

NEUTRAL POINT OF VIEW

Whatever we write in Wikipedia must be encyclopedic, i.e. it should have all the qualities of the language used in the best of the encyclopedias of the world. One of the most important quality that the writing must have is "Neutral Point of View" abbreviated as NPOV.

In fact, it is a fundamental principle of Wikipedia and of other Wikimedia projects. It is also one of Wikipedia's three core content policies; the other two are "Verifiability" and "No original research". **(Slide)**

These policies jointly determine the type and quality of material that is acceptable in Wikipedia articles. They work in harmony and they should not be interpreted in isolation from one another. Editors are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with all three.

It is the first & most important of the three core content policies. The principles upon which it is based cannot be superseded by other policies or guidelines, nor by editor consensus.

Neutral Point of View is NOT NEGOTIABLE. Better than an encyclopedia has no material than it has POV.

If contravened, it is one of the very few issues which will warrant intervention, right from complete destruction of articles and reverting of the complete editing of users.

But what does NPOV mean?

NPOV or Neutral Point of View is a way to describe not facts, but points of view or opinion. A lot of the material on Wikipedia is fact; an equally large amount of material is a point of view.

It means that the material must... **(Slide)**

"represent fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without editorial bias" (i.e. How you say it)

"and must include all of the significant views that have been published by reliable sources on a topic". (i.e. What do you say or not say?)

Fair - it must be impartial & unprejudiced.

Proportionate - it should reflect the true importance of each point of view, and reflect it appropriately. Neither too much emphasis, nor under emphasis, correctly nuanced.

Without editorial bias - it is possible to use fair & proportionate language but by selection of judicious facts or sequence push a particular point of view, to the unsuspecting reader.

Significant views - every view is not accepted but the really important & the major ones are. These are decided based on study of reliable sources, pseudoscience, fringe theories, and views with insignificant following are not reflected.

Example: Consider the belief that the Earth is flat both by ancient Greeks and by a cult of modern people who choose to ignore the evidence that the Earth is round. The initial belief of the ancient Greeks that the Earth was flat is mentioned in the main text of the article “Earth” as:

“Initial belief in a flat Earth was gradually displaced in the Greek colonies of southern Italy during the late 6th century BC by the idea of spherical Earth.”

but the cult of modern Flat Earth theorists who refuse to believe the Earth is not round is not mentioned in the main article on Earth. However, since they are notable in their own way, they have a mention in the article about the idea of “Flat Earth” as well as a full separate article about them called as “Modern flat Earth societies.”

In this way, the representation of Flat Earth is just and proportionate. The facts are placed in the correct place as per their significance.

Before we go ahead, it must be pointed out that as a project arising out of Western science, philosophical thought, logic & rationale, the basis for Wikipedia is based on the concept of truth & science as in Western academia. Alternative models cannot be used as the underlying basis of justification for fundamental changes in Wikipedia.

Techniques to achieve NPOV

- **Naming.** Bias can arise from incorrect naming of an article. For example, an article titled "Criticisms of X" might be better renamed "Societal views on X".
- **Article Structure.** The internal structure of an article could be done in a way to project a POV. Structure must reflect mainstream views to protect neutrality, and to avoid problems like POV forking and undue weight. Although specific article structures are not, as a rule, prohibited, care must be taken to ensure that the overall presentation is broadly neutral.
- **Good research.** Thorough coverage of research on a topic, especially a controversial one, is a must to reduce chances of own bias and to prevent this being introduced by others.
- **Reliable Sources. Bias in sources.**
- **Due and undue weight.** (Slide)
 - If a viewpoint is in the majority, then it should be easy to substantiate it with reference to ***commonly accepted reference texts***;
 - If a viewpoint is held by a significant minority, then it should be easy to name ***prominent*** adherents;
 - If a viewpoint is held by an extremely small minority, it ***does not belong on Wikipedia***, regardless of whether it is true or you can prove it, except perhaps in some ancillary article.
- **Balancing aspects.** An article should not give undue weight to minor aspects of its subject, but should strive to treat each aspect with a weight proportional to its treatment in the body of reliable, published material on the subject. **False**

Balance. Giving "equal validity" can create a false balance. This is often attempted

- **Impartial tone.** In articles and text dealing with disputes. Wikipedia *describes* disputes. Wikipedia does not *engage* in disputes. A neutral characterization of disputes requires presenting viewpoints with a consistently impartial tone; otherwise articles end up as partisan commentaries *even while* presenting all relevant points of view. The tone of Wikipedia articles should be impartial, neither endorsing nor rejecting a particular point of view. Try not to quote directly from participants engaged in a heated dispute; instead, summarize and present the arguments in an impartial tone.
- **Words to watch & weasel words.** "Said" vs "Claimed". "Most people think". Avoid euphemisms, idioms, cliches, inexact references to time, unspecified places, mixing person with appointment, etc.

Handling NPOV Disputes

- Differentiate between opinion & fact.
- Provide references to all facts & opinions.
- Separate out the issue with biased POV.
- Discuss NPOV variants on talk page.
- Develop consensus.
- Refer disputes to the NPOV noticeboard or its equivalent.

Resources

- [Neutral Point of View Policy Guideline.](#)
- [Logical fallacies.](#)
- [Words to watch.](#)
- [NPOV FAQ.](#)
- [NPOV Noticeboard - to report disputes.](#)

- [NPOV Tutorial.](#)
- Others :
 - [No Original Research.](#)
 - [Verifiability.](#)

ENDNOTE

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