

LGBT+ studies



Editing Wikipedia can be daunting for newbies, especially as a student editor contributing to Wikipedia for the first time in a class assignment. This guide is for students assigned to add content to Wikipedia articles related to gender and sexuality.

Be accurate

Wikipedia is a resource millions of people use to inform themselves about the world, guide policy decisions, or make sense of their culture and society.

By documenting and sharing accurate and objective content about or related to sexuality, you will help Wikipedia present a wider spectrum of human knowledge. You will ensure that people of all orientations are represented on one of the most-accessed websites in the world.

Understand the guidelines

Take time to read and understand the suggestions here to maximize the value of your contributions to Wikipedia. If you post something that doesn't meet these guidelines, resolving it may take up valuable volunteer time that could have been spent improving content.

If you aren't comfortable working within these guidelines, talk to your instructor about an alternative off-wiki assignment.

Engage with editors

Part of the Wikipedia experience is receiving and responding to feedback from other editors. Don't wait until the last day to make a contribution or you may miss out on important comments, advice, and ideas. Volunteers from the Wikipedia community might read, respond to, or ask questions about your work. If you get a comment, make sure you acknowledge it. Discussion is a crucial part of the Wikipedia process.

Avoid close paraphrasing

Use your own words. Plagiarizing by copying-and-pasting is against the rules. Close paraphrasing, which is when most of the words are changed but the structure and meaning of the original text remains, is also not okay.

Plagiarism is a violation of your university's academic honor code. Plagiarism on Wikipedia will be caught by other editors, and there will be a permanent online record of plagiarism tied to your account. Even standard resources, such as descriptions in textbooks or abstracts in academic journals, are under copyright and should never be directly copied.

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to make sure you really understand your material, draw from a number of different sources, and write about it in your own words.

Don't be scared. Be bold!

Everybody on Wikipedia wants to make it the best it can be. Take the time to understand these guidelines, and soon you'll be contributing important knowledge to a resource millions of people use every day!

Getting started

Choosing an article

Choose a topic that is underdeveloped on Wikipedia and that has a lot of literature in independent, peer-reviewed sources. Search for a topic with interesting and plentiful sources first, then choose a Wikipedia article to develop based on what you find.

Finding good candidates

Look for “start” or “stub” class articles, which are generally in need of expansion if more reliable sources are available. Type *Category:Start-Class LGBT articles* or *Category:Stub-Class LGBT articles* into Wikipedia’s search bar for a list of these topics.

For global issues, search for *LGBT representation in* or *LGBT rights in* followed by a country of interest.

For a list of articles that don’t yet exist on Wikipedia, but could, see: *Category:LGBT studies redlink lists*.

For more guidance, see the *Finding Your Article* training: wikiedu.org/finding-articles

Using reliable sources

Unlike many academic papers you’ve written, a Wikipedia article prioritizes secondary sources over primary sources. Before you spend too much time working on an article, it’s important to establish whether the subject has been adequately covered by reliable, secondary sources.

Use these sources:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles or books, found in databases like JSTOR, that synthesize and evaluate a period in time or research within a particular topic area
- Reputable press articles synthesizing the history of a topic

Do not use these sources:

- Primary sources, that is, where authors directly participated in the research or documented their personal experiences
- Blog or social media posts
- Studies (because they’re primary sources that usually only cover a very specific group)

It can be difficult to find sources about historically underrepresented and marginalized populations. Consult your instructor or librarian if you’re having trouble. For more information about finding good sources, type this shortcut into Wikipedia’s searchbar:

| shortcut [WP:RS](#)

Evaluating sources

Learning to evaluate sources is a core component of engaging critically in your field and on Wikipedia.

Consider the **content** of a source. Approach sources that you find in the popular press with caution. Check that the sources that the author cites are academic. It’s generally a good idea to weigh conclusions of any article or book against other sources in the field. Draw from a number of sources when making a claim on Wikipedia so that you know the information you’re adding has been properly vetted.

Consider the **publisher** of a source. Work cited should come from a reliable publisher of literature related to gender and sexuality studies. It’s better to use an academic source to contribute the same information that you might find in a popular news source, as an academic article is often subject to a stricter peer-review process.

Depict information accurately

Be careful not to cherry pick sourcing to back up uncommon or unpopular claims. Present the facts; make sure those facts are supported by multiple, valid sources. And give appropriate weight to aspects of the topic as the reliable literature covers it.

Structuring your article

Organizing your article

Every article will be unique, but here are some types of articles that students tend to edit. Add, remove, or reorder these suggested sections as needed. Keep in mind that not all topics deserve their own article; some might be better included as a section in an existing article.

Writing about an event

- Lead section
- Background/context (events leading up to and influencing the event)
- Event details
- Aftermath, impact, or legacy
- Media representations (if relevant)

For a good example, see the article about the *Stonewall riots*.

Writing about an organization

- Lead section
- History
- Mission
- Prominent staff
- Programs
- Impact
- Awards and recognition

For a good example, see the article for the *American Civil Liberties Union*.

Writing about legislation or rights

- Lead section
- History
- Court rulings
- Legislation
- Public opinion

For a good example, see the article on *Same-sex marriage in Spain*.

Writing about a person

Consult our *Biographies* handout, available at wikiedu.org/biographies

Writing about media

Consult our *Books* and *Films* handouts, available at wikiedu.org/books and wikiedu.org/films

Using proper terminology

Terms related to sexuality, gender identity, and sex characteristics are not interchangeable, but often intersect, and are therefore difficult to define. If you reference academic terminology, contextualize it in a sentence or two, and/or wikilink to related articles.

Terms are not necessarily consistent across time periods or cultures. Don't assign modern labels to historical figures. Also make sure to use local terms when talking about non-US based gender and sexuality categories. When writing about a person, use labels and pronouns that they have used to describe themselves and that are also found in reliable sources.

For more detailed guidelines, see | *shortcuts* [WP:LGBT](#), [WP:GENDERID](#), & [WP:BIRTHNAME](#).

Understanding tone

Sexuality topics are “controversial” on Wikipedia, which means that these articles see a lot of circular re-editing, edit wars, and biased editing. To avoid problems with other editors, only add content that you can attribute to a reliable source and engage in an article's talk page with your proposed changes.

Avoid making value judgements on content and do not take a personal stance in your writing. Wikipedia is not the place to advocate for one particular interpretation of the facts. Remember that activism in the context of adding to an encyclopedia is the act of making all the facts of an issue freely accessible to everyone. Your role is that of documentarian. That means you should present the facts, never your own analysis. See | *shortcut* [WP:NOR](#).

Wrapping up

Key points

As you start writing, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Summarize what the sources say in your own words.
- Be sure to write in an impersonal, fact-based, encyclopedic style. Don't approach a Wikipedia article like a blog post or personal essay. See the *Editing Wikipedia* brochure linked from your course page if you need a refresher on the difference in tone.
- Unlike most school assignments, Wikipedia doesn't permit original research. Your article should cover what the sources say, not your own interpretations or opinions.
- Write for a general audience. Don't assume people are familiar with the subject. Make sure to explain terminology and wikilink to relevant articles.
- Give appropriate weight to aspects of the topic as the literature covers it.

Final thoughts

- Don't procrastinate! Writing good, reliable Wikipedia articles takes time. Don't wait until the last minute. If you get stuck, always ask your instructor for extra time, rather than adding content to Wikipedia that doesn't meet these guidelines.
- Check back on your page. It can be interesting to see how your article grows, but you may also have comments and suggestions from other editors, and want to get involved in new developments.
- If you have additional questions about contributing to Wikipedia, you can ask the Wikipedia Expert listed on your course page.
- Take pride in your contributions! Your hard work will bring awareness to gender and sexuality issues and histories, information that millions of Wikipedia's readers will be able to access.



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