Contributing to Wikipedia

A guide to improving the online encyclopedia

I'm Adrianne, User:Wadewitz. I've been contributing to Wikipedia since 2004. I contribute because I like sharing the sum of all human knowledge with everyone. I'm happy to help you learn how to contribute too, so you can contribute your knowledge and help make Wikipedia better.

Imagine a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. That's our commitment.

This is the vision for Wikipedia and the other Wikimedia projects, which volunteers from around the world have been building since 2001. Bringing together the sum of all human knowledge requires the knowledge of many humans — including yours!

What's included here:

In this guide, we will walk you through how to contribute to Wikipedia, so the knowledge you have can be freely shared with others. You will find:

What Wikipedia is and how it works

How to navigate Wikipedia

How you can contribute to Wikipedia

Important policies that keep Wikipedia reliable

How to edit Wikipedia with the VisualEditor and using wiki markup

A step-by-step guide to adding content

Etiquette for interacting with other contributors

What is Wikipedia?

Wikipedia is one of the largest collaborative projects in history. With millions of articles and in hundreds of languages, Wikipedia is the fifth most visited website in the world.

A lot of content already exists on Wikipedia, but many important topics have poor coverage and some have no article at all. Wikipedia relies on contributors like you to keep information current, expand short "stub" articles, and create new articles on topics not already covered on your language Wikipedia. Contributions you make to Wikipedia can enlighten hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people worldwide.

When you make an edit to Wikipedia, you're joining a community of hundreds of thousands of people —Wikipedians — who have freely contributed their knowledge to Wikipedia

What you contribute to Wikipedia is free content and becomes part of the commons. It may be edited and reused by others under a free license.

Navigating Wikipedia pages

Talk
Each article has a corresponding Talk page where contributors can leave comments and suggestions, discuss changes, and ask for help from one another.

Edit
Many readers never notice the [Edit] button, but it's the most important part of any Wikipedia article. Click the [Edit] button at the top to edit the whole article, or click one of the inline links to edit a particular section.

View history
The history of a Wikipedia article includes every contribution since it was created. You can see who changed what when, and compare any two versions side-by-side.

Create account
If you haven't done so yet, create your account. With an account, you can keep track of your contributions, create a personal userpage, and receive notifications when other contributors reply to you or build on what you've done.

Featured content
Here you can find some of the best work on Wikipedia: articles, photographs and other content that meet the community's highest standards.

Help
The Help pages, just like the articles, are written by Wikipedia contributors.

Community portal
The community portal lets you explore what's going on across Wikipedia, from news to collaborations to policy discussions.

Toolbox
This section has useful tools for getting more information about a page and its history.

Languages
These are the other language versions of Wikipedia — out of more than 280 — that have an article on the same topic.

Language settings
These settings allow you to change the language used for menus and select your keyboard layout.

Search
Find articles by name, or find pages that include your search terms. You can also enter shortcuts (like "WP:HELP") to bring up specific pages, as we reference throughout this brochure.

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Create account & Log in

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★ Esperanto
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✎ Edit links

An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump ☆

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump is a 1768 oil-on-canvas painting by Joseph Wright of Derby, one of a number of candlelit scenes that Wright painted during the 1760s. The painting departed from convention of the time by depicting a scientific subject in the reverential manner formerly reserved for scenes of historical or religious significance. Wright was intimately involved in depicting the Industrial Revolution and the scientific advances of the Enlightenment, but while his paintings were recognised as something out of the ordinary by his contemporaries, his provincial status and choice of subjects meant the style was never widely imitated. The picture has been owned by the National Gallery, London since 1863 and is still regarded as a masterpiece of British art.

The painting depicts a natural philosopher, a forerunner of the modern scientist, recreating one of Robert Boyle's air pump experiments, in which a bird is deprived of air, before a varied group of onlookers. The group exhibits a variety of reactions, but for most of the audience scientific curiosity overcomes concern for the bird. The central figure looks out of the picture as if inviting the viewer's participation in the outcome.

Contents [hide]
1 Historical background
2 Painting
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    2.3 Style
3 Reception
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An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump

Artist	Joseph Wright of Derby
Year	1768
Type	Oil-on-canvas
Dimensions	183 cm × 244 cm (72 in × 94 $\frac{1}{2}$ in)
Location	National Gallery, London, England

Historical background [edit]

In 1659, Robert Boyle commissioned the construction of an air pump, then described as a "pneumatic engine", which is known today as a vacuum pump. The air pump was invented by Otto von Guericke in 1650, though its cost deterred most contemporary scientists from constructing the apparatus. Boyle, the son of the Earl of Cork, had no such concerns—after its construction, he donated the initial 1659 model to the Royal Society and had a further two redesigned machines built for his personal use. Aside from Boyle's three pumps, there were probably no more than four others in existence during the 1660s: Christian Huygens had one in The Hague, Henry Power may have had one at Halifax, and there may have been pumps at Christ's College, Cambridge and the Montmor Academy in Paris.[1] Boyle's pump, which was largely designed to Boyle's specifications and constructed by Robert Hooke, was complicated, temperamental, and problematic to operate. Many demonstrations could only be performed with Hooke on hand, and Boyle frequently left critical public displays solely to Hooke—whose dramatic flair matched his technical skill.[2]

Despite the operational and maintenance obstacles, construction of the pump enabled Boyle to conduct a great many experiments on the properties of air, which he later detailed in his *New Experiments Physico-Mechanicall, Touching the Spring of the Air, and its Effects (Made, for the Most Part, in a New Pneumatical Engine)*. In the book, he described in great detail 43 experiments he conducted, on occasion assisted by Hooke, on the effect of air on various phenomena. Boyle tested the effects of "rarified" air on combustion, magnetism, sound, and barometers, and examined the effects of increased air pressure on various substances. He listed two experiments on living creatures: "Experiment 40," which tested the ability of insects to fly under reduced air pressure, and the dramatic "Experiment 41," which demonstrated the reliance of living creatures on air for their survival. In this attempt to discover something "about the account upon which Respiration is so necessary to the Animals, that Nature hath furnish'd with Lungs", Boyle conducted numerous trials during which he placed a large variety of different creatures, including birds, mice, eels, snails and flies, in the vessel of the pump and studied their reactions as the air was removed.[3] Here, he describes an injured lark:

> ...the Bird for a while appear'd lively enough; but upon a greater Exsuction of the Air, she began manifestly to droop and appear sick, and very soon after was taken with as violent and irregular Convulsions, as are wont to be observ'd in Poultry, when their heads are wrung off: For the Bird threw her self over and over two or three times, and dyed with her Breast upward, her Head downwards, and her Neck awry.[4]

By the time Wright painted his picture in 1768, air pumps were a relatively commonplace scientific instrument, and itinerant "lecturers in natural philosophy" —usually more showmen than scientists—often performed the "animal in the air pump experiment" as the centrepiece of their public demonstration.[5] These were performed in town halls and other large buildings for a ticket-buying audience, or were booked by societies or for private showings in the homes of the well-off. the setting suggested in both of Wright's demonstration pieces.[6] One of the most notable and respectable of the travelling lecturers was James

NEW EXPERIMENTS Physico-Mechanicall, Touching The SPRING of the AIR, and its EFFECTS, (Made, for the most part, in a New PNEUMATICAL ENGINE)

Title page of Robert Boyle's *New Experiments* of 1660, in which he detailed how to perform the experiment.

Contributing

Volunteers contribute in more ways than one. Here are examples of what it takes to make Wikipedia happen.

upload photographs and illustrate articles

review articles and make suggestions for improvement

welcome newcomers and answer their questions

add new text and references

copy edit articles

assign students to edit Wikipedia or help student editors learn the basics through the Wikipedia Education Program

monitor new articles and recent edits

discuss Wikipedia policies and help resolve disputes

develop the free, open source software that runs Wikipedia

Preparing to edit

Anyone can edit Wikipedia, but there are some basic rules. Here are some of the most important ones to follow as you start editing:

Neutral point of view

Everything on Wikipedia must be written from a neutral point of view. Articles must not take sides, but instead should describe — accurately and without bias — all the significant viewpoints on the topic published in reliable sources. Wikipedia is not the place for argumentation or advocacy.

No original research

Simply put, Wikipedia is not a place to publish original ideas. Rather, you should summarize what has been written in reliable sources about the original topic or research. Articles may not contain any new analysis or synthesis of published material that goes beyond the sources themselves.

Copyright and plagiarism

Since all contributions are freely licensed, no editor owns any article; all of your contributions can and will be edited and redistributed. Except for brief quotations, copying content from copyrighted sources onto Wikipedia is not allowed. Whether direct copying or close paraphrasing, plagiarism and copyright violation are disruptive and time-consuming for volunteers to clean up. It's important that all content you contribute to Wikipedia is written in your own words.

Reliable sources

The most reliable sources on Wikipedia are third-party sources with a reputation for fact-checking, such as books published by academic presses, peer-reviewed academic journals, and international newspapers. You should be using sources that represent significant viewpoints, rather than one-off studies or fringe work. Try to find the best and most reliable sources available on the topic.

Conflicts of interest

If you have a conflict of interest about a particular topic — such as an employer or an organization you are a part of — you should avoid editing articles about it.

We've developed these policies and principles over the years so we can be sure that Wikipedia is as reliable and useful as possible.

VisualEditor

With VisualEditor, you can see what your changes will look like as you edit, so you can focus on the content. Just click on the parts you want to change and start editing.

Editing toolbar
In edit mode, the toolbar lets you add formatting, references, images, and special page elements called templates (such as the infoboxes at the beginning of many articles). When you are finished editing, press the

Lead section
The first sentence provides a definition of the topic, and lead section goes on to summarize the key points covered in the article. This is the only section without a heading.

Infobox
Some articles include an infobox that presents key facts about the topic.

Citations
Inline citations in the body of the article are used to show where the information in each part of the text came from. The citation details appear as footnotes at the end.

Body of the article
Headings — and sometimes sub-headings — break the article up into sections, and are used to generate the table of contents. Each section usually covers some significant aspect of the topic, so that readers can jump right to the information they are looking for.

Images
Freely licensed images and other media files can be added to Wikipedia articles from Wikimedia Commons.

Appendices and footnotes
After the main body of an article comes sections with additional information, such as related Wikipedia articles ("See also"), footnotes with details on the sources used ("References"), and a list of other websites readers could turn to for more information ("External links")

Wiki markup

Wiki markup is the original form of editing Wikipedia articles (and on some browsers, it will be the only form available). It gives you precise control over the content and appearance of the page, once you understand how it works.

Bold `'''...'''`
Three single quotation marks before and after a string of text will make that text bold. Bold is usually used for the subject of an article in the first sentence.

Italic `''...''`
Two single quotation marks begin and end a segment of italic text.

Internal link `[[...]]`
Double square brackets around a term create a link to the article of that name. Adding a pipe and another string of text before the closing square brackets changes the link text.

Template `{{...}}`
Double braces are used for templates, which are reusable page elements that serve a wide variety of purposes. The first thing after the opening braces is the name of the template. Pipes separate the parameters, which are additional inputs that can change the way a template works or the information it displays.

Heading `==Heading==`
A pair of double equals signs mark a line as a heading. Triple equals signs make a sub-heading.

Image `[[File: Robertboyle newexperiments.jpg]]`
Double square brackets around the title of a photo from Wikimedia Commons will insert the image. Pipes separate optional parameters to control how the image is displayed. The most common way is with two parameters: the word "thumb" to use the standard thumbnail format, and a descriptive caption that appears beneath the image.

Citation `<ref>` and `</ref>`
Opening and closing ref tags are used to cite a source. An automatically-numbered superscript will appear at the location of the ref tags, and the content will appear as a footnote in the references section.

References `<references/>`
The references tag, or an equivalent template, sets the location where the footnotes show up — typically in a "References" section near the end.

External link
`[http://www.whitehouse.gov White House website]`
A single square bracket, followed by a url, a space, label text, and a closing square bracket makes a normal hyperlink. Typically, these are not used in the body of an article, only in footnotes or an "External links" section.

Category `[[Category:1768 paintings]]`
At the end of an article, double square brackets around a string that starts with Category: adds an article to the specified category. Categories are used to organize Wikipedia articles into related sets.

Adding content, step by step

A good way to begin is to add some missing information to an existing article. Pick a topic you're familiar with, and find a reliable source that covers it better than the Wikipedia article. Now comes the fun part. Click the edit button!

Add some of what is missing. Using the source you've found, summarize the information you want to add in your own words. At the end of your new block of text, add a reference. In the edit toolbar — whether you're using wiki markup or the VisualEditor — you can click the 'reference' icon to cite your source.

Now it's time to save your changes. In the 'edit summary' field, add a brief description of what you've done in your edit, then click 'Save page'. (With the VisualEditor, you'll be prompted for an edit summary after you click Save page.) The edit summary helps others editors understand what you are doing.

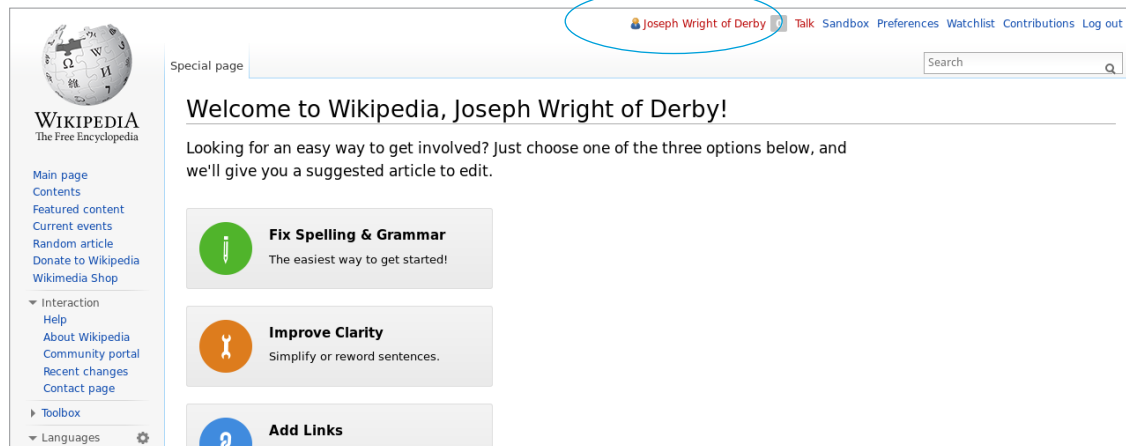And don't worry. If you make a mistake, you can always make more changes or restore a previous version of the article.

If you don't have a topic you want to write about, try visiting the page Special:GettingStarted. You'll get some suggested articles to improve, and step-by-step guidance on making your first edit. If you want to create a new article, click the Help link in the sidebar for some detailed guidance.

Interacting with the community

Wikipedia has other types of pages beyond articles. Once you've started editing, you might want to start your user page to let others get to know you a little bit. At the top right (if you are logged in) you will see your username, which you can click to reach your user page. Links to pages that do not exist — such as your user page if you have not created it yet — are colored red, instead of the typical blue. If you click the Create button on one of these pages, you can start from a blank page. A user page is a place to write a little bit about yourself, to give other contributors an idea of who you are and what you're interested in. You can share as much or as little as you like. When you save the page, your red link will turn blue!
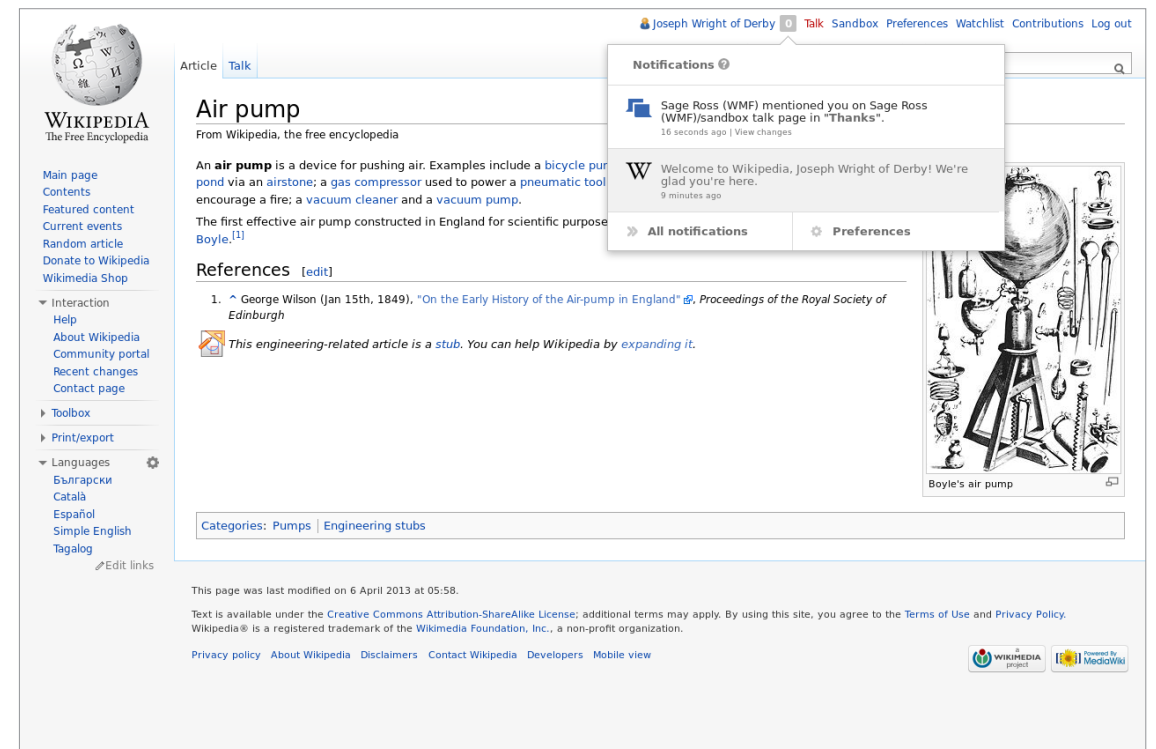

You also have a user talk page, where other contributors can leave messages for you. If want to contact another user, you can navigate to their Talk page and leave a message at the bottom. You should sign your messages on Talk pages; clicking the signature button in the edit toolbar will insert four tildes (~~~~), the special wiki markup for inserting your username along with the date and time of your message.

Look! Someone replied to me in a Talk page discussion by mentioning my username.

Every article has its own Talk page, too. These Talk pages can be used to make suggestions, post new sources, point out problems, and discuss changes that contributors disagree about.

One important guideline for community discussions on Wikipedia is to be respectful and civil. Even if you get into disagreements, you should *assume good faith* on the part of other contributors. They almost always have the same goal you do — to make Wikipedia better. Keep the discussions focused on content, rather than making them about individual contributors.

Evaluating Wikipedia article quality

The quality of Wikipedia articles varies widely; many are very good, but some lack depth and clarity, or contain bias, or are out of date. In general, high-quality articles have these elements:
• a lead section that gives an easy-to-understand overview,
• a clear structure,
• balanced coverage,
• neutral content, and
• reliable sources.

Additional information about article quality is available by consulting the "Evaluating Wikipedia" brochure, mentioned below in the resources section.

Additional resources

Evaluating Wikipedia: Tracing the evolution and evaluating the quality of articles"
How articles evolve, elements of good quality articles, and signs of poor quality articles are all covered in this guide.
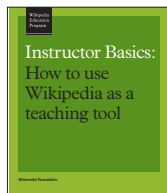
Illustrating Wikipedia: A guide to contributing content to Wikimedia Commons
A companion guide covering Wikimedia Commons, the media repository for images used on Wikipedia. The brochure covers what Commons is, how to upload files, how to use files, and the basics of free licenses.
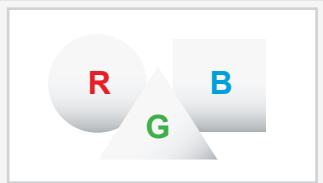
Instructor Basics: How to use Wikipedia as a teaching tool
This brochure offers best practices for educator looking to assign students to contribute to Wikipedia as part of the course curriculum.

Wiki markup cheatsheet

These are the shortcuts most frequently used when editing Wikipedia articles.

Instructions	What you type	What you get
Italic	`''italic text''`	*italic text*
Bold	`'''bold text'''`	**bold text**

Section headers	`==Heading Text==`
	
	`===Heading Text===`
	
	`====Heading Text`
		Heading Text
		
		Heading Text
		
		Heading Text

Link to another Wikipedia article (Internal link)	`[[William Shakespeare]]`	William Shakespeare
Link to another displayed title	`[[William Shakespeare|Shakespeare]]`	Shakespeare
Link to another Wikipedia article (External link)	`[[http://www.whitehouse.gov White House website]]`	White House website
Bulleted list	`* Bulleted list` `** Bulleted list`	• Bulleted list •Bulleted list
Bulleted list	`# Numbered list` `## Numbered list`	1. Numbered list 1. Numbered list
Image with caption	`[[File:Example.png|thumb|Caption text]]`	Caption text
Your signature for Discussion page	`~ ~ ~ ~`	Username (talk) 19:50, 11 December 2013 (UTC)
Reference	`<ref>[http://example.org Example.org], additional text.</ref>`	Page text.[1]
Display references	`<references/>`	Example.org, additional text

Glossary

edit summary
A brief explanation of an edit to a Wikipedia page, which helps other contributors follow the development an article and understand the intention of the edit.

free license
A public copyright license that ensures the freedom to use and study a work, to make and redistribute copies of it, to make changes and improvements, and to distribute derivative works, by any person for any purpose. Wikipedia — and each individual contribution to it — uses the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license, which is a free license. See [[WP:CC-BY-SA]] to learn more.

history
The record of a Wikipedia page, accessible through the View history tab, that shows every edit made. Any two versions can be compared to see the specific differences (known as a *diff*), and previous versions can be restored.

infobox
A box summarizing key information about a topic that is often included at the top of an article. Infoboxes are a common type of *template*.

markup
The special code used to format a Wikipedia page. See the cheatsheet (page 15) for the basics, or go to [[H:MARKUP]] for more detail.

parameter
A bit of text, separated from other bits with a pipe character (|), that is used to control how images, templates and other wiki markup appear on a page.

stub
A short, undeveloped article with plenty of room for expansion. Adding content to stubs is a good way for new contributors to get started.

Talk page
The discussion space for an article or other Wikipedia page, where you can talk about the contents of the page with other contributors.

template
A way of automatically including the contents of one page within another. For instructions on using them, see [[H:T]].

User page
The personal page of an individual contributor, which begins with "User:" followed by their username. Wikipedians can use their User pages to share information about themselves and their interests, list the articles they have worked on or want to work on, and much more.

Wikimedia Commons
The media repository for Wikipedia and many other wikis, where you can contribute freely licensed photos, diagrams, videos and other media files for illustrating Wikipedia.

Wikipedian
Someone who helps build Wikipedia. Commons synonyms include *contributor, user, editor*, and *community member*.