

An Introduction to Wikipedia

Citations and sources

8.1 - Referencing guidelines

This document is part of An Introduction to Wikipedia, a course on [WikiLearn](#).

In this document we will look at references and citations on Wikipedia, and how some sources are considered more reliable than others.

Reliable sources on Wikipedia

Everything on Wikipedia should be referenced. Although this isn't always the case, especially with very old Wikipedia articles that might still exist without any references at all.

Ideally, someone like yourself will come along and improve these, and there are lists of articles that need references added to them. We'll look at those in a future lesson.

We can't just use anything as a reference. There are certain guidelines on what is a good or reliable reference, and in this lesson we'll go over some things to keep in mind.

Wikipedia relies on reliable sources. But what is a reliable source?

Wikipedia articles should be based mainly on secondary sources, so a source that relates to or discusses information originally presented elsewhere.

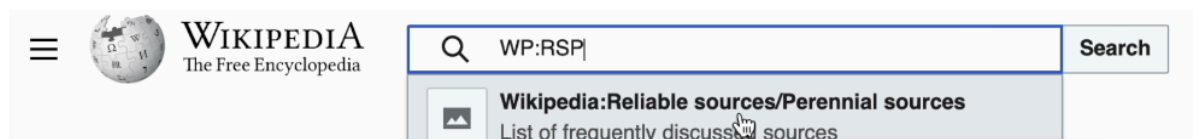
As an example, a book about the Second World War might be a secondary source about the war, but if it included details of the author's own war experiences, it would be a primary source about those experiences.

Reliable sources could be academic and peer-reviewed publications, scholarly monographs, or textbooks. But sometimes academic publications can fall out of date, so non-academic sources may also be used.

News reporting from well-established news outlets and high-quality mainstream publications is generally considered to be a reliable source for facts.

Which sources you use will be based on what subject you're writing about, as for example, some news organisations might not be considered reliable for their political reporting, but are considered excellent sources for their sports coverage.

Wikipedia maintains a non-exhaustive list of reliable sources that often come up in discussion. You can find it by typing WP:RSP in the Wikipedia search bar.



This will take you to the Wikipedia page for Reliable Sources / Perennial Sources, as seen in the image below.

There's a link to jump straight to the list of frequently discussed sources, and this is a good place to look at first if you're unsure if a source is reliable or not.

WIKIPEDIA The Free Encyclopedia

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Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Perennial sources

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

< Wikipedia:Reliable sources

This is an information page.
It is not one of Wikipedia's policies or guidelines; rather, its purpose is to explain certain aspects of Wikipedia:Reliable sources guideline. It may reflect differing levels of consensus and vetting.

Shortcuts
WP:RSP
WP:RS/P
WP:RS/PS

This page in a nutshell: This is a list of repeatedly discussed sources, collected and summarized for convenience. Consensus can change, and context matters tremendously when determining how to use this list. Only sources that have been repeatedly raised for discussion are listed here, it is not a general or comprehensive list of all generally reliable or unreliable sources in the world, it is a *summary* of discussions about the listed sources.

[Jump to the list of frequently discussed sources.](#)

The following presents a non-exhaustive list of sources whose **reliability** and use on Wikipedia are frequently discussed. This list summarizes prior consensus and consolidates links to the most in-depth and recent discussions from the **reliable sources noticeboard** and elsewhere on Wikipedia.

Context matters tremendously, and some sources may or may not be suitable for certain uses depending on the situation. When in doubt, defer to the linked discussions for more detailed information on a particular source and its use. **Consensus can change**, and if more recent discussions considering new evidence or arguments reach a different consensus, this list should be updated to reflect those changes.

The reliability of a source greatly affects what

If you can't find something there, you can find others mentioned in the reliable sources noticeboard archive. There is a link to the archive above the main list, under 'What if my source is not here?', as highlighted by the red circle below. Or search WP:RSN in the Wikipedia search box to find it.

Categories

- Large language models
- Paid reporting in Indian news organizations
- Religious scriptures
- Self-published peerage websites
- State-sponsored fake news sites
- Student media
- Tabloids
- Valnet

See also

- Topic-specific pages
- Templates and categories
- Notes
- References

What if my source is not here?

If your source is not listed here, it only means that it has not been the subject of repeated community discussion. That may be because the source is a *stellar* source, and we simply never needed to talk about it because it is so obviously reliable,^[a] or it could mean the source is so obviously poor it never merited discussion. It could mean that the source covers a niche topic,^[b] or that it simply fell through the cracks. If you're concerned about any source being used on Wikipedia, you should review the **reliable sources noticeboard** (RSN), following the instructions at the top of that page, where you can "Search the noticeboard archives":

If you do not find what you're looking for, please start a discussion about it there. That is, after all, how the entries on this list got here to begin with.

You can also find a much longer list of previously discussed sources on various topics at [Wikipedia:New page patrol source guide](#).

A source's absence from the list does not imply that it is any more or less reliable than the sources that are present. Absence just means its reliability has not been the subject of serious questioning yet. "**Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.**"

Shortcut
WP:RSN MISSING

This will take you to the page shown below. You can search there, or start a new discussion if you're unsure about a source, and other contributors will help reach a consensus on its reliability.

To start a new discussion, click the large blue button that says Start a new discussion.

You can also scroll down the page to see other discussions and you can reply to give your input too.

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Shortcuts

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Shortcut

WP:DEPRE

Below the Legend section is the actual list, under Sources, and you can already see the first two include a source that is considered generally unreliable (in red), and another that is considered generally reliable (in green).

Wikipedia:Reliable sources/Perennial sources

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Note: If you add/remove a source in the "generally unreliable", "deprecated" or "blacklisted" categories, please update WP:CITEWATCH/SETUP/GENERAL § WP:RSP, or leave a note at Wikipedia talk:CITEWATCH if you need help.

Shortcuts

WP:RSPSOURCES

WP:RSPSS

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Perennial sources

Source	Status (legend)	Discussions		Uses	
		List	Last		
112 Ukraine		2019 2020 2020 1 A B	2020	112 Ukraine was deprecated following a 2019 RIC, which showed overwhelming consensus for the deprecation of a slew of sources associated with Russian disinformation in Ukraine. It was pointed out later in a 2020 RIC that 112 Ukraine had not been explicitly discussed in that first discussion prior to its blacklisting request. Further discussion established a rough consensus that the source is generally unreliable, but did not form a consensus for deprecation or blacklisting. The prior blacklisting was reversed as out of process. 112 Ukraine closed in 2021.	1 2
ABC News		1 2	2021	There is consensus that ABC News, the news division of the American Broadcasting Company, is generally reliable. It is not to be confused with other publications of the same name.	1 2

Taking a closer look at these, you can see links to discussions under List and when the last discussion was held, to give you an idea of when the current consensus was reached. There’s also a summary of the discussions that could include information relevant to anyone wanting to use that source in the future.

Perennial sources					
Source	Status (legend)	Discussions			Uses
		List	Last	Summary	
112 Ukraine		2019 2020 2020 1 A B	2020	112 Ukraine was deprecated following a 2019 RIC, which showed overwhelming consensus for the deprecation of a slew of sources associated with Russian disinformation in Ukraine. It was pointed out later in a 2020 RIC that 112 Ukraine had not been explicitly discussed in that first discussion prior to its blacklisting request. Further discussion established a rough consensus that the source is generally unreliable, but did not form a consensus for deprecation or blacklisting. The prior blacklisting was reversed as out of process. 112 Ukraine closed in 2021.	1 2
ABC News		1 2	2021	There is consensus that ABC News, the news division of the American Broadcasting Company , is generally reliable. It is not to be confused with other publications of the same name.	1 2

Further down the list, for Amazon, there’s a note that a consensus found it was generally unreliable to use as a source, with one of the reasons being that reviews on Amazon are considered self-published, with a link to the Wikipedia policy on this topic.

Amazon		1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2021	User reviews on Amazon are anonymous, self-published, and unverifiable, and should not be used at all. Amazon is a reliable source for basic information about a work (such as release date, ISBN, etc.), although it is unnecessary to cite Amazon when the work itself may serve as a source for that information (e.g., authors' names and ISBNs). Future release dates may be unreliable.	[show]
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Self-published sources, such as blogs or even self-published books, are largely not acceptable on Wikipedia. This also includes social media posts, comment sections, forum posts, or personal websites, and it’s because anyone can publish something and claim to be an expert, and it’s important that the information on Wikipedia is verifiable.

So unless an author has previously been published by reliable, independent publications, Wikipedia advises you to exercise caution when using self-published sources.

You can read the Wikipedia policy on self published sources by typing WP:SPS into the Wikipedia search bar to see the page pictured below.

Wikipedia:Verifiability

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Verifiability and other

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

Self-published sources

[edit]

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](#)

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](#), [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.^[a] 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.^[a] **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

[edit]

"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](#).

See also: [Wikipedia:Reliable sources § Statements of opinion](#)

Shortcuts

WP:SPS

WP:SELF PUB

WP:SELF PUBLISH

WP:BLOGS

WP:EXPERTSPS

Wikipedia is also very strict when it comes to biographical articles about living people, and in these cases you should **never** rely on self-published sources. For more information on why Wikipedia is so strict around these types of articles in particular, type WP:BLP into the Wikipedia search bar to read the policy on Biographies of living persons, as pictured below.

Wikipedia:Biographies of living persons

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the guideline on whether a person is sufficiently noteworthy to have an article, see [Wikipedia:Notability \(people\)](#).

This page documents an English Wikipedia policy.

It describes a widely accepted standard that all editors should normally follow. Changes made to it should reflect consensus.

Shortcut WP:BLP

Report problems about particular biographical material on Wikipedia to the biographies of living persons noticeboard. See also [§ Dealing with articles about yourself](#), below.

This page in a nutshell: Material about living persons added to any Wikipedia page must be written with the greatest care and attention to verifiability, neutrality, and avoidance of original research.

Do you find this page confusing? Do you need help?

[show]

Editors must take particular care when adding information about living persons to any Wikipedia page, including but not limited to articles, talk pages, project pages, and drafts.^[a] Such material requires a high degree of sensitivity, and must adhere strictly to all applicable laws in the United States, to this policy, and to Wikipedia's three core content policies:

Neutral point of view (NPOV)

Verifiability (V)

No original research (NOR)



Websites that rely on user-generated content are also generally unacceptable as reliable sources on Wikipedia. Although these websites often have a lot of useful information, such as release dates of movies or writing credits for music, the content is often contributed by users and included without a source. Because of this, there's

no way to verify the information is correct, and mistakes or incorrect information can appear.

At the end of the day, verifiability is important on Wikipedia too, and any information on Wikipedia that isn't referenced is likely to be removed because no one can verify whether the information is correct.

All of this doesn't mean that your sources have to all be freely available online, just that someone should be able to verify it. So, if you were to use a book as a source, ideally someone should be able to find a copy in a library collection to double check the source.

Likewise, if a source is only accessible behind a paywall, this is still ok to use, as although not everyone will be able to read the source, someone else with access to the resource could.

Wikipedia Resource Exchange

The screenshot shows the Wikipedia page for the WikiProject Resource Exchange. The page title is "Wikipedia:WikiProject Resource Exchange/Resource Request" with a language selector for 15 languages. Below the title are tabs for "Project page" and "Talk". A breadcrumb trail reads "From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" and "< Wikipedia:WikiProject Resource Exchange". The main heading is "RESOURCE REQUEST" in large, bold, gold letters. Below this is a button that says "Click here to create a new request". To the right of the heading is a "Shortcuts" box with links for "WP:RX", "WP:REX", and "WP:REREQ", and an owl icon. Below the heading is a section "How to use this page" with an "edit" link. Underneath is a "Making a request" section with an "edit" link. A light blue box contains a tip: "Before asking volunteers to look for your source, try finding it yourself with the tools at your disposal." Below this is an information icon and text: "In particular, eligible editors can use the Wikipedia Library, which gives access to content provided by numerous academic publishers." A list of guidelines follows: 1. Though we would prefer you to ask for a specific journal, article or work, we will accept open-ended questions. You can ask for all kinds of sources here, either on this page or by writing directly to an active user. 2. Provide as much detail as possible: a full citation with author, title, publisher, date and identifiers like DOI, ISBN, ISSN, PMID, OCLC, etc. Indicate which article you need this for. 3. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot send you full book/thesis copies. Narrow down your request to a specific chapter or page(s). 4. Add the {{Deenhard}} template when your request is completed. On the right side of the page is a large "Rx" logo with a warning box: "Fixing references and common medical problems! Warning: for legal reasons, we must note that the Resource Exchange cannot fix any medical problems. But it can fix references."

If you can't find a source you need for your research, there is the WikiProject Resource Exchange where you can request help accessing sources, including those behind a paywall.

It can be found by typing WP:RX into the Wikipedia search bar, and you can request help finding or accessing something you need to expand a Wikipedia article you're working on.

You can also browse the current requests and see if you can help someone locate a source.

There's also some general tips on finding sources on a page called Find Your Source, pictured below.

Wikipedia:Find your source Add languages

Project page [Talk](#) [Read](#) [Edit source](#) [View history](#) [Tools](#)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This page is about finding a specific source. For finding new sources, see Wikipedia:FIND.

Shortcut
WP:FYS



THE WIKIPEDIA LIBRARY

FIND YOUR SOURCE

When researching with Wikipedia, you should read the cited sources – but how can you find them?

I am looking for...

Scholarly Journal Articles
Books
Newspaper articles
More help finding sources

Help using Wikipedia in Research



Academic Journal articles

- If a DOI or other identifier is included, you can click on it to find an online copy of the article. This may or may not be free to access, but will give you a place to start. If the article does not appear free to access, you may still be able to find the article elsewhere, whether online or through a nearby library. Consider the resources in the following points as further guides to accessing such articles.
- Install the [Unpaywall](#) extension on your browser: you will have a 50% chance of finding the full text in open access, wherever you found it.
- Search for the article title on [Google Scholar](#). If the initial result is behind a paywall, try clicking on the "All X versions" link - this will tell you if

You can visit the Find Your Source page by typing WP:FYS into the Wikipedia search bar, and it's worth remembering as it could be useful later on if you need tips on finding resources for your research.

Additional sources and further reading

Information on References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_sources

Wikipedia's Guide to Reliable Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources

Wikipedia's Perennial Sources list:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources/Perennial_sources

Wikipedia's Policy on Primary and Secondary Sources information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research#Primary,_secondary_and_tertiary_sources

Wikipedia's Policy on Biography of Living Persons:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Biographies_of_living_persons

Wikipedia's Policy on Verifiability: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>

Resource Exchange Resource Request:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Resource_Exchange/Resource_Request

Find Your Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Find_your_source

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