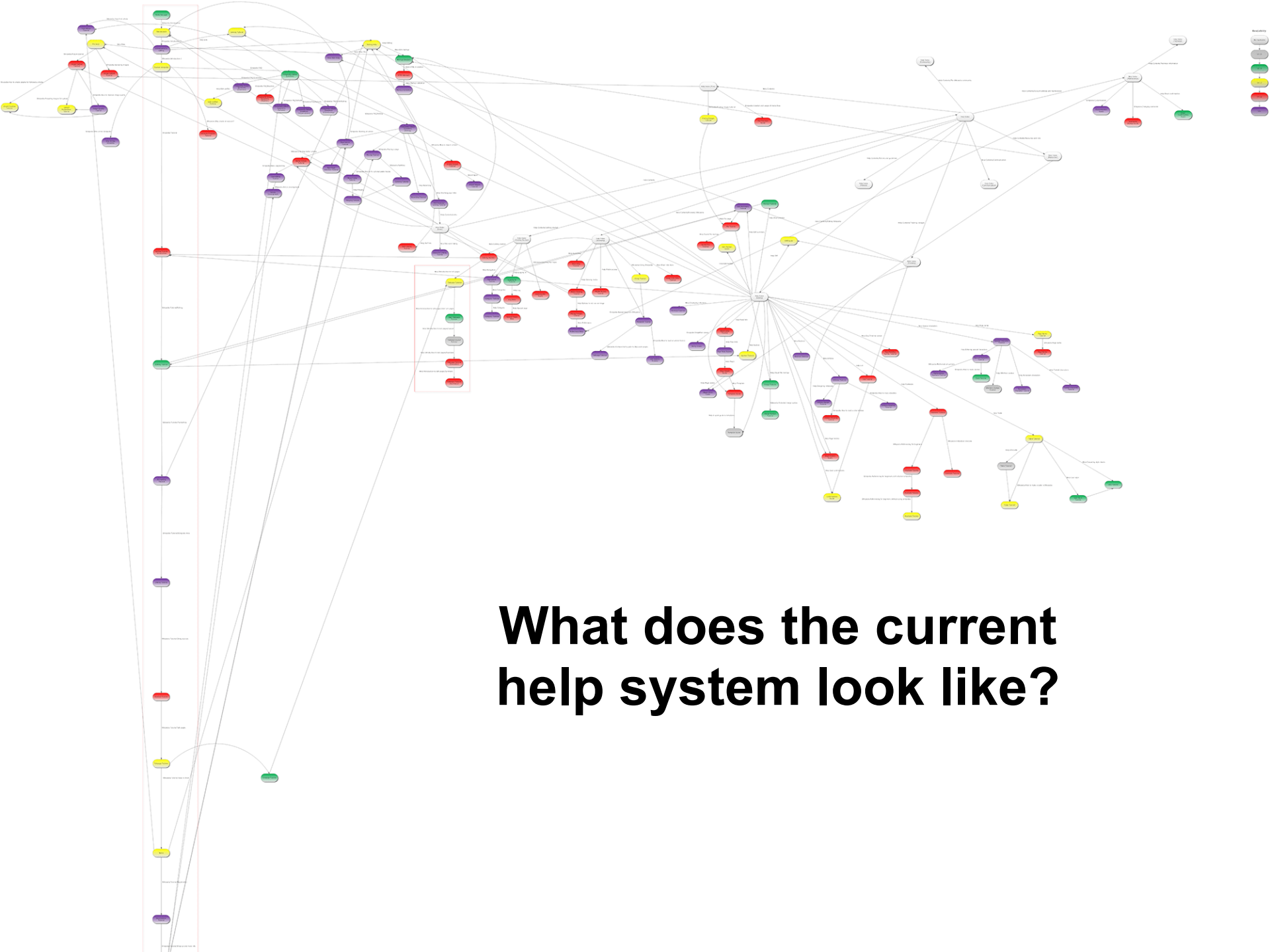


Wikipedia: Too much documentation?

Peter Coombe
Wikimedia

The trouble with help pages

- Accumulated lots of cruft over time
- Too long (e.g. *Wikipedia:Citing sources* is 8145 words)
- Widely varying in complexity
- Duplication: 5 pages about how to do tables
- Navigation is poor



**What does the current
help system look like?**

Different entry points

- Search (internal/external)
- Links in site sidebar
- Warnings and welcome messages
- Page and talk page templates

Different target audiences

- Readers
- New and wannabe editors
- Experienced editors



Wikipedia Help

☒ Help ☒ Wikipedia ☒ Template ☐ Category

Shortcuts:
[WP:HELP](#)
[WP:H](#)

Getting started

An introduction

Policies and guidelines

Community standards

Browsing Wikipedia

Help for reading the encyclopedia and navigating the site

Asking questions

Contact another user or keep yourself informed

Editing Wikipedia

General help for editors

The Wikipedia community

Submit or debate a proposal

Links and references

Help for creating links or dealing with references

Resources and lists

Resources for editors

Files

Using images, videos and sound files

Account settings

Tips and tools for registered users

Keeping track of changes

Track the evolution of a page or follow a user

Technical information

Tools for advanced users and troubleshooting information

[V](#) · [T](#) · [E](#)

Wikipedia help pages

[\[show\]](#)

View all of these on a single page

See also: [Department directory](#) · [Editor's index](#) · [Quick directory](#) · [The Missing Manual](#) · [About the help pages](#)

Questions and problems

Ask a question

Find out where to ask a question

Tip of the day



The old "Help:Contents"
This got 10,000 hits *per day*.

Help:Contents/Getting started



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[< Help:Contents](#)

Getting started

Who writes Wikipedia - contains essential information for new readers.

Contents [hide]

- 1 Learning the basics
- 2 The Wikipedia interface
- 3 Browsing Wikipedia
- 4 See also
- 5 Content pages:

Learning the basics

[edit]

Introduction to Wikipedia

[Basic navigation](#) – Find articles or learn the interface.

[How to log in](#)

[Why create an account?](#)

[Choosing a username](#)

The Wikipedia interface

[edit]

Find your way around.

[Edit toolbar](#)

[Page history](#)

[User contributions pages](#)

[Talk pages](#)

[Recent changes page](#)

[Patrolling the recent changes](#)

[Watching pages](#)

[Related changes page](#)

[Using "What links here"](#)

Tutorials

[Introduction to Wikipedia](#)

[Introduction to editing](#) (main tutorial)

[Fundamentals of editing](#)

[Learning the ropes](#)

[A Primer for newcomers](#)

[Linky tutorial](#)

[Scartol, on template use and design](#)

[Dweller, on Featured Article Candidates](#)

[Yuser, on fighting linkspam](#)

[Deletion and deletionism](#)

[Reporting and dealing with vandals](#)

[The Rambling Man, on vandalism](#)

[Grutness's guide to stubbing](#)

[External interfaces – let's compare](#)

[Internal interfaces – what do you use?](#)

[Summary of policies](#)

[How to use an ImageMap](#)

[Getting an article to featured article status](#)

[Basic dispute resolution](#)

[Adding citations](#)

[See also: Wikipedia: The Missing Manual](#)

V T E

Example help page: Citing sources

Types of citation [\[edit\]](#)

- A *full citation* fully identifies a [reliable source](#) and, where applicable, the place in that source (such as a page number) where the information in question can be found. For example: [Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 1](#). This type of citation is usually given as a [footnote](#), and is the most commonly used citation method in Wikipedia articles.
- An *inline citation* means any citation added close to the material it supports, for example after the sentence or paragraph, normally in the form of a footnote.
- A *short citation* is an inline citation that identifies the place in a source where specific information can be found, but without giving full details of the source – these will have been provided in a full bibliographic citation either in an earlier footnote, or in a separate section. For example: [Rawls 1971, p. 1](#). This system is used in some articles; the short citations may be given either as footnotes, or as [parenthetical references](#) within the text.
- *In-text attribution* involves adding the source of a statement to the article text, such as [Rawls argues that X.](#)^[5] This is done whenever a writer or speaker should be credited, such as with quotations, close paraphrasing, or statements of opinion or uncertain fact. The in-text attribution does not give full details of the source – this is done in a footnote in the normal way. See [In-text attribution](#) below.
- A *general reference* is a citation that supports content, but is not linked to any particular piece of material in the article through an inline citation. General references are usually listed at the end of the article in a References section. They are usually found in underdeveloped articles, especially when all article content is supported by a single source. They may also be listed in more developed articles as a supplement to inline citations.

When and why to cite sources [\[edit\]](#)

By citing sources for Wikipedia content, you enable users to [verify](#) that the information given is supported by reliable sources, thus improving the [credibility of Wikipedia](#) while showing that the content is [not original research](#). You also help users find [additional information](#) on the subject; and you avoid [plagiarising](#) the source of your words or ideas by giving attribution.

In particular, sources are required for material that is [challenged or likely to be challenged](#) – if reliable sources cannot be found for challenged material, it is likely to be removed from the article. Sources are also required when [quoting](#) someone, with or without quotation marks, or closely paraphrasing a source. However, the citing of sources is not limited to those situations – editors are always encouraged to add or improve citations for any information contained in an article.

Citations are especially desirable for statements about living persons, particularly when the statements are contentious or potentially defamatory. In accordance with the [biography of living persons policy](#), unsourced information of this type is likely to be removed on sight.

Citations are *not* used on [disambiguation pages](#) (sourcing for the information given there should be done in the target articles). Citations are also often discouraged in the [lead section](#) of an article, insofar as it summarizes information for which sources are given later in the article, although such things as quotations and particularly controversial statements should be supported by citations even in the lead.

For an image or other media file, details of its origin and copyright status should appear on its [file page](#). Image [captions](#) should be referenced as appropriate just like any other part of the article. A citation is not needed for descriptions such as [alt text](#) that are verifiable directly from the image itself, or for text that merely identifies a source (e.g., the caption "[Belshazzar's Feast \(1635\)](#)" for [File:Rembrandt-Belsazar.jpg](#)).

Inline citations [\[edit\]](#)

Further information: [Wikipedia:Inline citation](#)

Inline citations allow the reader to associate a given bit of material in an article with the specific reliable source(s) that support the material. Inline citations are most commonly added using either [footnotes](#) (long or [short](#)) or [parenthetical references](#). This section describes how to add either type, and also describes how to create a list of full bibliography citations to

Shortcut:
WP:WHYCITE

Shortcut:
WP:INCITE

Resistance to change

- Movement politics. Resistance to top-down.
- Editors find it hard to identify with users
- Ownership of pages.
- Sunk costs

So how to approach it?

Improved existing Wikipedia:Help Project, trying to catalyse community work.

Research beforehand, reports and presentations on the problems. **Usability testing** with real users.

Work *around* existing pages where needed.

Where are we now?

New introduction to citing sources

Verifiability

Why references are important

Inline citations

How to add them

RefToolbar

Citations the easy way

Reliable sources

Which sources are good enough?

Summary

Review of what you've learned

If you've read many Wikipedia articles, then you'll have seen plenty of inline citations. These are usually small numbered footnotes which link to a full source in a reference section when clicked, like this.^[1] They are generally added directly after the fact they support, or at the end of the sentence after any punctuation.

When editing a page inline citations can be spotted between `<ref>` and `</ref>` tags.

All the references then appear together on the page, wherever the `{{Reflist}}` template or `<references />` tag is present. This will usually be in a section titled References. If you are creating a brand new page, or adding references to a page that didn't previously have any, don't forget to add a References section like the below, or the citations you went to all that effort adding won't show up!

```
== References ==
{{Reflist}}
```

Note: This is by far the most popular system for inline citations, but sometimes you might find other forms being used in an article such as references in parentheses. As a general rule, the first major contributor to an article gets to choose the referencing system used there. If an article uses a different system, just copy it when adding any new references.

References

1. [^] Wales, J (2012). *What is an inline citation?*. Wikipublisher. pp. 6.

Next >>

New contents page

See below for assistance with the most common questions, or search the help pages using the search box to the right.

For the old help contents page, see [Help:Contents/Browse](#)



I need help with **reading or browsing** Wikipedia

Please see the [Readers' FAQ](#) and our other [help pages for readers](#).



I want to **report a problem** with an article

Anyone can edit almost any page on Wikipedia by simply following the "Edit" link at the top of that page. [Be bold](#) in improving articles. When adding new facts, please try to [provide references](#) so they may be verified. If you are affiliated with the article subject, please see the [conflict of interest guide](#).

If you are unable to fix a problem yourself, or require more help, you can [contact us](#) for more advice. If it's an article about you or your organization, see [Contact us - Subjects](#).



I have a **factual question**

e.g. *"Which country has the world's largest fishing fleet?"*

If [searching Wikipedia](#) has not answered your question, at the [Reference Desk](#) you can ask questions about any topic. Volunteers will attempt to answer, or point you towards the information you need.

I'm looking for help with **something else**

- Try the help search box to the top right of this page
- [Browse Wikipedia's help pages](#)



I want to **learn more about editing** Wikipedia

That's great, Wikipedia could always use more contributors! [Getting started](#) will show you the ropes, and [the Teahouse](#) provides a friendly place for new editors to ask questions and get to know people. If you're looking for something to do, the [Community portal](#) keeps lists of open tasks. The [Cheatsheet](#) shows how to edit wiki markup.



I want to **create a new article**

If you haven't created one before, you should read [Wikipedia:Your first article](#) to see if your article might be appropriate for Wikipedia. Then the [Article wizard](#) will walk you through the actual process of creating an article.



I have another **question about Wikipedia**

If you haven't already you may wish to check the [frequently asked questions](#).

You can ask all kinds of questions about using Wikipedia at the [Help desk](#) or the [Teahouse](#). Volunteers at each of these will respond to your questions as soon as possible.

Alternatively you can get live help with editing in the [help chatroom](#).

What next?

Still massive amounts to do.

Better guidelines for writing help pages, based on what we've learnt.

Make the software and processes easier
(WYSIWYG is coming - eventually!)

Questions?

pcoombe@wikimedia.org

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:The_wub