

Citing sources on Wikipedia



Citations are critical to make content on Wikipedia reliable. Here's how to cite sources in the articles on which you are working.

A core principle of Wikipedia is that facts added to the encyclopedia must be verifiable. In other words, everything you write on Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable source, like a peer-reviewed journal, a book, or a mainstream newspaper article.

In general, you should be citing at least once per paragraph you contribute to Wikipedia, but any quotations, hard facts such as statistics, or potentially contentious claims must be cited. Any information you add that is not cited to a source may be deleted from Wikipedia, so it's important to ensure that you add proper citations to your work.

Remember, Wikipedia forbids original research. That means it is wrong to connect two pieces of information you get from different sources to reach a new conclusion. Instead, find a source that draws that conclusion on its own and cite that source. Take this sentence, for example: "The World Anti-Doping Agency was set up in 1990,^[1] but doping in professional sports rose throughout the 1990s.^[2]" Although each of the facts may come from the cited sources, they are combined in a way that implies a conclusion that isn't found in either source.

Before you begin

Look for a few Featured Articles or Good Articles in the subject area in which you're writing, and see how the authors of those article cite sources. Some disciplines, such as the biomedical sciences, have additional sourcing requirements (type [WP:MEDRS](#) into the search bar to see these). Some favor in-text attribution, where you add the name of the author into the sentence in which you add the fact you got from that author (see [WP:INTEXT](#) for more information).

There is no single acceptable style on Wikipedia, like MLA or APA style, as you may be used to in your university courses. You should, however, maintain a consistent style throughout the article, so if you are

expanding an existing article, take care to ensure all references are in the same style. When expanding an existing article, take care to not remove any citations previous editors added to the article. One easy way to ensure consistency in style — and to add your citations in general — is to use the citation toolbar.

Using the citation toolbar

To access the toolbar, click the word "Cite" on the editing window toolbar. That will provide a dropdown that offers templates for websites, newspapers, books, and journals, the most common sources used on Wikipedia. If you click one of these, you will see a form asking you for the important information to provide in your citation. Fill out the form.

In the box that says "Ref name", give a short name for this particular source. You can then use this short name as the citation any other time you cite that source. To do so, put your cursor at the location you want to add a footnote, and click the "Named references" button on the toolbar. Select the appropriate short name you've given for that reference from the dropdown.

At the end of your article, add a section called `==References==`. Underneath that section, type in: `{{Reflist}}`.

The tool will automatically format and list all of the full citations you have added along the way from the citation toolbar.

See also

For more information, see the following:

- What are reliable sources? <http://enwp.org/WP:RS>
- Referencing for beginners: <http://enwp.org/WP:REFB>
- More on citing sources: <http://enwp.org/WP:CITE>