

*Where*  
**WIKIPEDIA**  
*has gone **wrong***

*What*  
*we can do to bring it*  
***back on track***

***Wikimania 2011***

***Haifa, Israel***

***Dror Kamir***

***August 2011***

# **Neutral is a matter of perspective**

***Embarking on the neutrality odyssey***

***“Again, neutral is a matter of perspective.  
What isn't neutral to you or I, may be neutral  
to someone else.”***

***English Wikipedia, Talk:Israel,***

***Request for Comment/Jerusalem, 21:41, 7 January 2010 (UTC)***

# Talk:Israel

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Request for Comment/Jerusalem

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This RFC has been notified in [Wikiproject Israel](#) and [Wikiproject Palestine](#) and the [neutrality noticeboard](#).

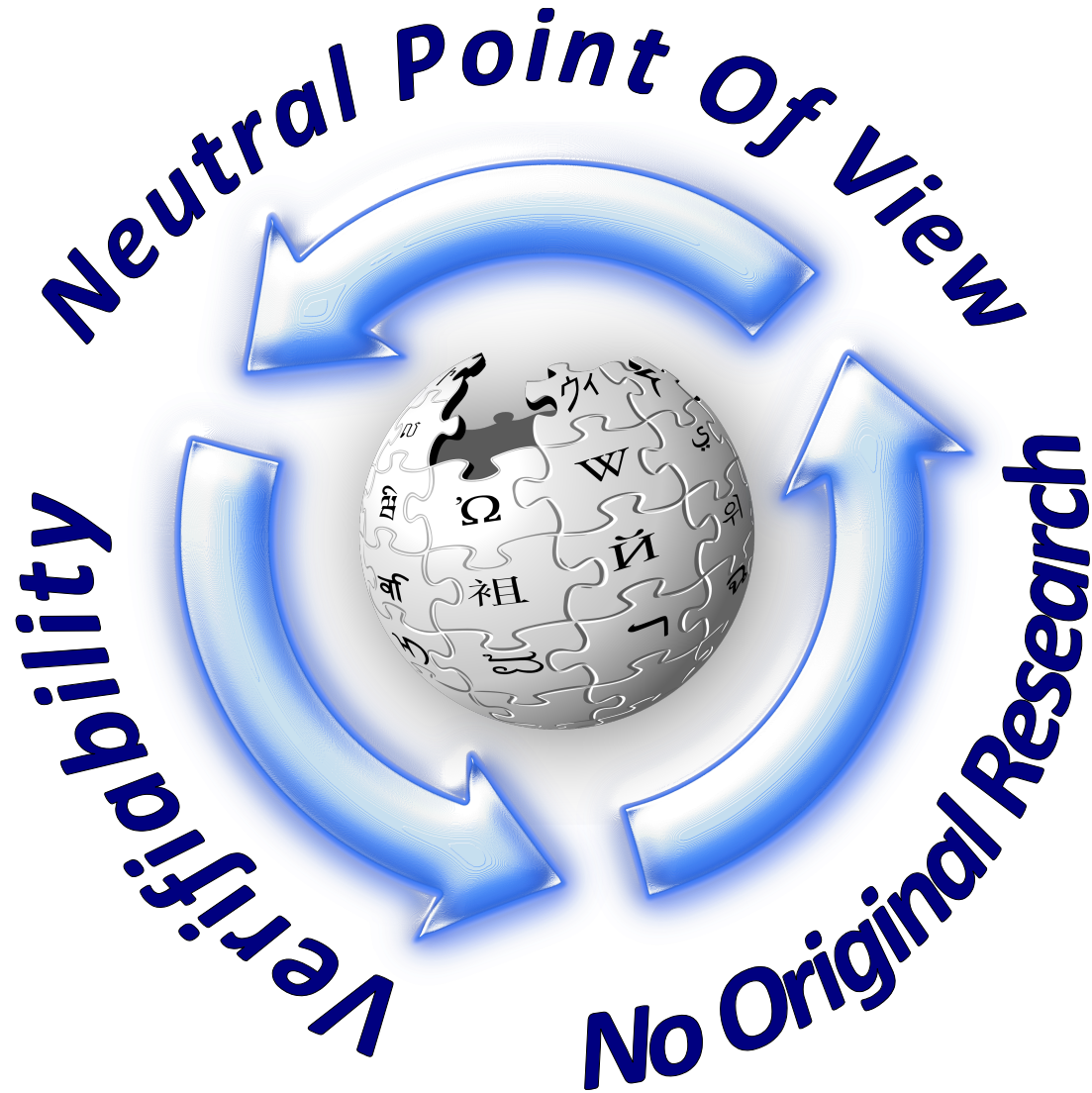
Again, neutral is a matter of perspective. What isn't neutral to you or I, may be neutral to someone else. Certainly the BBC or NBC isn't considered "neutral" in the muslim world. If we are going to question the neutrality and WP:UNDUE of listing

Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, we should also make sure that the name of the nation isn't given the same undue weight. After all, with the exception of Egypt and Jordan, none of Israel's neighbors recognize the nation. Nor does most of the muslim world... Seriously, a line has to be drawn at some point, or every article will be laced with notations and exceptions. Sadly, this whole debate reminds me of a bad case of WP:IDONTLIKEIT. --[nsaum75](#)<sup>!שית</sup> 21:41, 7 January 2010 (UTC)

I agree that a line should be drawn somewhere, I just don't think it should be drawn neatly around the POV of the Israeli government to the exclusion of any differing opinion. Good luck with your campaign to change the name of Israel. --[FormerIP](#) ([talk](#)) 21:45, 7 January 2010 (UTC)

There are some things that are POV and some things that are fact (much like the sky appears blue). This seems to be an attempt to change a fact and replace it with an opinion because some people in the world do not like the reality of things.--[nsaum75](#)<sup>!שית</sup> 21:54, 7 January 2010 (UTC)

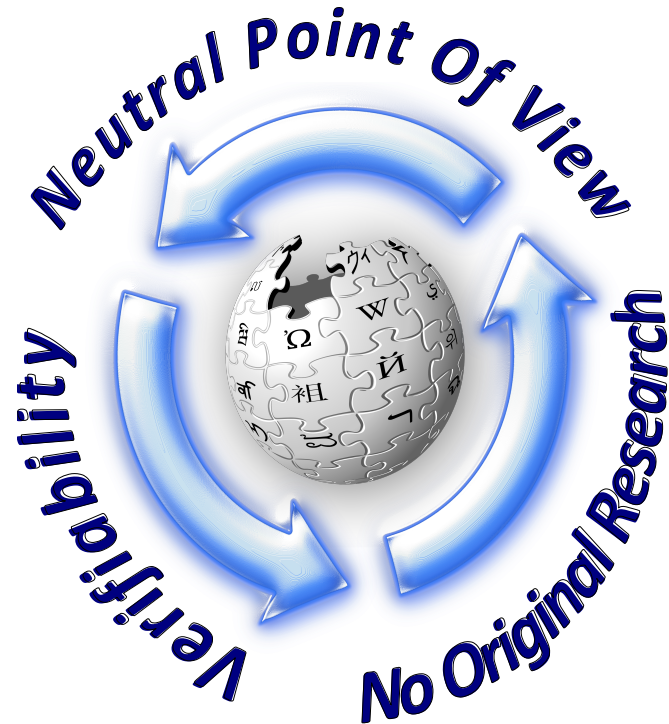
# *The three basic principles of Wikipedia*





# *The three basic principles of Wikipedia*

*Wikipedia 2001*



*Wikipedia 2006*



*Whereas during the first half decade of Wikipedia, NPOV was (unofficially) considered the main editing guideline, since 2006 (approximately), all editing principles were subject to the notion of “verifiability”, namely sourcing.*

# *Development of the NPOV principle*

***(Wikipedia 2001):*** The neutral point of view attempts to present ideas and facts in such a fashion that both supporters and opponents can agree. Of course, 100% agreement is not possible; there are ideologues in the world who will not concede to any presentation other than a forceful statement of their own point of view. We can only seek a type of writing that is agreeable to essentially rational people who may differ on particular points.

***(Wikipedia 2006):*** Editing from a neutral point of view (NPOV) means representing fairly, proportionately, and as far as possible without bias, all significant views that have been published by reliable sources.

# *Development of the NPOV principle*



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## Wikipedia:Neutral point of view

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This is an **old revision** of this page, as edited by [69.116.72.188 \(talk\)](#) at 00:19, 10 October 2006. It may differ significantly from the **current revision**.

[\(diff\)](#) [← Previous revision](#) | [Latest revision \(diff\)](#) | [Newer revision](#) [→ \(diff\)](#)



The **neutrality of this article is disputed**. Please see the discussion on the [talk page](#). Please do not remove this message until the **dispute is resolved**.

This page documents an English Wikipedia

<[span](#)  
[id="WP:NPOV](#)

# Development of the NPOV principle

## *Analysis of Wikipedia's NPOV rule then and now*

*(Wikipedia 2001): "The neutral point of view attempts to present ideas and facts in such a fashion that both supporters and opponents can agree.*

*Of course, 100% agreement is not possible; there are ideologues in the world who will not concede to any presentation other than a forceful statement of their own point of view.*

*We can only seek a type of writing that is agreeable to essentially rational people who may differ on particular points."*

*The emphasis is on agreement. An NPOV text is one that all sides can agree upon.*

*The process of writing is productive negotiation among people of various points of view, who act rationally and cooperatively.*

*A simple test – If you cannot tell the opinion of the article's writer, than it must be NPOV.*

# *Development of the NPOV principle*

*(Wikipedia, since 16 Oct 2006):*

*Editing from a neutral point of view (NPOV) means representing fairly, proportionately, and as far as possible without bias, all significant views that have been published by reliable sources.*

*Reference to collaborative work has been removed.*

*Use of equivocal terms without mentioning any rule of thumb to test them.*

*A tautological statement*

*Subduing NPOV to sourcing.*

# *Development of the NPOV principle*

## *Wikibook's version (still valid)*

*(Wikipedia 2001, emphases added):*

*Wikibooks has a strict neutral point of view (NPOV) policy. Wikibooks is best served by trying to present a fair, neutral description of the **facts** — among which are the facts that various interpretations and points of view exist (of course, there are limits to what POVs are considered worth mentioning, **which can be an area of conflict**).*

*Neutral point of view **should not be confused with point of view espoused by an international body such as the United Nations**; writing in NPOV style requires recognizing that even widely held or widely respected points of view are not necessarily all-encompassing.*

## *Everyone can edit*

*This "new" equivocal tone is also reflected in the phrasing of Wikipedia's pillars on the Wikimedia "Meta" website*

***" The ability of **almost** anyone to edit **(most)** articles without registration. "***

## *Not perfect but surprisingly good*

*“Overall, Wikipedia is not perfect, but surprisingly good. A German magazine did a blind test of entries from Encarta, the leading German encyclopedia and us. Wikipedia won. Let me stress that this was the German version, and the Germans are real fetishists for quality.”*

*Jimmy Wales interviewed by CIO Insight, 5 June 2005*



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## ***We work with thousands of contributors***

***In rebutting Nature's work, we in no way mean to imply that Britannica is error-free [...] We have a reputation not for unattainable perfection but for strong scholarship, sound judgment, and disciplined editorial review [...] Our editors work unceasingly to revise and improve the encyclopedia and to publish the results in a timely way. We work with thousands of contributors and advisers around the world — scholars and experts all — and maintain a brisk correspondence with our readers as well.***

***Encyclopædia Britannica's statement, March 2006***

# *The problem with sources*

*Why the emphasis on sourcing does not solve the accuracy problem and sends needed editors away*

- 1. Accessibility** - Reliable detailed sources are often inaccessible, unless you pay (quite a lot) or have free access to an academic library.
- 2. Language** - Sources often use professional language; for some subjects, most reliable sources are in foreign languages.
- 3. Facts vs. interpretation** - Sources can often resolve factual uncertainties, but when it comes to interpretation of facts, they simply present their author's view.

## *The problem with sources*

*Why the emphasis on sourcing does not solve the accuracy problem and sends needed editors away*

- 4. Sources can have different level of reliability. When reading a newspaper, for example, not all items share the same level of credibility.**
- 5. Sources may present views as facts when the distinction is irrelevant to the matter in question. For example, the judicial view of "stealing" may differ from other commonly accepted views, but if the text is about law, this observation would be discarded as irrelevant.**

# Wikipedia's accuracy

*Random list of issues that require constant updating in order to avoid errors.*

- 1. Countries in the OECD or the UN or the EU**
- 2. Diseases that can be treated with a certain drug**
- 3. Archeological findings and their implications**
- 4. Shape of coins and banknotes in a certain country**
- 5. Names of leaders of countries, organizations, companies**
- 6. Biographical details (e.g. a journalist became a politician)**
- 7. Laws and policies (e.g. policies toward abortion)**
- 8. New influential books, TV series, software**

# *Wikipedia's accuracy*

*Random list of issues that require reports from the field for accuracy*

- 1. To what extent is the Arabic language used in Israel?**
- 2. Is Northern Cyprus accessible from the Rep. of Cyprus?**
- 3. What is the most commonly used currency in Zimbabwe?**
- 4. Actual enforcement of legal limitations on abortions in IL**
- 5. Availability of Internet connection in different parts of Cameroon**

*In these cases, established sources can be misleading.*

## *Arbitration committee*

***Most issues brought before the arbitrators relates to interpretation of facts or editors' behavior.***

- 1. Should abortion be defined as a process in which the embryo is removed or destroyed***
- 2. Should the country in the Balkans be called Macedonia, Republic of Macedonia or Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***
- 3. In which circumstances should the port city on the Baltic Sea be called Danzig rather than Gdańsk***

## *A project to create a neutral encyclopedia*

***“Wikipedia is a project to create a neutral encyclopedia. Use of the site for other purposes, such as advocacy or propaganda, furtherance of outside conflicts, publishing or promoting original research, and political or ideological struggle, is prohibited.”***

*The English Wikipedia Arbitration Committee, January 2008*