://en.wikisource.org). Free learning materials can be found at Wiki-

### Grand Central North

Grand Central North, opened on August 18, 1999, provides access to Grand Central from 45th Street, 47th Street, and 48th Street.[16] It is connected to the Main Concourse through two long hallways, the Northwest Passage (1,000 feet long) and Northeast Passage (1,200 feet long), which run parallel to the tracks on the upper level.[19] Entrances are at the northeast corner of East 47th Street and Madison Avenue (Northwest Passage), northeast corner of East 48th Street and Park Avenue (Northeast Passage), and on the east and west sides of 230 Park Avenue (Helmsley Building) between 45th and 46th Streets. A fifth entrance is scheduled to open in early 2012 on the south side of 47th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues.[20] The 47th Street passage provides access to the upper level tracks and the 45th Street passage provides access to the lower level. Entrances at both ends of the 45th Street (outside Helmsley Building) are accessible.

Like Gregory Maguire's re-imagined Wicked Witch of the West, Wikipedia may simply be misunderstood. Be prepared to show the wonderful side of Wikipedia to parents, teachers, and students.

### RESOURCES

Brown, Adam R. (2011). Wikipedia as a data source for political scientists: Accu-
racy and completeness of coverage. *PS Political Science and Politics*, 44(2), 339.


Adapted from the presentation “Wicked or Wonderful: Revisiting the World of Wikipedia” by Annette Lamb and Larry Johnson.