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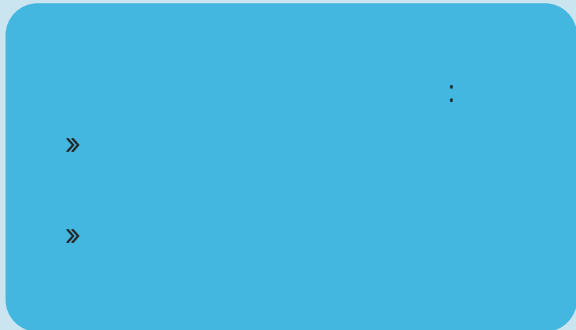
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How contributors improve Wikipedia

Most people think of Wikipedia as only encyclopedia articles, but a great deal of work takes place behind the scenes, as well: about half of the edits made to Wikipedia are made to pages other than the articles. Contributors discuss how articles should evolve, evaluate the quality of sources, and set out editorial policies. These pages and discussions are open for public scrutiny, just like the articles themselves, if you know where to look.

Each article has its own Discussion page. At the top of each article is a link labeled "Discussion". Click on it and you will see how much deliberation has gone into creating the article. Maybe some aspect that you are wondering about has already been discussed. If you have doubts about the quality of an article and cannot improve it yourself, write your questions on the discussion page. Most questions are answered within a few days, but if your questions have not received any attention in one week, it may be a good idea to ask the article's contributors directly, or seek a more general discussion forum. Click on View history and find a user who has made several edits to the article and click on the link that leads to his or her personal discussion page. You can ask questions of the individual contributor on that page.

Evaluating 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of Wikipedia articles varies widely; many are very good, but some lack depth and clarity, or contain bias, or are out of date. On the English language Wikipedia, there are formal processes for the best articles to be identified as "good articles" or "featured articles", but the vast majority of articles on the site – even though some of them are quite good – have not attained these designations. So, how can you quickly assess the general quality of an article? There are two main ways:

- Check for the elements of good articles
- Look for common signs of poor quality

Elements of quality articles

In general, high-quality articles have five elements: a lead section that gives an easy-to-understand overview, a clear structure, balanced coverage, neutral content, and reliable sources.

The lead section is understandable and summarizes the article's key points. The lead in a biography should, for instance, mention why the person is known and where she lived, but need not cover details about her childhood that may be more appropriate to a subsequent section.

The structure is clear. There are several headings and subheadings, images and diagrams at appropriate places, and appendices and footnotes at the end. For most articles, the content is chronological or arranged by theme.

The various aspects of the topic are balanced well. No aspect takes over the article, and all aspects are covered. More important viewpoints receive more space in the article. For example, an article about a cat breed that contains a long description about the breed's temperament, but little or no information about its physical characteristics, is not well balanced.

Coverage is neutral. Articles must be written without bias; where there is disagreement among scholars of the subject, the different views should be covered with appropriate balance. Both positive and negative should be included, in proportion to their coverage in reliable sources. Good articles also use neutral language and emphasize facts.

References to reliable sources are important. Good articles have plenty of footnotes at the bottom. If you see numerous links to authoritative publications, that's a good sign that you're reading a high-quality article. The article about the moon should have links to NASA's website, but not to an amateur astronomer's blog.

Signs of bad quality

If an article has more than two of these signs, you should find better sources. (Then come back and improve the Wikipedia article with those sources!)

The article has a warning banner at the top. Most warning signs are only information or requests, such as asking you to help expand the article if it is very short. But warning signs can also represent an unresolved dispute about the article's neutrality or the quality of its sources.

Several language problems are in the lead section of the article. Problems in the lead usually indicate problems with the whole article. A very short lead section may indicate an article that has grown up piece-by-piece, without much attention to the overall work.


The language contains unsourced opinions and value statements, which are not neutral and should be removed. For example, instead of saying: "She was the best singer," the text should say: "She had 14 number one hits, more than any other singer."

The article refers to "some", "many", or other unnamed groups of people. These statements are too general and should be replaced with facts.

There seem to be aspects of the topic that are missing from the table of contents and the article. For instance, a biography that skips an entire period of its subject's life suggests it may be missing important facts.

Some sections seem overly long in proportion to their importance. For example, a big "criticism" section in an otherwise short article about a company suggests that the article is biased against the company.

The article has very few references, or substantial parts of the article lack footnotes. If an article is based on too few sources, it may have been written without complete information about the subject.

 The discussion page is filled with hostile dialogue. If the editors working on the article are not finding common

What to do with articles of poor quality?

What should you do when you find an article that has one or several problems?

If you have the time or the knowledge, please consider correcting the problems yourself by clicking Edit at the top of the article, changing the text and clicking Save page.

- 1) Check if the problem is temporary, such as somebody trying to remove a section that is unflattering about their hero. Click View history and look through the last few edits.
- 2) If the problem lies in the last edits you can click undo and instantly repair the damage. If the problem has been around for a longer period or if you do not possess the knowledge to fix it, leave a comment on the Discussion page, describing the problem.
- 3) If the problem is serious, such as libelous statements against a living person, feel free to cut out the problematic parts. Be thoughtful about your own biases, though, especially if you are working on an article about yourself, your nation, or your organization. Critical sections in an article are often appropriate, especially when they are well sourced.

For more information about what you can do when you find a poorly written article, type "Wikipedia:Writing better articles" in the search box.



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