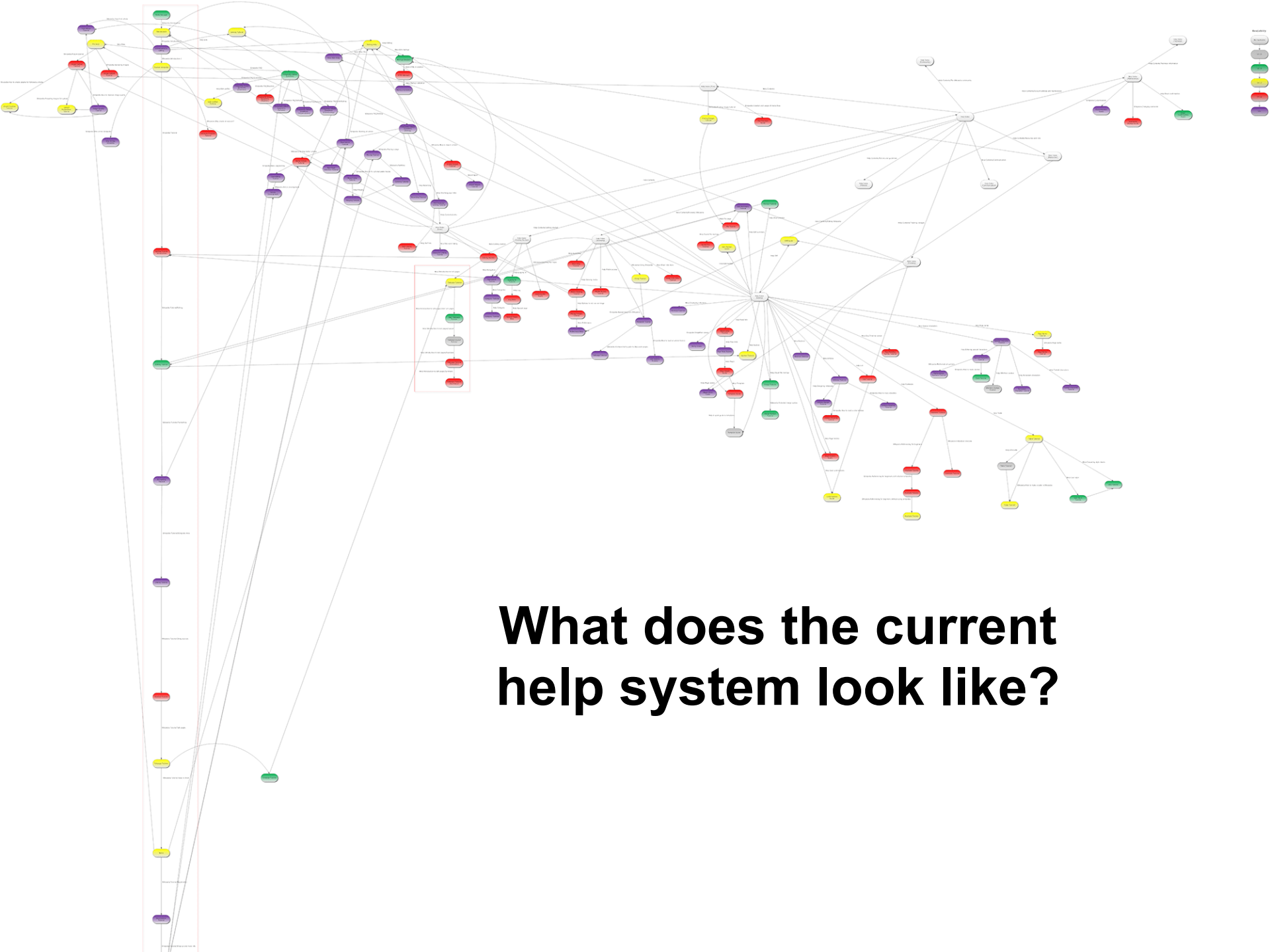# Wikipedia:
Too much documentation?

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

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.

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

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

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 **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 **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 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 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 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.

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

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?

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