# Films

*Editing Wikipedia can be daunting for newbies, especially as a student editor contributing to Wikipedia for a class assignment. This guide is for students assigned to contribute to articles about films on Wikipedia.*

## Be accurate

Wikipedia is a resource millions of people use to inform themselves. Reasons for reading about a film on Wikipedia are as diverse as the films themselves. By documenting and sharing accurate and objective content about films, you will help to ensure that people around the world have access to a wider spectrum of human knowledge.

## Understand the guidelines

Take time to read and understand the suggestions in this guide to maximize the value of your contributions to Wikipedia. If you post something that doesn't meet these guidelines, resolving it may take up a lot of extra time and effort.

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 important feedback.

If volunteers from the Wikipedia community have questions or comments about your work, be sure to reply. Thank them, and work with them to improve the article. If they make changes or remove your work because it does not follow these guidelines, don't just add it again! Ask them why they did so and what you can do to improve it. Repeatedly making a change that others have undone is called "edit warring," and can lead to your account being blocked or banned

## Avoid close paraphrasing

Use your own words. Plagiarizing by copying-and-pasting or by close paraphrasing — when some of the words are changed, but the structure and meaning of the original text remains — is against the rules.

Plagiarism is a violation of your university's academic honor code. Plagiarism on Wikipedia will be caught by other editors or automated plagiarism-detection tools. When that happens, some or all of your work will be deleted and there will be a permanent online record of the plagiarism tied to your account. Even standard resources like textbooks, are under copyright and should never be directly copied. The rules for plagiarism apply everywhere on Wikipedia, including articles that you're working on in sandboxes.

The best way to avoid this hassle is to make sure you really understand your material, and write about it in your own words. If you don't know how to avoid close paraphrasing, contact your university's writing center.

## Make a difference

Take the time to understand the rules and guidelines. They may seem intimidating now, but soon you'll be contributing your knowledge and judgment to a resource you, and millions of other people, use every day

## Picking the right film

Wikipedia has strict rules about what films can have an article. If a film doesn't already have an article, that may be because it doesn't meet Wikipedia's "notability" criteria. In general, you should only create articles on films that:

- Have already been published
- Have been the primary topic of at least 2 high-quality articles or reviews that meet Wikipedia's sourcing standards, as described below (2 is the bare minimum; it's a good idea to make sure there are at least 3 or 4)

For more detailed information to help you determine which film are notable, see this

| *shortcut*    WP:NFILM

### What's a shortcut?

The text   WP:NFILM   is what's known on Wikipedia as a shortcut.

You can type shortcuts like this into Wikipedia's search bar to pull up specific pages that might otherwise be hard to find.

## Choose sources wisely

Articles must be written using reliable sources that are independent of the people and companies involved in the film's production.

**Use these sources, if possible:**

- Nationally known professional critics' reviews in publications with a reputation for accuracy and integrity (e.g., *Chicago Sun-Times* or *Rolling Stone*)
- Peer-reviewed film criticism journals

**Do not cite these:**

- Social media posts
- Personal websites
- Amazon reviews
- IMDb
- Press releases
- Blurbs on the film's poster (but sometimes these come from published reviews you can find and cite directly)
- User scores and user reviews on review aggregators like Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic (but they can be useful to find links to published reviews)

If you're unsure about your sources, review the Dashboard training module on "Sources and Citations" or ask your instructor for help. Detailed information about Wikipedia's sourcing guidelines is available at

| *shortcut*    WP:RS

## Article framework

Articles about films tend to follow a fairly standard format. The next page includes a list of common sections or topics for any article about a film. Use it to organize your work, but remember that it's rare an article will include all of them — you should add, remove, combine, or reorder sections as appropriate.

There's a lot of flexibility, but if you deviate too much from the basic framework, your work may look less credible to other Wikipedians. When an article looks "wrong," other editors may assume there are other mistakes, and be more critical of your contribution. Of course, following the guidance in this handout doesn't mean you won't make mistakes or receive criticism. Proper layout is never a substitute for accurate, well-written content based on good sources.

# Structuring your article

- **Lead section:** Every article starts with a lead section, which provides the most basic information about the film and summarizes the entire article.

- **Plot synopsis:** A succinct outline of the plot, with no more than a few paragraphs. Don't add interpretations, analyses, or judgments to this section. Don't write for dramatic effect; err on the side of dry description and don't try to avoid spoilers. Some basic elements of the synopsis can be sourced directly from the film itself if not properly summarized in the secondary sources.

- **Cast:** List the main performing cast. Don't include extras and bit parts unless the performers are especially noteworthy.

- **Production:** Who first came up with the idea to make the film? When did they announce the cast and crew? Where and when did filming take place? Did anything noteworthy happen during production? Who wrote the film's score?

- **Release:** When and where was it released? Was it edited or named differently for release in different countries? Was the movie screened at film festivals? Anything unusual about the marketing strategy? Only include information about marketing if there's secondary source coverage for it.

- **Reception:** This section covers two areas: critical reception and box office numbers, if applicable. If the film was released to theaters, how much money did it make domestically and overseas? The websites *the-numbers.com* and *boxofficemojo.com* can be useful to find this information. What did reviewers think about it? Give priority to the most well-known critics and the most prominent or scholarly publications. Try to provide a balanced picture of its reception, without adding your own opinions or interpretations of the reviews. Include any major awards or distinctions it received. Paraphrasing is generally preferred, but you can use short quotes if critics' words are particularly informative or interesting. For additional advice about editing reception sections, see
  | *shortcut*   WP:RECEPTION

- **Others:** If there's a lot to say about any of the above topics, a sub-section or additional section may be appropriate. For example, "sequels" if it spawned several sequels, "awards" if it received several awards and accolades, "themes" if many of the critics commented about similar themes, or "soundtrack" if a stand-alone soundtrack was released. Sections should be based on how prominent different aspects of the subject are discussed in the source material — if it's hardly mentioned in the sources, it shouldn't have its own section.

- **Categories:** At the bottom of every Wikipedia article are categories that classify an article into different groups. Like the rest of the article, categorization must be based on sources rather than your own opinion. This also applies to classifications like genres elsewhere in the article.

- **Infobox:** An infobox provides a helpful overview of the film. You've probably seen them at the top-right area of other Wikipedia articles. To add an infobox, edit the page and select Insert → Template then type in "Infobox film" and fill in as many fields as you can. For more information about the infobox, visit Template:Infobox film on Wikipedia.

For more detailed information about the structure and style of film articles, see the page at | *shortcut*   WP:MOSFILM

# Wrapping up

## Key points

As you start writing, keep these guidelines in mind:

- 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 have seen the movie or are familiar with its subjects.

- Summarize what the sources say in your own words. Aside from including a small number of short quotes from reviewers/critics, you should avoid copy/pasting text.

- Stick to the structure presented in this guide, but use your judgment about when to rename, combine, add, or remove sections.

- 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.

- Don't be afraid to acknowledge your mistakes, as we all make mistakes. Just acknowledge and learn from them and move on.

## 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 article. It can be interesting to see how your article grows, and to see how other readers and editors respond to your work.

- Remember to link to other pages on Wikipedia so readers can learn more about topics you mention.

- Give appropriate weight to aspects of the topic as the sources cover it.

- It's normal to have questions. If you're not sure what to do at any point, a good place to find guidance is the Get Help button near the top of your course page on the Dashboard.

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