

# Mentoring new editors on Wikipedia

[Kirsten Stoller](#)

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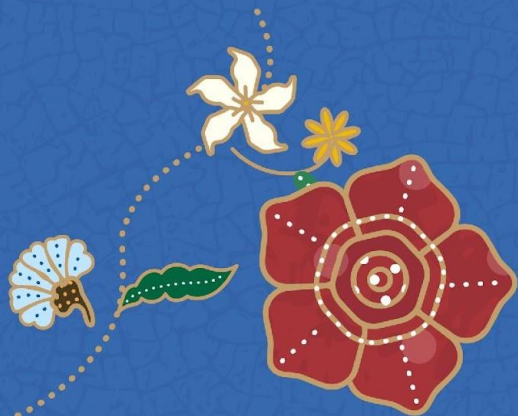
[Martin Urbanec](#)

WMF Senior Software Engineer, Growth

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# Speakers



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**GROWTH**



**Kirsten Stoller**  
WMF Growth team Senior  
Product Manager



**Martin Urbanec**  
WMF Growth team  
Senior Software Engineer

Wednesday, August 16 (14:15-15:15)

# Agenda

## Presentation: ~15 minutes

- New editor needs
- Mentorship
- Mentorship metrics

## Q & A: ~ 10 minutes

## Workshop: ~35 minutes

- Small group discussions

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# Why are we here?

We care about the sustainability of Wikipedia, and are concerned about newcomer retention.

- The majority of **new accounts never edit**.
- The majority of **first time editors never return to edit again**.



Why are **you** here?

Raise your hand if you **help newcomers or provide mentorship** in some way within the Wikimedia movement.

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Why are **you** here?

Raise your hand if you are  
**currently a Mentor** using  
Growth's mentorship tools on  
Wikipedia.

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# Is Mentorship available at my Wiki?

The following wikis have Growth's Mentorship features enabled:

Albanian Wikipedia  
Arabic Wikipedia  
Armenian Wikipedia  
Azerbaijani Wikipedia  
Basque Wikipedia  
Bengali Wikipedia  
Central Kurdish Wikipedia  
Chinese Wikipedia  
Croatian Wikipedia  
Czech Wikipedia  
Dutch Wikipedia  
English Wikipedia\*  
French Wikipedia  
French Wiktionary  
German Wikipedia  
Greek Wikipedia

Hebrew Wikipedia  
Hungarian Wikipedia  
Indonesian Wikipedia  
Italian Wikipedia  
Kannada Wikipedia  
Kashmiri Wikipedia  
Korean Wikipedia  
Kurdish Wikipedia  
Latvian Wikipedia  
Moroccan Arabic Wikipedia  
Nepali Wikipedia  
Northern Frisian Wikipedia  
Northern Sami Wikipedia  
Norwegian Bokmål Wikipedia  
Polish Wikipedia  
Portuguese Wikipedia

Romanian Wikipedia  
Russian Wikipedia  
Serbian Wikipedia  
Slovak Wikipedia  
Spanish Wikipedia\*  
Swahili Wikipedia  
Swedish Wikipedia  
Telugu Wikipedia  
*Test Wikipedia*  
Tumbuka Wikipedia  
Turkish Wikipedia  
Ukrainian Wikipedia  
Vietnamese Wikipedia

**~50 wikis**  
**~800 Mentors**

# Editing is complicated for newcomers

New editors face three barriers when getting started

([New Editor Experiences](#))



## Technical

*“What is an infobox?”*



## Conceptual

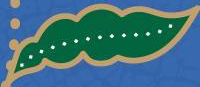
*“What is notability?”*



## Cultural

*“Why are people so mean?”*

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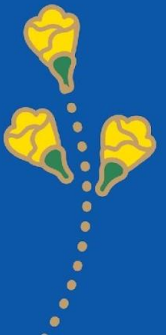




# What do new editors need?

New editor needs:	Growth team tool
<b>In-context help:</b> help relevant to the activity they are doing at that moment.	<u><a href="#">Help panel</a></u>
<b>Human-to-human help:</b> One-on-one help from an experienced community member.	<u><a href="#">Mentorship</a></u>
<b>Task recommendations:</b> suggestions for specific tasks based on their interests and skills.	<u><a href="#">Newcomer homepage</a></u> <u><a href="#">Suggested edits</a></u>

[New Editor Experiences, August 2017](#) | By Reboot and the Wikimedia Foundation



# Mentorship

## Hypotheses:

If we improve mentorship tools, then mentors can provide a better experience for newcomers.

If newcomers have a better experience, then new editor retention will improve.

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[New Wikipedia editors](#), Molly Fuller Abbott, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

# Mentorship

Mentorship tools are available at all Wikipedias, **you might just need to set it up**.

Experienced wikipedians volunteer as Wikipedia mentors

Every mentor gets assigned newcomers (mentees) randomly

- **Enrolling:** <Special:EnrollAsMentor>
- **Enabling:** <Special>EditGrowthConfig>

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## Enroll as a mentor

Thank you for volunteering as a Wikipedia mentor. You can enroll as a mentor by filling out this form.

Introduction message

Introduction message introduces you as a mentor. Please keep this shorter than 240 characters. No wikitext is allowed.

Enroll

*Special:EnrollAsMentor at Test Wikipedia*

## Automatically assigned mentors

New accounts are randomly assigned to these mentors.

#	Username	Last active	Number of newcomers assigned	Status	Message for newcomers	Edit	Remove
1	<a href="#">ARoseWolf</a> (talk   contribs   block)	20:32, 10 April 2023	About twice the average	Active	Hello and welcome! My name is Asareel and I am here to assist you with navigating and editing Wikipedia. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions you may have.	<a href="#">Edit</a>	<a href="#">Remove</a>
2	<a href="#">Ahmetlii</a> (talk   contribs   block)	09:14, 25 March 2023	Average (the default)	Active	Welcome! I edit on different areas whenever there's a need of improvement, and try to help newcomers. Don't hesitate to ask questions about editing and other processes on Wikipedia, I will do my best to give a good answer.	<a href="#">Edit</a>	<a href="#">Remove</a>
3	<a href="#">Alextejthompson</a> (talk   contribs   block)	13:08, 17 March 2023	About twice the average	Active	Hi and welcome to Wikipedia. Ask me anything and I'll do my best to answer.	<a href="#">Edit</a>	<a href="#">Remove</a>

*Special:ManageMentors page at English Wikipedia*

# Mentorship

Admins can edit mentorship options of any user, or fully remove mentors.

Upon mentor removal, mentees are reassigned to a different mentor.

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You are about to remove [Martin Urbanec \(WMF\)](#) as a mentor.

Reason for removing the mentor

Submit

*Admin interface for removing another mentor*

You are about to edit the mentorship-related options for mentor [Martin Urbanec \(WMF\)](#).

Introduction message

To test the Growth mentorship at English Wikipedia.

Is automatically assigned to newcomers?

Number of newcomers assigned

About half the average

Average (the default)

About twice the average

Is away?

Reason

Submit

*Admin interface for editing another mentor*



# Mentor Dashboard

A dashboard for experienced users who signed up to become mentors to newcomers.

Mentors to have a central place to access tools and settings for mentoring newcomers.

It allows mentors opportunities to proactively reach out to help newcomers.

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## Mentor dashboard

The screenshot displays the Mentor Dashboard interface. It features a main section titled "Your mentees" with a search bar and a table of mentees. The table includes columns for mentee name, activity date, and various metrics. To the right, there is a "Settings" panel with options for "Mentor status" (set to "Active"), "Number of mentees assigned to me" (set to "Average (the default)"), and a "Message to your mentees" section with a text input field containing "Ask me about design stuff". Below the settings is a "Claim mentee" button and a "Resources" section with links for "Manage mentors", "How to introduce yourself as a mentor", and "How to claim a mentee".

**Your mentees**

See your mentees below. Use the filters to change which mentees are shown.

Filters

★ 魔琴 active 17 weeks ago	2020-03-27	0	180	0	0
★ Rho2017 active 1 day ago	2020-01-24	7	104	0	0
★ AnotherGuy active 18 weeks ago	2020-01-17	4	121	1	0
★ 魔琴 active 20 weeks ago	2020-03-27	0	40	0	0
★ Fredsow12 active 20 weeks ago	2020-03-27	1	302	3	0
★ Nimbus2000 active 21 weeks ago	2020-02-15	0	223	2	0
★ NewbieTest_Account active 22 weeks ago	2018-10-23	0	34	0	0
★ X91242 active 23 weeks ago	2019-09-23	1	2	2	1
★ Rocketmandolin active 23 weeks ago	2019-09-21	0	8	0	0

Show 10 1 of 1 < >

**Settings**

Mentor status: Active

Number of mentees assigned to me: Average (the default)

Message to your mentees: Ask me about design stuff

Claim mentee: Claim mentee

You can change a mentee's mentor to yourself. This is frequently used for editing events so that instructors can be a newcomer's mentor both on and off wiki.

**Resources**

- Manage mentors
- How to introduce yourself as a mentor
- How to claim a mentee

*Mentor Dashboard*

More info at [MW:Mentor dashboard](#)

# Mentors encourage newcomers

## Hypothesis:

If Mentors proactively send new editors supportive messages, new editors will be more likely to continue editing.

## Plan:

One part of the Positive Reinforcement project was to add a new module to the Mentor dashboard and send mentors notifications when they have “praise-worthy” mentees.

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## Send praise

Positive messages from experienced users and mentors increase editor retention.

**Metric:** 1 edit in the last 30 days. Customise these figures in settings.



Admin

0 talk topics


 23

Total edits

 2

Reverted edits

 0

Thanks received 

 3 days

Longest streak 

Send praise

Skip this mentee



1 of 24 praise-worthy mentees





## Thoughts from Mentors:

“Mentors are the first guard of the wiki, avoiding many of those users to create bad content that would need to be deleted otherwise. So, in theory, mentors are reducing the workload of patrollers and admins.”

-Spanish Wikipedia Mentor

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[Pat Hadley guides new Wikipedia editors](#), Molly Fuller Abbott, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

# Mentorship Metrics

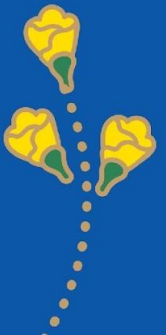
A WMF data scientist gathered registrations from Spanish and English Wikipedia from **June 1 to July 15, 2023**. English and Spanish Wikipedia don't yet provide Mentorship to 100% of new accounts, and since mentorship is randomly assigned this is a natural **A/B test**.

Our dataset contains **19,305 Spanish accounts** and **114,512 English accounts**, of which 50.0% and 11.2% respectively had Mentorship enabled.

*Further details:*

[mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth/Positive\\_reinforcement/Mentorship\\_preliminary\\_analysis,\\_August\\_2023](https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth/Positive_reinforcement/Mentorship_preliminary_analysis,_August_2023)

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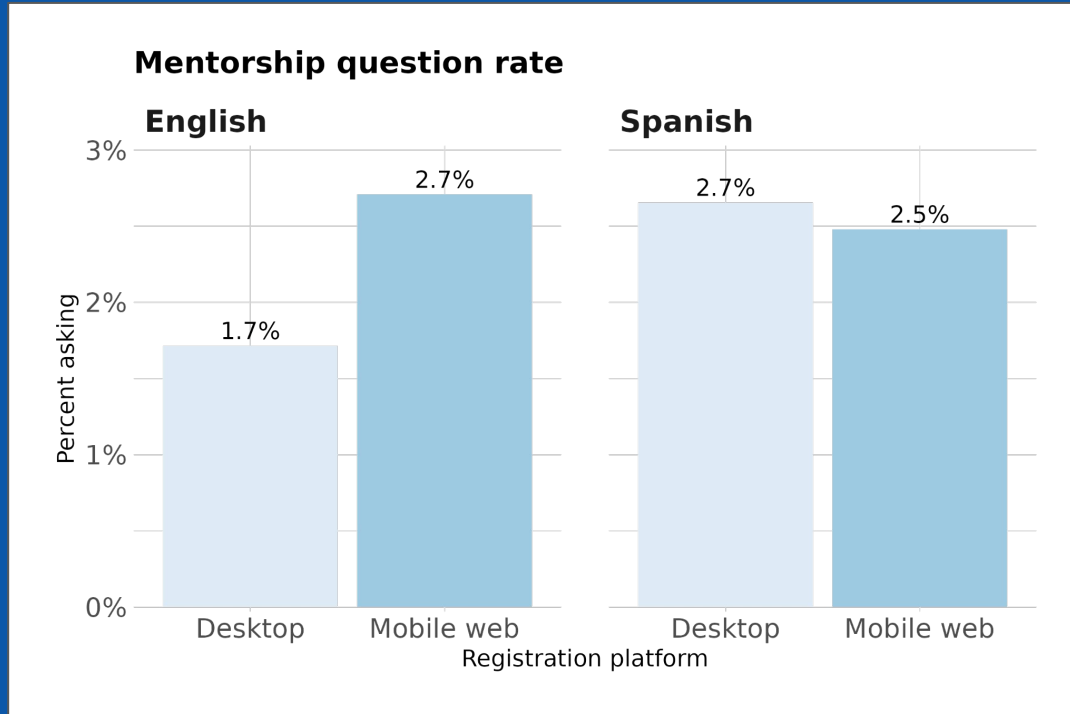
# Mentorship Metrics

What proportion of newcomers with access to a mentor, ask them a question?



# Mentorship Metrics

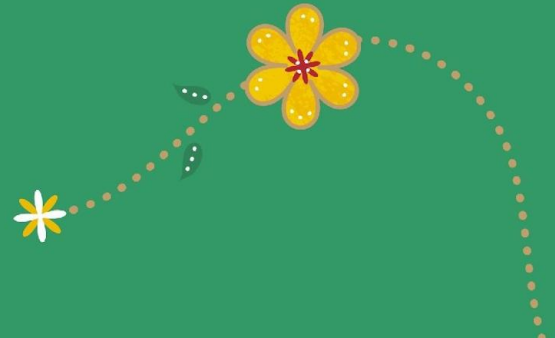
What proportion of newcomers with access to a mentor, ask them a question?



# Mentorship Metrics

Is asking their mentor a question their first edit?

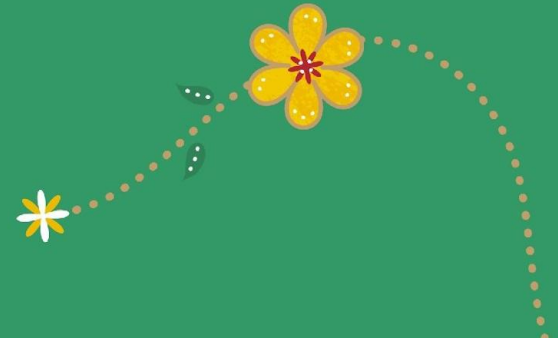
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# Mentorship Metrics

Is asking their mentor a question their first edit?

Language	Platform	% asking in the first edit
English	Desktop	29.0%
	Mobile web	32.8%
Spanish	Desktop	27.1%
	Mobile web	30.5%





# Mentorship Metrics

Does mentorship increase the number of newcomers who edit for the first time?

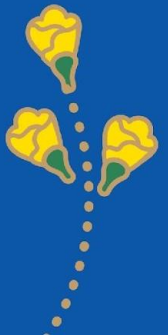
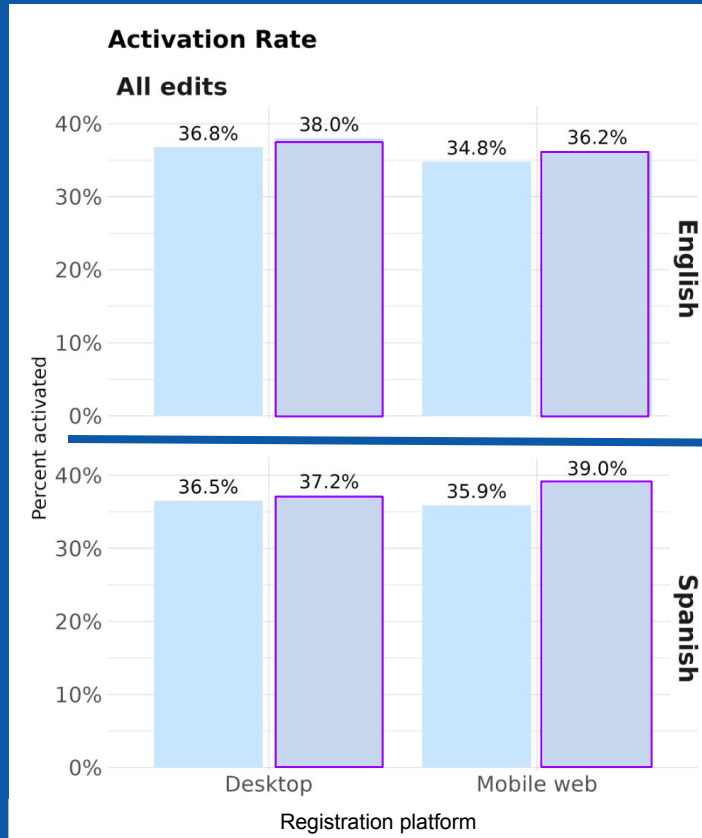
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# Mentorship Metrics

Does mentorship increase the number of newcomers who edit for the first time?

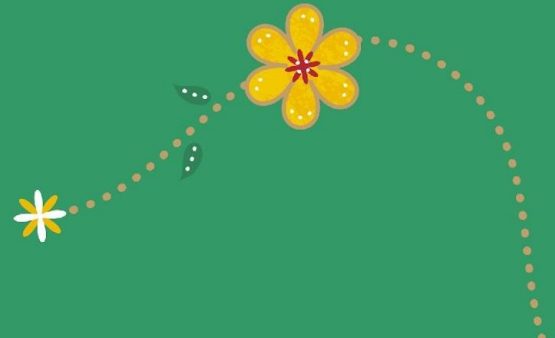
Activation: making an edit within 24 hours of registration.



# Mentorship Metrics

How does Mentorship impact retention, productivity, and revert rates?

- **Retention:** an activated newcomer returns to edit again within 14 days.
- **Productivity:** the number of edits made.
- **Revert rate:** for newcomers who make at least one edit, the proportion of their edits that were reverted within 48 hours.



# Mentorship Metrics

## How does Mentorship impact retention, productivity, and revert rates?

### Retention

We find no difference in the retention of newcomers who have access to a mentor compared to those who do not, when keeping their first day activity constant.

### Productivity

We find conflicting patterns of productivity between English and Spanish Wikipedia.

### Revert rate

We find no difference in the revert rate between newcomers who have access to a mentor and those who do not, when keeping their activity constant.

*Further details:*

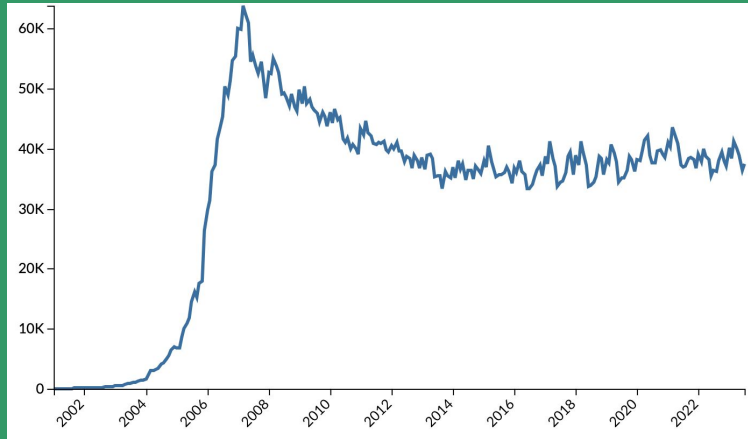
[mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth/Positive\\_reinforcement/Mentorship\\_preliminary\\_analysis,\\_August\\_2023](https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth/Positive_reinforcement/Mentorship_preliminary_analysis,_August_2023)

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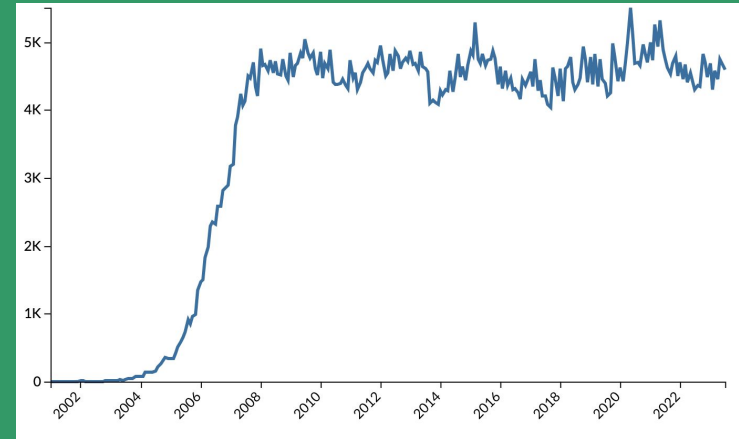


# Mentorship Metrics

It's hard to really impact editor retention!



Active editors on English Wikipedia



Active editors on Spanish Wikipedia

## Thoughts from Mentors:

“I truly believe that the combination between virtual mentorship and in-person guidance could make the difference. At my user group we add all the attendants of our workshops as mentees... they feel relief to see our username in the welcome page.”

-Spanish Wikipedia Mentor & [Wikiesfera](#) organizer

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# Sign up!

It's easy! Simply visit

**Special:EnrollAsMentor**

on your home wiki.

## Enroll as a mentor

Tools ▾

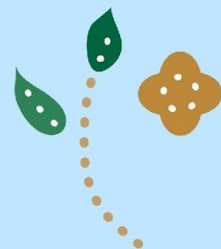
Thank you for volunteering as a Wikipedia mentor. You can enroll as a mentor by filling out this form.

Introduction message

Introduction message introduces you as a mentor. Please keep this shorter than 240 characters. No wikitext is allowed.

**Enroll**

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# Set up Mentorship at your Wiki!

**1. Agree on having mentorship:** Start a conversation at the relevant places at your wiki & recruit mentors.

**2. Activate mentorship:** At your wiki, an interface admin can turn on the mentorship system, via **Special:EditGrowthConfig**. Add some criteria to define who can be a mentor.


### 3. Mentors sign up

Editors can sign up to be Mentor:

**Special:EnrollAsMentor**

**Your mentor** ...

We've assigned you an experienced editor to answer your questions about editing. [Learn more about mentors.](#)

 **Rotideypoc41352**  
11,133 edits • Active today

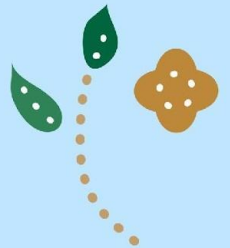
"Hello and welcome! Please feel free to drop by my talk page, introduce yourself, and let me know what you led you to click that "Edit" button."

[Ask your mentor a question](#)

[View your mentor's other conversations](#)

New account holders see a message from their Mentor on their Homepage

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# Q & A

Do you have any questions?

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# Discussion

1. What is **one thing your wiki does well** in terms of welcoming or onboarding newcomers?
2. How can we **recruit more Mentors** and ensure Mentorship is rewarding and engaging for Mentors?
3. How can we **make Mentorship more effective**? How should Mentorship tools be improved?

## **Independent brainstorm:**

Spend 5 minutes adding sticky note answers or ideas in response to questions

**Add your ideas** (sticky notes) to the associated poster

**Discussion groups:** pick a topic you want to discuss in more detail.

# Discussion feedback

What is one thing your wiki does well in terms of welcoming or onboarding newcomers?

- Welcome templates on user talk pages, barnstars on user talk pages
- Letting know that “abandon hope all ye enter here” :)
- Welcome templates, communication through social media (Twitter, Discord, etc.)
- Having fun training sessions frequently
- Assigned mentors choose new mentors
- Every mentor has 1-2 co-mentors
- Nothing special
- Mentors are very committed
- Use live meetings of Wikipedians Germany: stammtische, wikicon, GLAM to recruit them
- Welcome messages for newbie with guides

# Discussion feedback

How can we recruit more Mentors and ensure Mentorship is rewarding and engaging for Mentors?

- Advertise on village pumps and showcase how easy / not overbearing mentorship is
- Measure mentorship efficiency and give the best performers some gadget (hat, wikibiscuits,...) And also a bandstar or something similar
- Move sessions like this / more time / more exchange amongst mentors
- Live mentor meetings in countries / worldwide
- By training them better, giving them more tools
- Auto-enroll as a mentor? Prompt it in more places
- Posting asking for mentors to sign up in key places: village pumps, The signpost, wikiproject talk pages, watchlist notices
- Mentor ambassadors → who are super mentors?
- Not all may be aware of the Mentorship program. Maybe prompt users to sign up upon logging in? Much like notifying them about ongoing requests for adminship & suchlike.
- Instead of randomly assigning mentors, connect people who have shared interests (e.g. subject or location)
- Recruit work with community members local affiliates to spread awareness
- German wikipedia: there is a functioning system (at least I believe so since I am not one) It is an important function for newbies.
- Offer awards, tokens of recognition to active members (those who answer quickly)
- A workshop for mentors? Some recognition for mentors?
- To see contributions of their mentees
- Trainings for new mentors who may feel they're not ready to work with a person (instead of doing cleanup)



# Discussion feedback

How can we make Mentorship more effective? How should Mentorship tools be improved?

- New users should receive a traditional mail with info because may have no experience to find info in wikispaces
- Train them find ways to evaluate their individual efficiency
- More practical small tasks like adding links
- Organize often mentors (?)
- Notifications w/ a thank you for successfully helping 1/10/100 newcomers
- Create tools for identifying inactive members and suggest them for removal
- Less is more. Make it as simple as you can. Probably start off by guiding the newbie with correcting typos, etc.
- Coach-the-coach style support for mentors
- Make it easy to pass questions to other mentors (ticketing system) if delay in response or specialist needed
- Tool that shows (highlights) new comments from mentor on discussion pages
- Tool: survey for each newbie on how his level of tech-knowledge is (as this impacts the answer you will give to newbies)
- Create community
- Tool box with my mentors personal answers to easily insert + adapt
- Maybe include a space for mentors discussions in order to streamline and have community-wide standards

# Thank you!

**Are you interested in becoming a Mentor or setting up Mentorship?**

Learn more: [mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth](https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Growth)



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# Appendix: Mentorship Metrics

## Methodology

We gathered a dataset of registrations from English and Spanish Wikipedia spanning June 1 to July 15 2023. During this time period, 50% of newcomers on Spanish Wikipedia were randomly assigned to have access to a mentor, while the other 50% did not get a mentor. On English Wikipedia, 10% of newcomers would randomly get a mentor until July 11, at which point it increased to 25% ([ref](#)).

Our data gathering excludes known test accounts, bots, users registered through Wikipedia's API (these are usually mobile app accounts), and users not registered on the given wiki (i.e. auto-created accounts and those registered by another user). We also excluded users with a non-standard mentorship setting (there were a handful of these on each wiki).

The dataset used in this analysis contains 19,305 Spanish accounts and 114,512 English accounts, of which 50.0% and 11.2% respectively had Mentorship enabled.

In the above analysis of mentorship's effect on the key Growth metrics of activation, retention, productivity, and revert rate, we make extensive use of regression models. Activation and retention are yes/no outcomes, for which we use a [logistic regression](#) model. Productivity is measured by a count of the number of edits, which is known to have a long tail distribution. We therefore use a [negative binomial model](#) for productivity. Our revert rate analysis uses a zero-one-inflated beta distribution. This is because revert rates calculated across a time window tends to fall into one of three categories: 1) the user has all of their edits reverted (one-inflation), 2) the user has none of their edits reverted (zero-inflation), and 3) the user has some of their edits reverted (resulting in a beta distribution).

