

Verfying Online Data

What is Wikipedia all about?

“Wikipedia is the best thing ever. Anyone in the world can write anything they want about any subject. So, you know you are getting the best possible information.”
 -Michael Scott

While pointing out how great Wikipedia is, Michael also points out why it can be dangerous. Anyone can write anything.

15 Interesting Facts about Wikipedia

Wikipedia is quite possibly the most ambitious internet venture ever. An internet encyclopedia constantly updated by an anonymous crowd of users; over the years it's gone from internet inside joke to invaluable resource for trusted information. Most of the time, anyway. Here are 15 things you might not know about Wikipedia.

The name is a combination of the words "wiki," meaning shared website, and "pedia," which is a shortened form of encyclopedia.

Wikipedia was founded in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger.

Languages currently supported: 260

Sex is one of the most popular Wikipedia articles in every language except French and Spanish.

Wikipedia generates approximately 684 million page views each year.

Bad weather leads to more Wikipedia updates. That's why the Dutch Wikipedia has more pages than Spain's Wikipedia.

The English language Wikipedia has more than 3 million articles.

- German - 1.08 million
- French - 958,000
- Italian - 697,000
- Spanish - 608,000

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Wikipedia contains no ads.

Members of the Wikipedia community are referred to as Wikipedians. But anybody can edit articles on Wikipedia.

There is no censorship on Wikipedia, but articles must meet certain guidelines:

- Encyclopedic
- Neutral
- Verifiable

Wikipedia's mission is to make all of the information in the world available in every language.

Who edits Wikipedia pages?

- 69% edit to fix errors
- 73% edit because they like the idea of sharing knowledge
- 19% hold Masters degrees
- 4.4% are PhDs
- 13% are women

A sampling of Wikipedia articles in August, 2002 showed only 0.2% were the victims of vandalism. By May, 2009 that number had increased to 7.7%

Just 31% of Wikipedia readers are women.

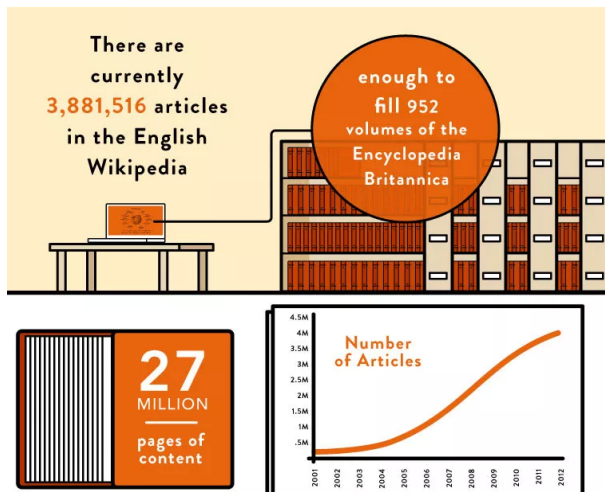
A 2008 study compared the accuracy of Wikipedia articles vs. similar articles in Encyclopedia Britannica, The Dictionary of American History, and American National Biography Online.

Wikipedia - 80% accurate

Others - 95 to 96% accurate

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How to we make sure the information we find online is accurate? We cross check with multiple resources. This exercise will compare information publicly edited website to an official or educational source.

- 1 Choose an author that you will do your upcoming research project on.

- 2 Look up the author you chose on WIKIPEDIA. Record the below facts you found on Wikipedia.

- 3 Now, find another source on your author. It needs to be an official biography site or an educational site. (ie. www.jennyhan.com, journal, or college library). Cross check your facts above.

- 4 Were the facts the same? Did they differ from the Wikipedia answers?

If they were different , find a 3rd source and check the information again.

- 5 What did you learn from this exercise?

- 5 Why is it so important to fact check- especially when using a publicly edited site like Wikipedia?

Big Take Away: It is okay to use sites like Wikipedia as long as we VERIFY the information.