

How to Use Wikipedia

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Audience: High school students

What is Wikipedia?

- Wikipedia is the free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit. Wikipedia articles describe information on a particular topic; they are similar to yet different from expository essays.

What is an Expository Essay?

- An expository essay explains or describes one topic in a clear and concise manner.¹

Wikipedia Articles vs Expository Essays:

- Similarities:
 - They share the convention that a writer does not assume the reader has prior knowledge or understanding of the topic.
 - Both are carefully organized.
- Differences:
 - Wikipedia articles do not have a thesis statement but expository essays must have a thesis.
 - Both are written in clear and easily understood language.

How do I know if I can use a Wikipedia article?

- Some Wikipedia articles have a message box displayed at the top that explains what still needs work in the article.
- **You can only choose an article that does not have a message at the top or if the message is not about the section of the article that you intend to use.**²
- Example of a message box:



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Wikipedia & Sources:

- What is Verifiability?
 - “Verifiability means that people reading and editing the encyclopedia can check that the information in the article comes from a reliable source.”³ You can use how to analyse [a website](#) and [an article](#) to check the sources in the references section.
- What are Reliable Sources?
 - Reliable sources are “published material with a reliable publication process, authors who are regarded as authoritative in relation to the subject, or both. These qualifications should be demonstrable to other people.”⁴

¹ [What is Expository Writing?](#)

² [The Anatomy of a Wikipedia Article](#)

³ [Wikipedia: Verifiability](#)

⁴ [Wikipedia: Identifying Reliable Sources](#)

Remember that the information in the Wikipedia article that you choose should concur with the information that you find in your other sources.