

Wikipedia:Wikipedia is not a reliable source

For information on citing Wikipedia as a source in an academic setting, see [Wikipedia:Citing Wikipedia](#).



This is an [explanatory supplement](#) to the [Wikipedia:Reliable sources guideline](#).

This page is intended to provide additional information about concepts in the page(s) it supplements. This page is not one of [Wikipedia's policies or guidelines](#), as it has not been [thoroughly vetted](#) by the community.



This page in a nutshell: Do not use a Wikipedia article as a source for another Wikipedia article, even when describing Wikipedia.

Wikipedia is not a reliable source. Wikipedia can be edited by anyone at any time. This means that any information it contains at any particular time could be [vandalism](#), a work in progress, or just plain wrong. [Biographies of living persons](#), subjects that happen to be in the news, and politically or culturally contentious topics are especially vulnerable to these issues. Edits on Wikipedia that are in error may eventually be fixed. However, because Wikipedia is a volunteer-run project, it cannot monitor every contribution all the time. There are many errors that remain unnoticed for days, weeks, months, or even years. **Therefore, Wikipedia should *not* be considered a definitive source in and of itself.**

The same applies to Wikipedia's [sister projects](#), as well as websites that [mirror](#) or [use](#) it as a source themselves, and [printed books](#) or other material derived primarily or entirely from Wikipedia articles.

1. Wikipedia generally uses reliable secondary sources, which vet data from primary sources. If the information on another Wikipedia page (which you want to cite as the source) has a primary or secondary source, you should be able to cite that primary or secondary source and eliminate the middleman (or "middle-page" in this case).
2. Always be careful of what you read: it might not be consistently accurate.
3. Neither articles on Wikipedia nor websites that [mirror Wikipedia](#) can be used as sources, because this is **circular sourcing**.
4. An exception to this is when Wikipedia is being discussed in an article, which may cite an article, guideline, discussion, statistic or other content from Wikipedia or a sister project as a primary source to support a statement about Wikipedia (while avoiding undue emphasis on Wikipedia's role or views, and inappropriate self-reference).

Articles are only as good as the editors who have been editing them—their interests, education and background—and the efforts they have put into a particular topic or article. Since we try to avoid [original research](#), a particular article may only be as good as (a) the available and discovered [reliable sources](#), and (b) the subject matter may allow. Since the vast majority of editors are anonymous, you have only their [editing history](#) and their [user pages](#) as benchmarks. Of course, Wikipedia makes no representation as to their truth. Further, Wikipedia is collaborative by nature, and individual articles may be the work of one or many contributors over varying periods. Articles vary in quality and content, widely and unevenly, and also depending on the quality of sources (and their writers, editors and publishers) that are referenced and/or linked. Circumstances may have changed since the edits were added.

It also helps to look at the article's editing history (it may have changed drastically over time; you can identify individual contributions and their contributors by user name), and the article's talk page (to see controversies and development).

To be sure, Wikipedia is a good springboard from which to launch your own research, but ... *caveat lector*.

See also

- [Wikipedia:List of citogenesis incidents](#)
- [Wikipedia:Wikipedia is a tertiary source](#)
- [Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Self-references to avoid](#)
- [Wikipedia:Verifiability#Wikipedia and sources that mirror or use it](#)
- [Wikipedia:Reliable sources](#)
- [Wikipedia:Wikipedia is not a publisher of original thought](#)
- [Wikipedia:Wikipedia is wrong](#)
- [Wikipedia:Academic use](#)

External links

- [Does Wikipedia Suck?](https://web.archive.org/web/20201031233550/https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2010/03/26/does-wikipedia-suck) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201031233550/https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2010/03/26/does-wikipedia-suck>) on teaching students to evaluate sources
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_is_not_a_reliable_source&oldid=967520265"

This page was last edited on 13 July 2020, at 18:39 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.