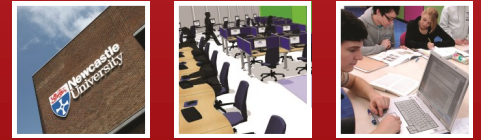


# Wikipedia

## The pros and cons



## Robinson Library

Using Wikipedia as an academic sources of information

Many people have used Wikipedia to look for information, but we suggest that you don't use it as your sole source of information for University work.

Here are some brief tips to help you decide when Wikipedia is an appropriate information source for you.

### Wikipedia– some brief facts:

- It's an online encyclopaedia, created as a collaborative website with over 100,000 contributors from all over the world
- It has no formal editors or formal peer review process
- It contains around 4.5m articles in English, but there are many more in 280 languages
- 10,000 articles are read each day
- 500 million people read it every month

### Things to be aware of:

- Anyone can add and edit Wikipedia entries, so they could be incorrect or deliberately false
- Material can be changed at any time– what was there yesterday may not be there today
- Articles aren't translated between different language versions of Wikipedia, so you may find different information in different countries
- Controversial issues, such as political and ideological topics, have a high risk of bias
- Breaking news topics are often very inaccurate
- Just because something sounds correct doesn't mean that it is
- "Featured articles", identified by a bronze star icon, have been identified by Wikipedia staff as being of "better" quality

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The Government Standard

## How to use Wikipedia effectively

### DO:

- Use Wikipedia with caution
- Use Wikipedia to get some general background information on a topic, to get you started
- Think of it as a “pre-search” tool rather than a “research” tool
- Use it to help identify alternative keywords
- Use it carefully as a starting point for more serious research - the references at the end of a Wikipedia article may link to more academic sources
- Use it to look up “hard facts” - but remember to verify them elsewhere too. For example, even something like a date of birth can be easily mistyped or deliberately falsified
- Think about whether the introduction is easy to understand
- Look to see if material is supported by good quality links and references
- Look at the contents list to see how the post is organised
- Use all your evaluative skills to help identify good quality material
- Use footnotes if they exist as they may link to quality sources
- Investigate the “History” and “Discuss” tabs for extra discussion and possible information about the authors
- Ask library staff for advice on finding other sources
- Remember that different language editions contain different information
- Have a go at contributing to Wikipedia yourself, it will help you to understand more about how it works

### AND:

- Don't rely solely on articles from Wikipedia for serious academic research
- Don't use Wikipedia as your primary source
- Don't cite Wikipedia articles in academic work
- Don't believe everything you read on Wikipedia