

What is Wikipedia?



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Online encyclopedia [Wikipedia](#) consists of millions of articles in more than 270 languages. The name comes from the Hawaiian word *wiki* meaning 'quick', which has gradually been adopted to denote a kind of technology that enables collaborative websites and 'encyclopedias'.

The articles on Wikipedia are written by tens of thousands of volunteer contributors all over the world. In addition, hundreds of thousands of registered visitors make daily edits to the content. As a result, Wikipedia is a massive online source of information on an enormous range of subjects.

Those contributing as writers and editors can do so regardless of their qualifications, so quality can vary and some 'editing' is carried out for not altogether positive reasons. All users are advised to consult other sources to verify Wikipedia's content before quoting it in a factual publication, as its 'open source' approach leaves it vulnerable to inaccuracies.

Key benefits and features of Wikipedia

- It's easy to search.
- The contents page acts as a guide and breaks down articles by subject.
- The collection of 'featured content' articles represent the very best of Wikipedia.
- Excellent linking within articles takes you to content on different aspects of the same subject.
- External sources are listed at the end of most articles.
- Articles often include images and/or audio/video content.
- Within the 'Community portal', you can interact with others contributing to Wikipedia, find out what's being worked on and what still needs to be added.
- You can join and contribute edits or new articles.
- The forum is a great place to discuss all things Wikipedia.
- Content can be found in multiple languages – although, as the illustration above shows, English is by far the most popular.

Next steps

Computer terms and internet jargon

What is the internet?

How to get the news on the internet

Search guides

Search

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