

How to evaluate a Wikipedia article

- **Look at the article quality:**

- Does the writing read well? Is the topic clearly explained?
- Are there any references and outside links? Are there citations to print sources as well as online sources? Are individual statements referenced with footnotes in the text?
- Are Wikipedia style conventions followed? (such as: is the article broken into sections; is there a clear introductory paragraph; are proper names and key concepts linked to other Wikipedia articles; is there any other formatting, such as images)? The Manual of Style (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style) spells out these conventions in detail.

- **Look at the page edit history:** (click on the “history” tab at the top of the article to see a record of all changes that have been made to the article)



- Was the article recently created? When was it last edited? (older articles have likely been seen by more people).
- Have many people contributed to the article, or is the work of only one or two editors (note the difference between major edits to content and minor edits to formatting). Were those contributors logged in or editing anonymously? (you can check an editor’s other contributions by clicking on the “contribs” link next to their username or clicking on their IP address).
- Is there evidence of ongoing edit wars or arguments over content (continual reversions of changes between two or more people?) Do the same changes keep getting made and undone?
- Is there evidence of heavy or continued vandalism? (constant changes and reversions with edit summaries like “revert” or “rvv vandalism”). If so, check that you have a good version of the page.

- **Check the article’s discussion page, if one exists:** (click the “discussion” tab at the top of the article)



- Are there discussions about the validity of the article? Are questions raised about the article?
- Does the article topic appear to be controversial or otherwise under debate?

- **Check the template messages at the top of the article**, if any exist:

- Is the article tagged with a “clean-up” note, such as:
 - “To meet Wikipedia’s [quality standards](#), this article or section may require [cleanup](#).”
 - “This article or section does not cite its [references or sources](#).”
 - “Some information in this article or section has not been [verified](#) and may not be reliable.”
 - “This article or section may contain [original research](#) or [unverified claims](#).”

If so, at least one Wikipedia editor thought that the article had problems that should be addressed by other editors, and the article may not be reliable.

- Finally, always do further research – like any encyclopedia, Wikipedia should be a starting place for research, not an end destination, and independent confirmation of any fact presented is advised.

- More information can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia.