What is Wikipedia?

Imagine a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing.

Wikipedia is a free content encyclopedia that can be read and edited by anyone.

An international project

Wikipedia began as an English-language project on January 15, 2001. It was soon joined by a German edition, and in a short time by many other languages. Enormous efforts are underway to highlight the international nature of



the project. While English, with more than 1.5 million articles is still the largest Wikipedia, there are well over three million articles in more than 250 languages, some quite large, and others just getting started.

Nobody knows everything but everybody knows something

Wikipedia was founded on the belief that virtually everybody has some knowledge that they can share with others. Our editors range in age from seven to seventy and beyond, each of them contributing a little something to help make this the most well-rounded collaborative educational effort ever seen. We believe that every single person has the right to learn, but also that everyone has something that they can (and should) teach others.

Who are the people in the Wikipedia community?

On Wikipedia, anyone can create or modify an article instantly, so that no article has a single author. Instead, tens and even hundreds of people work together, sharing what they know to edit and improve the content. The result is a never-ending "work in progress," always getting more thorough and always getting better. Contributors can create an account with a user name

and a password, but this is not required. Much of our best work comes from anonymous users, many of them just passing through, who notice a little something that they can tidy up. Many of them become hooked, and are soon an integral part of the Wikipedia volunteer community. Our neutral point of view policy encourages people from diverse backgrounds to work together. When disputes arise, we have mechanisms in place to resolve them amicably.

"You can edit this page right now!"

The key to Wikipedia's success is innovative new software known as "wiki." Created by Ward Cunningham in 1995, this software makes it possible to create a dynamic website, in which all users can edit a webpage quickly and easily, using their personal web browsers. It's easy. It's fast. It's a wiki!

Wikiwiki – "fast" in Hawaian

The wiki language, known as wikitext, is much simpler than HTML. It is practically intuitive, so that anyone can learn it in just a few minutes. For example, to italicize

$\Theta \Theta \Theta$	Editing Wikipedia – Edit this page – Wikipedia, the
🔶 · 🔶 🛃	🔯 🏦 Whttp://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia&action=ei
WIKIPEDIA The Free Encyclopedia	article discussion edit this page history Editing Wikipedia From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. B Ab Image: State of the stat
 Community portal Current events Recent changes Random page 	
Help Donations search	Wikipedia has been praised for being free, being openly and being detailed. It has been criticized for lack of systemic bias, and for deficiencies in traditional ency experiment of a [[discourse]] as defined in social scie social boundary defining what can be said about a speci
Go Search	the early [[third millennium]].

text, surround it with two apostrophes; use three for bolded text, and enclose a word in two brackets ([[]]) to create a link.

The software used by Wikipedia is known as Mediawiki, and was developed with the specific goal of creating an encyclopedia in mind. Today, Mediwiki software is distributed under a General Public License (GPL). It is used by many other wikis, though Wikipedia is still the largest wiki in existence.

How do I become a wikipedian?

Easy, all you have to do is go to Wikipedia and begin to edit. Add something you know, expand an article or simply improve its style. We're sure you'll be coming back again and again to the fastest growing Internet phenomenon in the world!

The GNU free documentation license

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Wikipedia's sister projects

As Wikipedia grew, sister projects were founded to enhance the content of the encyclopedia. Many of these have taken on a life of their own, though they are all part of the Wikimedia family, and there is constant cooperation between them. Our sister projects include:

Wiktionary

a free dictionary project in many languages http://www.wiktionary.org

Wikibooks

a project to develop free learning materials http://www.wikibooks.org

Wikiquote

a free compendium of quotations http://wikiquote.org

Wikisource

a repository of source texts http://www.wikisource.org

Wikinews

collaboratively written news http://www.wikinews.org

Wikimedia Commons

a repository for pictures and other media files under free licenses http://commons.wikimedia.org



Wiktionary

['wikjənri] n., a wiki-based Open Content dictionary

Wikimedia, the organisation

The Wikimedia Foundation, based in Florida, USA, is the parent organization of Wikipedia and its sister projects. It is a non-profit organization with the goal of providing free knowledge to every person in the world. Wikimedia



How can I help?

The Wikimedia Foundation relies on public donations to run its wiki-based projects. If you want to ensure that Wikipedia and all the other Wikimedia projects continue to grow and flourish, donate online with PayPal or MoneyBookers. Our account name is donation@wikimedia.org. PayPal allows for one time, monthly and yearly payment options. For more information, see our fundraising page at http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Fundraising.

Donate via postal mail

You can also send donations via snail-mail to Wikimedia's main office at the following address:

Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 200 2nd Ave South, #358 St. Petersburg, FL 33701-4313

If sending donations from outside the United States, please note that an international money order or a check payable in a United States bank would be appreciated, to avoid collection costs. Please do not send currency by mail.



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