Wikipedia:Verifiability

"WP:V" redirects here. For discussing particular sources, see Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Noticeboard. For vandalism, see Wikipedia:Vandalism.
"WP:PROOF" redirects here. For advice on the use of mathematical proofs, see Wikipedia:WikiProject Mathematics/Proofs.

✓ **This page documents an English Wikipedia policy.**
It describes a widely accepted standard that editors should normally follow, though exceptions may apply. Changes made to it should reflect consensus.

This page in a nutshell: People must be able to check that any of the information within Wikipedia articles is not just made up. This means all material must be attributable to reliable, published sources. Additionally, quotations and any material challenged or likely to be challenged must be supported by inline citations.

In the English Wikipedia, **verifiability** means that people are able to check that information comes from a reliable source. Its content is determined by previously published information rather than editors' beliefs, experiences, or previously unpublished ideas or information. Even if you are sure something is true, it must have been previously published in a reliable source before you can add it.[a] If reliable sources disagree with each other, then maintain a neutral point of view and present what the various sources say, giving each side its due weight.

All material in Wikipedia mainspace, including everything in articles, lists, and captions, must be verifiable. Additionally, four types of information must be accompanied by an inline citation to a reliable source that directly supports[b] the material:

- direct quotations,
- material whose verifiability has been challenged,
- material whose verifiability is likely to be challenged, and
- contentious material about living and recently deceased persons.

Any material that needs an inline citation but does not have one may be removed. Please immediately remove contentious material about living people (or existing groups) that is unsourced or poorly sourced.

For how to write citations, see citing sources. Verifiability, no original research, and neutral point of view are Wikipedia's core content policies. They work together to determine content, so editors should understand the key points of all three. Articles must also comply with the copyright policy.

Content policies

Neutral point of view

No original research

Verifiability

Article titles

Biographies of living persons

Image use policy

What Wikipedia is not

Responsibility for providing citations

"WP:PROVEIT" redirects here. For the editing tool, see Wikipedia:ProveIt.

All content must be verifiable. **The burden to demonstrate verifiability lies with the editor who adds or restores material**, and it is satisfied by providing an inline citation to a reliable source that directly supports[b] the contribution.[c]

Using inline citations, provide reliable, published sources for all:

- direct quotations,
- material whose verifiability has been challenged
- material whose verifiability is likely to be challenged, and
- contentious material about living and recently deceased persons.

The cited source must clearly support the material as presented in the article. Cite the source clearly, ideally giving page number(s)—though sometimes a section, chapter, or other division may be appropriate instead; see Wikipedia:Citing sources for details of how to do this.

Any material lacking an inline citation to a reliable source that directly supports[b] the material may be removed and should not be restored without an inline citation to a reliable source. Whether or how quickly material should be removed for lacking an inline citation to a reliable source depends on the material and the overall state of the article. Consider adding a citation needed tag as an interim step to removing to allow references to be added.[d] When tagging or removing material for lacking an inline citation, state your concern that it may not be possible to find a published reliable source, and the material therefore may not be verifiable.[e] If you think the material is verifiable, you are encouraged to provide an inline citation yourself before removing or tagging it.

Do *not* leave unsourced or poorly sourced material in an article if it might damage the reputation of living people or existing groups, and do not move it to the talk page. You should also be aware of how Wikipedia:Biographies of living persons also applies to groups.

Reliable sources

What counts as a reliable source

Further information: Wikipedia:Reliable sources

A *cited source on Wikipedia* is often a specific portion of text (such as a short article or a page in a book). But when editors discuss sources (for example, to debate their appropriateness or reliability) the word *source* has four related meanings:

- The work itself (the article, book) and works like it ("An obituary can be a useful biographical source", "A recent source is better than an old one")
- The creator of the work (the writer, journalist: "What do we know about that source's reputation?") and people like them ("A medical researcher is a better source than a journalist for medical claims").

- The publication (for example, the newspaper, journal, magazine: "That source covers the arts.") and publications like them ("A newspaper is not a reliable source for medical claims").
- The publisher of the work (for example, Cambridge University Press: "That source publishes reference works.") and publishers like them ("An academic publisher is a good source of reference works").

All four can affect reliability.

Base articles on reliable, independent, published sources with a reputation for fact-checking and accuracy. Source material must be **published**, on Wikipedia meaning *made available to the public in some form*.[f] **Unpublished** material is not considered reliable. Use sources that directly support the material presented in an article and are appropriate to the claims made. The appropriateness of any source depends on the context. Be especially careful when sourcing content related to living people or medicine.

If available, academic and peer-reviewed publications are usually the most reliable sources on topics such as history, medicine, and science.

Editors may also use material from reliable non-academic sources, particularly if it appears in respected mainstream publications. Other reliable sources include:

- University-level textbooks
- Books published by respected publishing houses
- Mainstream (non-fringe) magazines, including specialty ones
- Reputable newspapers

Editors may also use electronic media, subject to the same criteria (see details in *Wikipedia:Identifying reliable sources* and *Wikipedia:Search engine test*).

Best sources

The best sources have a professional structure for checking or analyzing facts, legal issues, evidence, and arguments. The greater the degree of scrutiny given to these issues, the more reliable the source.

Newspaper and magazine blogs

Some newspapers, magazines, and other news organizations host online pages, columns or rolling text they call blogs. These may be acceptable sources if the writers are professionals, but use them with caution because blogs may not be subject to the news organization's normal fact-checking process.[g] If a news organization publishes an opinion piece in a blog, attribute the statement to the writer, e.g. "Jane Smith wrote ..." Never use the blog comments that are left by the readers as sources. For personal or group blogs that are *not* reliable sources, see § Self-published sources below.

Reliable sources noticeboard and guideline

Further information: Wikipedia:Reliable sources and Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Noticeboard

To discuss the reliability of a specific source for a particular statement, consult Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Noticeboard, which seeks to apply this policy to particular cases. For a guideline discussing the reliability of particular *types* of sources, see Wikipedia:Reliable sources. In the case of inconsistency between this policy and the Wikipedia:Reliable sources guideline, or any other guideline related to sourcing, this policy has priority.

Sources that are usually not reliable

"WP:NOTRELIABLE" redirects here. For Wikipedia's own reliability, see Wikipedia:Wikipedia is not a reliable source.
See also: Wikipedia:Reliable sources § Questionable and self-published sources, and Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Perennial sources

Questionable sources

Questionable sources are those that have a poor reputation for checking the facts, lack meaningful editorial oversight, or have an apparent conflict of interest.

Such sources include websites and publications expressing views widely considered by other sources to be promotional, extremist, or relying heavily on unsubstantiated gossip, rumor, or personal opinion. Questionable sources should be used only as sources for material on *themselves*, such as in articles about themselves; see below. They are not suitable sources for contentious claims about others.

Predatory open access journals are considered questionable due to the absence of quality control in the peer-review process.

Self-published sources

Further information: Wikipedia:Biographies of living persons § Avoid self-published sources, Wikipedia:List of companies engaged in the self-publishing business, and Wikipedia:Identifying and using self-published works
"WP:WORDPRESS" redirects here. For the use of Wordpress as a source, see WP:RSPWORDPRESS.

Anyone can create a personal web page, self-publish a book, or claim to be an expert. That is why self-published material such as books, patents, newsletters, personal websites, open wikis, personal or group blogs (as distinguished from newsblogs, above), content farms, podcasts, Internet forum postings, and social media postings are largely not acceptable as sources. Self-published expert sources may be considered reliable when produced by an established subject-matter expert, whose work **in the relevant field** has previously been published by reliable, independent publications.[g] Exercise caution when using such sources: if the information in question is suitable for inclusion, someone else will probably have published it in independent, reliable sources.[1] **Never** use self-published sources as third-party sources about living people, even if the author is an expert, well-known professional researcher, or writer.

Self-published or questionable sources as sources on themselves

"WP:SOCIALMEDIA" redirects here. For the policy on what Wikipedia is not, see WP:NOTSOCIALMEDIA.
"WP:TWITTER" redirects here. For the external links essay, see WP:Twitter-EL. For a template used for citing tweets, see Template:Cite tweet. For community evaluation of Twitter as a source, see Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Perennial sources § Twitter.

> It has been suggested that *Wikipedia:Reliable sources#Self-published and questionable sources as sources on themselves* and *Wikipedia:Biographies of living persons#Using the subject as a self-published source* be merged into this section. (Discuss) *Proposed since December 2023.*

Self-published and questionable sources may be used as sources of information **about themselves**, usually in articles about themselves or their activities, without the self-published source requirement that they are established experts in the field, so long as:

1. The material is neither unduly self-serving nor an exceptional claim;
2. It does not involve claims about third parties;
3. It does not involve claims about events not directly related to the source;
4. There is no reasonable doubt as to its authenticity; and
5. The article is not based primarily on such sources.

This policy also applies to material made public by the source on social networking websites such as Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Facebook.

Wikipedia and sources that mirror or use it

Do not use articles from Wikipedia (whether English Wikipedia or Wikipedias in other languages) as sources, since Wikipedia is a user-generated source. Also, do not use websites mirroring Wikipedia content or publications relying on material from Wikipedia as sources. Content from a Wikipedia article is not considered reliable unless it is backed up by citing reliable sources. Confirm that these sources support the content, then use them directly.[2]

An exception is allowed when Wikipedia itself is being discussed in the article. These may cite an article, guideline, discussion, statistic, or other content from Wikipedia (or a sister project) to support a statement about Wikipedia. Wikipedia or the sister project is a primary source in this case and may be used following the policy for primary sources. Any such use should avoid original research, undue emphasis on Wikipedia's role or views, and inappropriate self-reference. The article text should clarify how the material is sourced from Wikipedia to inform the reader about the potential bias.

Accessibility

Access to sources

Do not reject reliable sources just because they are difficult or costly to access. Some reliable sources are not easily accessible. For example, an online source may require payment, and a print-only source may be available only through libraries. Rare historical sources may even be available only in special museum

collections and archives. If you have trouble accessing a source, others may be able to do so on your behalf (see WikiProject Resource Exchange).

Non-English sources

See also: Wikipedia:Translators available and Wikipedia:No original research § Translations and transcriptions

Citing

Citations to non-English reliable sources are allowed on the English Wikipedia. However, because this project is in English, English-language sources are preferred over non-English ones when they are available and of equal quality and relevance. As with sources in English, if a dispute arises involving a citation to a non-English source, editors may request a quotation of relevant portions of the original source be provided, either in text, in a footnote, or on the article talk page.[h] (See Template:Request quotation.)

Quoting

If you quote a non-English reliable source (whether in the main text or in a footnote), a translation into English should accompany the quote. Translations published by reliable sources are preferred over translations by Wikipedians, but translations by Wikipedians are preferred over machine translations. When using a machine translation of source material, editors should be reasonably certain that the translation is accurate and the source is appropriate. Editors should not rely upon machine translations of non-English sources in contentious articles or biographies of living people. If needed, ask an editor who can translate it for you.

The original text is usually included with the translated text in articles when translated by Wikipedians, and the translating editor is usually not cited. When quoting any material, whether in English or in some other language, be careful not to violate copyright; see the fair-use guideline.

Other issues

Verifiability does not guarantee inclusion

"WP:ONUS" redirects here. For the responsibility to demonstrate verifiability, see WP:BURDEN.
Main page: Wikipedia:What Wikipedia is not § Encyclopedic content
See also: WP:UNDUE, WP:PAGEDECIDE, WP:PRESERVE, WP:SUMMARY, and WP:IINFO

While information must be verifiable for inclusion in an article, not all verifiable information must be included. Consensus may determine that certain information does not improve an article, and other policies may indicate that the material is inappropriate. Such information should be omitted or presented instead in a different article. The responsibility for achieving consensus for inclusion is on those seeking to include disputed content.

Tagging a sentence, section, or article

Further information: Wikipedia:Citation needed and Wikipedia:Template index/Sources of articles

If you want to request an inline citation for an unsourced statement, you can tag a sentence with the {{citation needed}} template by writing {{cn}} or {{fact}}. Other templates exist for tagging sections or entire articles here. You can also leave a note on the talk page asking for a source, or move the material to the talk page and ask for a source there. To request verification that a reference supports the text, tag it with {{verification needed}}. Material that fails verification may be tagged with {{failed verification}} or removed. It helps other editors to explain your rationale for using templates to tag material in the template, edit summary, or on the talk page.

Take special care with contentious material about living and recently deceased people. Unsourced or poorly sourced material that is contentious, especially text that is negative, derogatory, or potentially damaging, should be removed immediately rather than tagged or moved to the talk page.

Exceptional claims require exceptional sourcing

See also: Wikipedia:Fringe theories

Any exceptional claim requires *multiple* high-quality sources.[3] Warnings (red flags) that should prompt extra caution include:

- Surprising or apparently important claims not covered by multiple mainstream sources;
- Challenged claims that are supported purely by primary or self-published sources or those with an apparent conflict of interest;
- Reports of a statement by someone that seems out of character or against an interest they had previously defended;
- Claims contradicted by the prevailing view within the relevant community or that would significantly alter mainstream assumptions—especially in science, medicine, history, politics, and biographies of living and recently dead people. This is especially true when proponents say there is a conspiracy to silence them.

Verifiability and other principles

Copyright and plagiarism

Further information: Wikipedia:Copyright, Wikipedia:Plagiarism, Wikipedia:Copying within Wikipedia, Wikipedia:MOS § Attribution, and Wikipedia:CITE § In-text attribution

Do not plagiarize or breach copyright when using sources. Summarize source material in your own words as much as possible; when quoting or closely paraphrasing a source, use an inline citation, and in-text attribution where appropriate.

Do not link to any source that violates the copyrights of others per contributors' rights and obligations. You can link to websites that display copyrighted works as long as the website has licensed the work or uses the work in a way compliant with fair use. Knowingly directing others to material that violates copyright may be considered contributory copyright infringement. If there is reason to think a source violates copyright, do not cite it. *This is particularly relevant when linking to sites such as Scribd or YouTube, where due care should be taken to avoid linking to material violating copyright.*

Neutrality

Further information: Wikipedia:Neutral point of view

Even when information is cited to reliable sources, you must present it with a neutral point of view (NPOV). Articles should be based on thorough research of sources. All articles must adhere to NPOV, fairly representing all majority and significant-minority viewpoints published by reliable sources, in rough proportion to the prominence of each view. Tiny-minority views need not be included, except in articles devoted to them. If there is a disagreement between sources, use in-text attribution: "John Smith argues X, while Paul Jones maintains Y," followed by an inline citation. Sources themselves do not need to maintain a neutral point of view. Indeed, many reliable sources are *not* neutral. Our job as editors is simply to summarize what reliable sources say.

Notability

Further information: Wikipedia:Notability

If no reliable, independent sources can be found on a topic, Wikipedia should not have an article on it (i.e., the topic is not notable). However, notability is based on the *existence* of suitable sources, not on the state of sourcing in an article (WP:NEXIST).

Original research

Further information: Wikipedia:No original research

The no original research policy (NOR) is closely related to the Verifiability policy. Among its requirements are:

1. All material in Wikipedia articles must be *attributable* to a reliable published source. This means a reliable published source must exist for it, whether or not it is cited in the article.
2. Sources must support the material clearly and directly: drawing inferences from multiple sources to advance a novel position is prohibited by the NOR policy.[h]
3. Base articles largely on reliable secondary sources. While primary sources are appropriate in some cases, relying on them can be problematic. For more information, see the Primary, secondary, and tertiary sources section of the NOR policy, and the Misuse of primary sources section of the BLP policy.

See also

Guidelines

- Reliable sources

- Identifying reliable sources (medicine)

Information pages

- Wikipedia is not a reliable source
- How to mine a source
- Independent sources
- Identifying and using primary sources
- Identifying and using self-published works
- Video links
- When to cite

Resources

- Backlog – links to articles that need citations added
- Template index/Sources of articles – maintenance templates for articles with sourcing problems
- The Wikipedia Library – free access to newspapers, journals, and magazines for experienced editors
- WikiProject Resource Exchange – where you can ask for help with checking an individual source

Essays

- Citation overkill
- Identifying and using tertiary sources
- Verifiability, not truth
- You are not a reliable source

Notes

a. This principle was previously expressed on this policy page as "the threshold for inclusion is **verifiability, not truth**". See the essay, Wikipedia:Verifiability, not truth.

b. A source "directly supports" a given piece of material if the information is present *explicitly* in the source, so that using this source to support the material is not a violation of Wikipedia:No original research. The location of any citation—including whether one is present in the article at all—is unrelated to whether a source directly supports the material. For questions about where and how to place citations, see Wikipedia:Citing sources, Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Lead section § Citations, etc.

c. Once an editor has provided any source they believe, in good faith, to be sufficient, then any editor who later removes the material must articulate specific problems that would justify its exclusion from Wikipedia (e.g. why the source is unreliable; the source does not support the claim; undue emphasis; unencyclopedic content; etc.). If necessary, all editors are then expected to help achieve consensus, and any problems with the text or sourcing should be fixed before the material is added back.

d. It may be that the article contains so few citations it is impractical to add specific citation needed tags. Consider then tagging a section with {{unreferenced section}}, or the article with the applicable of either {{unreferenced}} or {{more citations needed}}. For a disputed

category, you may use {{unreferenced category}}. For a disambiguation page, consider asking for a citation on the talk page.

e. When tagging or removing such material, please keep in mind such edits can easily be misunderstood. Some editors object to others making chronic, frequent, and large-scale deletions of unsourced information, especially if unaccompanied by other efforts to improve the material. Do not concentrate only on material of a particular point of view, as that may appear to be a contravention of Wikipedia:Neutral point of view. Also, check to see whether the material is sourced to a citation elsewhere on the page. For all these reasons, it is advisable to clearly communicate that you have a considered reason to believe the material in question cannot be verified.

f. This includes material such as documents in publicly accessible archives as well as inscriptions in plain sight, e.g. tombstones.

g. Note that any exceptional claim would require exceptional sources.

h. When there is a dispute as to whether a piece of text is fully supported by a given source, direct quotes and other relevant details from the source should be provided to other editors as a courtesy. Do not violate the source's copyright when doing so.

References

1. Self-published material is characterized by the *lack of independent reviewers* (those without a conflict of interest) validating the reliability of the content. Further examples of self-published sources include press releases, the material contained within company websites, advertising campaigns, material published in media by the owner(s)/publisher(s) of the media group, self-released music albums, and electoral manifestos:

   - The University of California, Berkeley, library (https://web.archive.org/web/20160510203400/https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html) states: "Most pages found in general search engines for the web are self-published or published by businesses small and large with motives to get you to buy something or believe a point of view. Even within university and library web sites, there can be many pages that the institution does not try to oversee."
   - Princeton University (https://web.archive.org/web/20111005165358/http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/other/) offers this understanding in its publication, *Academic Integrity at Princeton (2011)*: "Unlike most books and journal articles, which undergo strict editorial review before publication, much of the information on the Web is self-published. To be sure, there are many websites in which you can have confidence: mainstream newspapers, refereed electronic journals, and university, library, and government collections of data. But for vast amounts of Web-based information, no impartial reviewers have evaluated the accuracy or fairness of such material before it's made instantly available across the globe."
   - The "College of St. Catherine Libraries Guide to Chicago Manual of Style" (https://web.archive.org/web/20060907142339/http://library.stkate.edu/pdf/citeChicago.pdf) (DEKloiber, December 1, 2003) states, "Any site that does not have a specific publisher or sponsoring body should be treated as unpublished or self-published work."

2. Rekdal, Ole Bjørn (1 August 2014). "Academic urban legends" (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4232290). *Social Studies of Science*. **44** (4): 638–654. doi:10.1177/0306312714535679 (https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0306312714535679). ISSN 0306-3127 (https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0306-3127). PMC 4232290 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4232290). PMID 25272616 (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25272616).

3. See Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence

Further reading

- Wales, Jimmy. "Insist on sources" (https://lists.wikimedia.org/pipermail/wikien-l/2006-July/05 0773.html), WikiEN-l, July 19, 2006: "I really want to encourage a much stronger culture which says: it is better to have no information, than to have information like this, with no sources."—referring to a rather unlikely statement about the founders of Google throwing pies at each other.

Wikipedia referencing	
Policies and guidelines	Verifiability · No original research · Biographies of living persons · Reliable sources (Medicine) · Citing sources · Scientific citations
General advice	Citation needed · Combining sources · Offline sources · Referencing styles
Citing sources	Citation Style 1 · Citation Style 2 · Citation Style Vancouver · Bluebook · Comics · Citation templates
Inline citations	Footnotes · Punctuation and footnotes · Shortened footnotes · Nesting footnotes
Help for beginners	Reference-tags · Citations quick reference · Introduction to referencing · Referencing with citation templates · Referencing without using templates · Referencing dos and don'ts · Citing Wikipedia
Advanced help	Cite link labels · Cite errors · Citation merging (bundling) · Cite messages · Converting between references formats · Reference display customization · References and page numbers · Guidance on source reviewing at FAC
Footnote templates	Citation Style documentation · Multiple references · {{Reflist}} · {{Refbegin}}
Find references	How to find sources · Bibliographies · Wikipedia Library · Resource Exchange · Reference Desk · Book Sources · Free newspaper sources
Citation tools (External links)	Citer (https://citer.toolforge.org/) · Biomedical cite (http://sumsearch.org/cite/) · Citation bot (https://tools.wmflabs.org/citations/) · MakeRef (https://tools.wmflabs.org/makeref/) · Refill (https://refill.toolforge.org/ng/) · WayBack (https://archive.org/)

Wikipedia key policies and guidelines (?)		
Five pillars (Ignore all rules)		
Content (?)	**P**	Verifiability · No original research · Neutral point of view · What Wikipedia is not · Biographies of living persons · Copyright (Copyright violations) · Image use · Article titles
	G	Notability · Autobiography · Citing sources · Reliable sources (Medicine) · Do not include copies of lengthy primary sources · Plagiarism · Don't create hoaxes · Fringe theories · Patent nonsense · External links
Conduct (?)	**P**	Civility · Consensus · Harassment · Vandalism · Ignore all rules · No personal attacks · Ownership of content · Edit warring ·

	G	Dispute resolution · Sockpuppetry · No legal threats · Child protection · Paid-contribution disclosure
	G	Assume good faith · Conflict of interest · Disruptive editing · Do not disrupt Wikipedia to illustrate a point · Etiquette · Gaming the system · Please do not bite the newcomers · Courtesy vanishing · Responding to threats of harm · Talk page guidelines (Signatures)
Deletion (?)	P	Deletion policy · Proposed deletion (Biographies) · Criteria for speedy deletion · Attack page · Oversight · Revision deletion
Enforcement (?)	P	Administrators · Banning · Blocking · Page protection
Editing (?)	P	Editing policy
	G	Article size (Summary style) · Be bold · Disambiguation · Hatnotes · Broad-concept article · Understandability
		Style — Manual of Style (Contents) · Accessibility · Dates and numbers · Images · Layout · Lead section · Linking · Lists
		Classification — Categories, lists, and navigation templates · Categorization · Template namespace
Project content (?)	G	Project namespace (WikiProjects) · User pages (User boxes) · Shortcuts · Subpages
WMF (?)	P	Universal Code of Conduct · Terms of Use · List of policies · Friendly space policy · Licensing and copyright · Privacy policy
List of all policies and guidelines (**P**: **List of policies** · **G**: **List of guidelines**) · **Summaries of values and principles**		