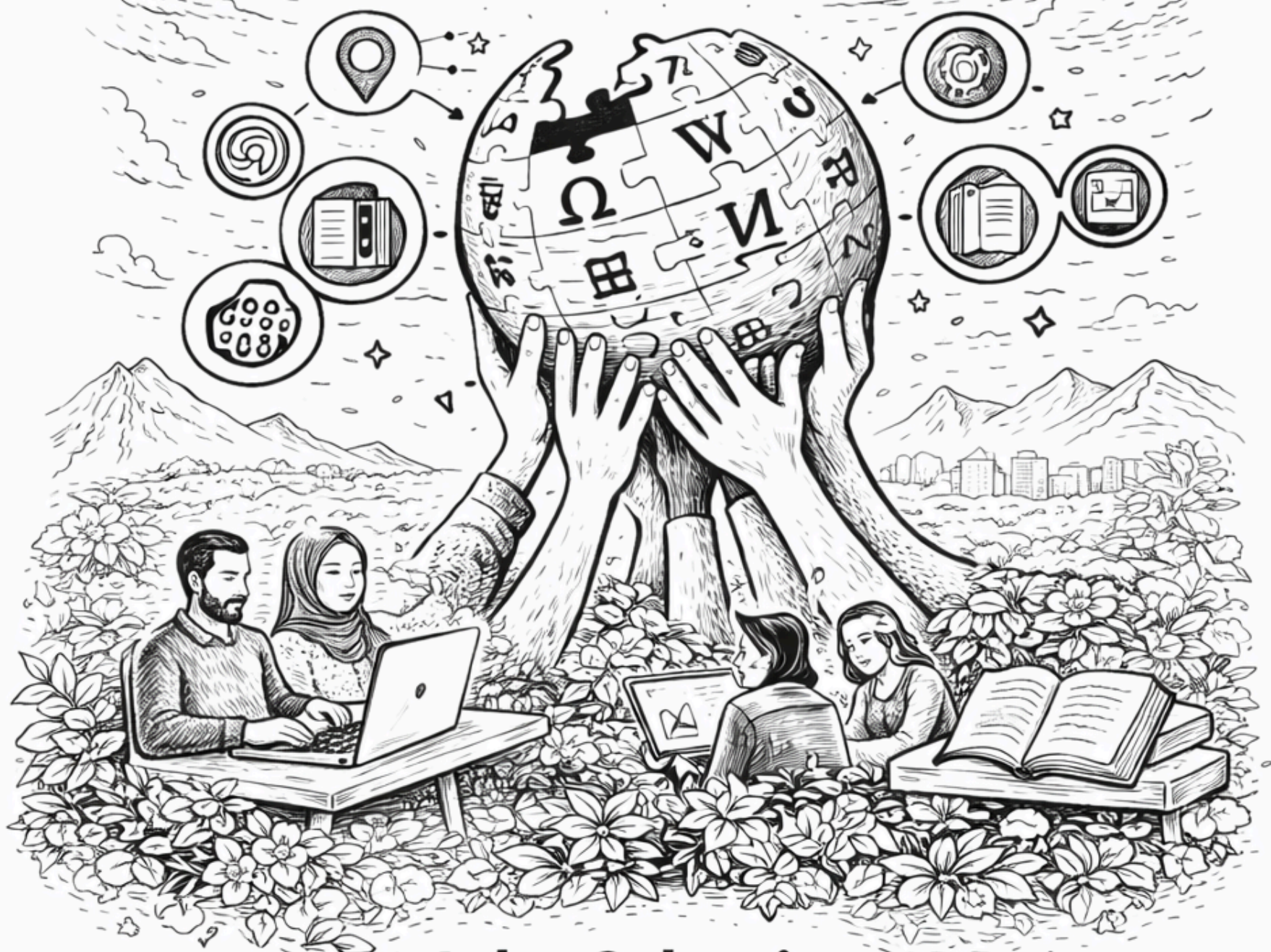


HOW TO

Write Your First
Wikipedia
Article
in Six Hours



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**Made possible with a generous grant from
The Harnisch Foundation**

How to Write Your First Wikipedia Article in Six Hours

Introduction

You are about to learn something surprisingly intimate: how to enter a public space with care.

You hover over **Edit**. You do not click. You scroll instead. You feel the strange pressure of being visible in a place that looks calm but is quietly alive. You wonder if someone will notice you. You wonder if you will do it wrong. You wonder if you should wait until you understand everything.

That reaction is normal.

Wikipedia looks like a website, but it is better understood as a living agreement. Millions of people, most of whom will never meet, cooperate to produce a single reference work. They do this without a central editor assigning topics, without a publishing calendar, without a manager approving drafts. The system works anyway. Not perfectly. Not smoothly. But remarkably. And the reason it works is not magic. It works because Wikipedia built a few simple rules that make large-scale collaboration possible.

This short book is a guided path into those rules.

The goal is practical. In roughly six hours, you will be able to create a new article responsibly, with citations, and with the habits that make your work sustainable. You will also learn how Wikipedia thinks, which is a different kind of skill. Many people can learn the buttons. Fewer people learn the method: how to make edits that other editors can trust, extend, and improve.

You do not need to be technical. You do not need to be an expert in your topic. You do not need to be fearless. You just need curiosity, patience, and a willingness to let published sources do the heavy lifting.

One more permission, right up front: your first successful Wikipedia day is often **one citation**, not one article. The skill is not grandness. The skill is steadiness.

Why Wikipedia exists

Wikipedia began with a simple moral intuition: access to knowledge should not depend on wealth, geography, or institutional affiliation. Before Wikipedia, reference information was often locked behind paywalls, expensive encyclopedias, or academic credentials. Even when information was technically available, it was scattered, uneven, and difficult to verify.

Wikipedia's answer was radical and plain: build a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit, and then design a process that makes "anyone can edit" compatible with "people can trust what they read." That tension is the beating heart of the project. Openness without standards becomes noise. Standards without openness becomes gatekeeping. Wikipedia tries, imperfectly, to hold both.

It is helpful to name the deeper motivation too. Wikipedia is not just a product. It is a public good. It is one of the few large-scale, noncommercial projects on the internet that still feels like it belongs to everyone.

How crowdsourcing becomes reliable

If you have ever wondered, "How can something edited by strangers be accurate," you are asking the right question. Wikipedia does not claim to be perfect. It claims to be correctable.

Crowdsourcing fails when it rewards speed, novelty, or charisma. It succeeds when it rewards transparency, evidence, and repair. Wikipedia's design pushes participants toward the second set of incentives. Every article has a history. Every change can be compared. Every claim can be sourced. Every disagreement can be debated in public. The trust model is not "trust the editor." It is "trust the process." Instead of asking you to believe a person, Wikipedia asks you to check a citation.

This is why the training you are about to do is not mainly about writing. It is about evidence, proportion, and the calm discipline of pointing outward.

The mental shift that makes Wikipedia feel easy

Most first-time editors struggle for the same reason: Wikipedia feels like a stage. You imagine invisible judges. You worry that a mistake will be permanent or humiliating. You fear stepping into a conversation where everyone else speaks a language you do not.

This book treats that reaction as normal, not as weakness. Wikipedia is public. Public spaces activate self-consciousness. The way through is not bravado. The way through is structure.

Each level in this course reduces a specific kind of fear by replacing it with a simple skill. You will learn how to enter the community, how to think in sources, how to test whether a topic belongs, how to draft with restraint, how to polish for credibility, and how to publish in a way that invites stewardship rather than conflict.

If you follow the steps, you will not just produce an article. You will become the kind of editor other editors can work with.

Your curiosity is the curriculum

A quiet secret of Wikipedia training is that motivation matters more than discipline. People do not keep editing because they were told to. They keep editing because something catches their attention and they want to improve it.

That is why this course begins with your interests.

You will build a watchlist of pages you care about. You will watch how those pages change over time. You will look at the conversations behind the scenes. You will start to notice patterns in how editors talk, how sources are used, how wording is softened, and how claims become stable.

Then you will choose a topic to write about. Not because someone assigned it, but because you found something worth clarifying, documenting, or bringing into the encyclopedia. Your curiosity will guide you to the work that you are most likely to finish.

What you will do, in six levels

This course is a rapid immersion, but it is not a rush. Each level builds a specific competency and produces an output you can point to.

Level One: Belonging and Signaling. It answers the first real question every new editor has: *How do I enter without panic?* You create an account, draft a simple userpage, build a watchlist that becomes your home base, and learn to read diffs so the site starts to feel navigable.

Level Two: Verifiability, Reliability, Discretion. It answers the second: *How do I speak without turning this into opinion?* You practice claim + citation in your sandbox, learn what counts as a strong source, and research at least one "citation needed" statement with an honest verdict.

Level Three: Notability and Systemic Bias. It answers the question that saves you hours of wasted effort: *Should this topic have an article at all?* You learn how Wikipedia decides what belongs, and you assemble a source set strong enough to support a real notability decision.

Level Four: Fact + Cite Drafting. It answers the craft question: *How do I turn sources into Wikipedia prose?* You translate published material into clear, restrained sentences and build a draft that stands on evidence rather than voice.

Level Five: Structure and Presentation. It answers the credibility question: *How do I make this feel like a real Wikipedia article?* You strengthen organization, links, references, and formatting so the page reads cleanly and signals care.

Level Six: Publishing and Discoverability. It answers the question most people skip: *What happens after it goes live?* You publish responsibly, connect the page to the wider encyclopedia so it can be found, and practice calm stewardship as others improve and reshape the work over time.

You do not need to master everything at once. You are building fluency through repetition: claim, source, proportion, clarity.

Level	Theme	Do	Learn
1.	<i>Belonging, Signaling</i>	Go to Wikipedia, Register, Userpage, User Talk, Watchlist, Diff.	Wikipedia:Simplified ruleset (overview)
2.	<i>Verifiability, Reliability, Discretion</i>	Talk, History, Contribs, Sandbox citation, citationhunt.org (pick topic).	WikiBlueprint Core Policies Guide (read the key excerpts)
3.	<i>Notability, Systemic Bias</i>	Topic list in Sandbox, Gather and analyze sources to test Notability.	WikiBlueprint Notability Guide (analyze source quality)
4.	<i>Copy Format, Fact + Cite,</i>	Draft in sandbox. Extract facts. Use as many of the best sources you can.	Wikipedia:Plain and Simple COI Guide (neutrality requires restraint)
5.	<i>Appearance, Links + References</i>	Finish drafting: Infobox, images, wikilinks, references.	Good article criteria (good quality recipe)
6.	<i>Discoverability, Categories</i>	Move it live! Categories, Wikiprojects, What Links Here, Description.	One Woman's Brilliant "Fuck You" to Wikipedia Trolls (stay resilient)

A note on ethics and safety

Wikipedia needs careful people. If you care about accuracy, fairness, and evidence, you belong here.

Wikipedia is also powerful. It shows up high in search results and shapes what people believe. That means editing comes with responsibility. If you are here to promote yourself, your organization, your product, or your cause, you will run into friction quickly. Wikipedia is built to resist marketing and advocacy, even when the subject is worthy.

Also, Wikipedia is public, very public. Every page, even your own draftspaces can be viewed by anyone on the internet. Be careful how much information you disclose about yourself, so editing stays fun and you can skip avoidable problems that take away from that joy.

Before you begin

Take one minute and choose a gentle posture toward yourself. You are not here to be impressive. You are here to become effective. Wikipedia rewards people who are patient, evidence-based, and clear. It is a long game built from small moves.

Open Wikipedia. Click on an article you love. Find **View history** and notice that the page has a memory. Every sentence you read was shaped by someone who was once new too. Then turn the page. Level One begins.

LEVEL 1



Level One: Belonging and Signaling

How you arrive on Wikipedia so the work feels safe, approachable, and collaborative

North Star: *You are teaching your nervous system that Wikipedia is a room you can safely enter.*

By the end of Level One, you are not trying to “know Wikipedia.” You are building four foundational capacities: you can show up with an account that does not accidentally trigger suspicion, you can present yourself with a small, human signal that makes collaboration easier, you can navigate Wikipedia from a home base instead of wandering aimlessly, and you can read a diff calmly, which is the beginning of resilience.

1.	<i>Belonging, Signaling</i>	Go to Wikipedia, Register, Userpage, User Talk, Watchlist, Diff.	Wikipedia:Simplified ruleset (overview)
Start.	<i>We want to become a part of the community, not just edit pages. We need to show others we're here to help so they assume the best of us.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to Wikipedia: Any way you like. It's a huge project in many languages. • Register: Use a positive, anonymous username like adj + noun (StokedIguana). • Userpage: 1) Greeting. 2) Big life themes. 3) Fun details. 4) Intentions to edit. • User Talk: Redlinked, not a good signal. Add a short note on User Talk. • Watchlist: Click the star on 20 articles that interest you. Private to you. • Diff: On watchlist, read left to right one line slowly. Then check a prev/diff. 	This is a short overview read. It doesn't need to be interrogated. I usually just ask if it basically made sense, and if anything stood out or surprised them.
<p>Wikipedia is not a machine you must master but a room you are entering. When you press edit, you step into a new space, and that can feel like walking onto a stage. The truth is no one is waiting to grade your first move. The project grows through small, steady contributions that improve over time. When you choose a username, draft a short userpage, and watch a page evolve, you help your nervous system settle. You begin to experience the site as navigable, not intimidating.</p>			

Start.

The first time you open Wikipedia with the intention to contribute, you are not just visiting a website. You are walking into a living social system. The interface is only the surface. Underneath is the feeling of being visible, the fear of being corrected, and the quiet suspicion that everyone else already knows the rules.

So before you “learn Wikipedia,” do something smaller and more powerful: **enter the room on purpose**. Open Wikipedia in any way you like, in any language you like, and notice what happens in your body when you even consider clicking edit. If your mind starts narrating catastrophe, that is normal. It means you are treating visibility as danger. Your first practice is not editing. Your first practice is *arrival*.

Here is the sentence you will return to whenever you feel unsure: **mistakes are reversible**. Say it once now. You will use it again.

Wikipedia can feel like a public stage with invisible judges. Your brain reads the edit button as exposure. You imagine that if you do the wrong thing, you will be corrected sharply, or you will break something, or you will look foolish in front of strangers. Even when you know, intellectually, that mistakes can be undone, your body may not believe it yet. Your body feels the risk first.

So Level One is designed to teach your body that Wikipedia is survivable. It does that through two simple moves. First, you create a few clear signals that help other editors interpret you correctly. Second, you learn one literacy skill that dissolves fear: reading a diff.

Start with the first signal: **register an account** and choose a **username** that reads like a person, not a brand. A username is the name attached to your edits, the label other people see in the page history. Many newcomers choose a name that feels direct and honest: their real name, their organization, their project, their role. Then they are surprised when they feel watched. Wikipedia is not punishing you for being transparent. It is reacting to patterns it has seen thousands of times. Accounts that look official or promotional often arrive with agendas, even when the person behind them means well. So choose ease. Pick a positive, anonymous username, something like *adjective + noun*.

Micro-check: *Does this sound like a human, not an organization?*

Trap to watch for: *Transparency Trap*. If your name starts sounding like a role, a brand, or an institution, you are buying scrutiny. Choose ease.

Your second signal is your **userpage**. A userpage is your little profile page on Wikipedia. It is not a résumé and it is not social media. Think of it as a small note that says, “Here is a human behind this account, and here is what I’m here to do.” A blank userpage is not a moral failing, but it can make you harder to interpret. A userpage that reads like a manifesto, marketing copy, or a long biography can also create distance. The middle path is small and human.

So draft your userpage in four lines: a greeting, big life themes (broad interests), one fun detail, and your intention to edit constructively. Keep it short on purpose. You are not trying to impress. You are reducing uncertainty.

Model Box: A simple userpage

Hi! I’m learning to contribute to Wikipedia.

I’m interested in local history, music, and ecology.

I love hiking and collecting odd facts.

I’m practicing small, constructive edits and learning Wikipedia’s norms.

Micro-check: *Could a stranger read this and assume good intent?*

Bonus tip: Look at a few ordinary userpages to calibrate what “normal” looks like. You are not copying. You are learning the shape.

Now create the channel where communication can land: your **user talk page**. Every account has one. A user talk page is like an inbox that lives on the site. Other editors use it to leave notes: questions, suggestions, corrections, thanks, warnings, and sometimes confusion. Newcomers often fear talk pages because they imagine conflict and judgment. But the deeper truth is simpler: talk pages are just the project’s communication system. The aim is not ceremony. The aim is reachability.

If your user talk page does not exist yet, make it real with one short note, such as: “This is my user talk page. Feel free to leave notes here.” That single move signals, quietly, that you are reachable and not hiding.

Micro-check: *Does this channel exist if someone needs to reach me?*

Trap to watch for: *Talk Page Dread*. If you imagine every message is an accusation, you will avoid the mailbox. Treat it like email. You can always pause before replying.

Now give yourself a home base: build a **watchlist**. A watchlist is a private list of pages you choose to “watch,” meaning Wikipedia will show you recent changes made to those pages in one convenient place. You add a page to your watchlist by clicking the little star icon at the top of an article. Without a watchlist, Wikipedia can feel like a vast ocean. You can scroll forever and still feel lost. With a watchlist, Wikipedia becomes a neighborhood.

So click the star on 20 articles that genuinely interest you. Choose pages you would actually enjoy returning to: your city or region, books or films or music or sports, museums or parks or architecture, animals or plants or science topics. The watchlist is private to you. This is not a public declaration. It is how you make Wikipedia feel navigable.

Micro-check: *Would I actually enjoy returning to these pages?*

And then, finally, learn the literacy skill that makes everything else survivable: **the diff**.

A quick definition: a **diff** (short for *difference*) is a simple comparison view that shows what changed between two versions of a page. It highlights what text was added and what text was removed. You do not need to understand everything about Wikipedia to read a diff. You just need to be able to look at a change and describe it plainly.

This is not a technical footnote. This is the hinge of your confidence. The diff is the core resilience skill on Wikipedia because it reveals the truth of the project: Wikipedia is built from tiny moves, not grand performances. People fix typos. People add citations (a citation is the footnote that points to a published source). People soften tone. People rearrange structure. People undo mistakes. People disagree sometimes, but even disagreement has recognizable patterns. The system expects revision. Which means the system expects imperfection. Which means you can breathe.

So go to your watchlist, open a recent change, and click into a diff. Then do the simplest possible thing: read left to right, one line at a time, and say one sentence in plain language: “**This edit did ____.**” You are not trying to judge whether the edit was good or bad yet. You are learning to see what happened.

Micro-check: *Can I describe the change without judging it?*

Trap to watch for: *Diff Blur*. If the diff starts looking like code, reduce the task to one line. Describe only that.

At this point, you have done something more important than “learn the site.” You have begun to feel that the site can be learned.

As you go through Level One, you will probably meet a few predictable resistance patterns. They are normal. They do not mean you are doing it wrong.

Level One succeeds when you stop bracing. When Wikipedia feels less like a stage and more like a room. When you can say, honestly, "I know how to be here. I am just getting started."

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Open *Wikipedia:Simplified ruleset* and read it once, start to finish, without interrogating it. Then read it a second time quickly, looking only for headings or phrases that feel like "rules of the room." Notice one thing that surprises you and one thing that reassures you.

Trap to watch for: *Stage Fright*. If you start thinking "I'm going to mess this up," return to the sentence: **mistakes are reversible**.

Return (10 minutes). Visit your userpage and read it once like a stranger would. If anything feels too long, too personal, too official, or too persuasive, shorten it. Then add 10 more pages to your watchlist by starring pages you genuinely care about.

Trap to watch for: *Transparency Trap*. If your page or username starts sounding like a role, a brand, or an organization, you are buying scrutiny. Choose ease.

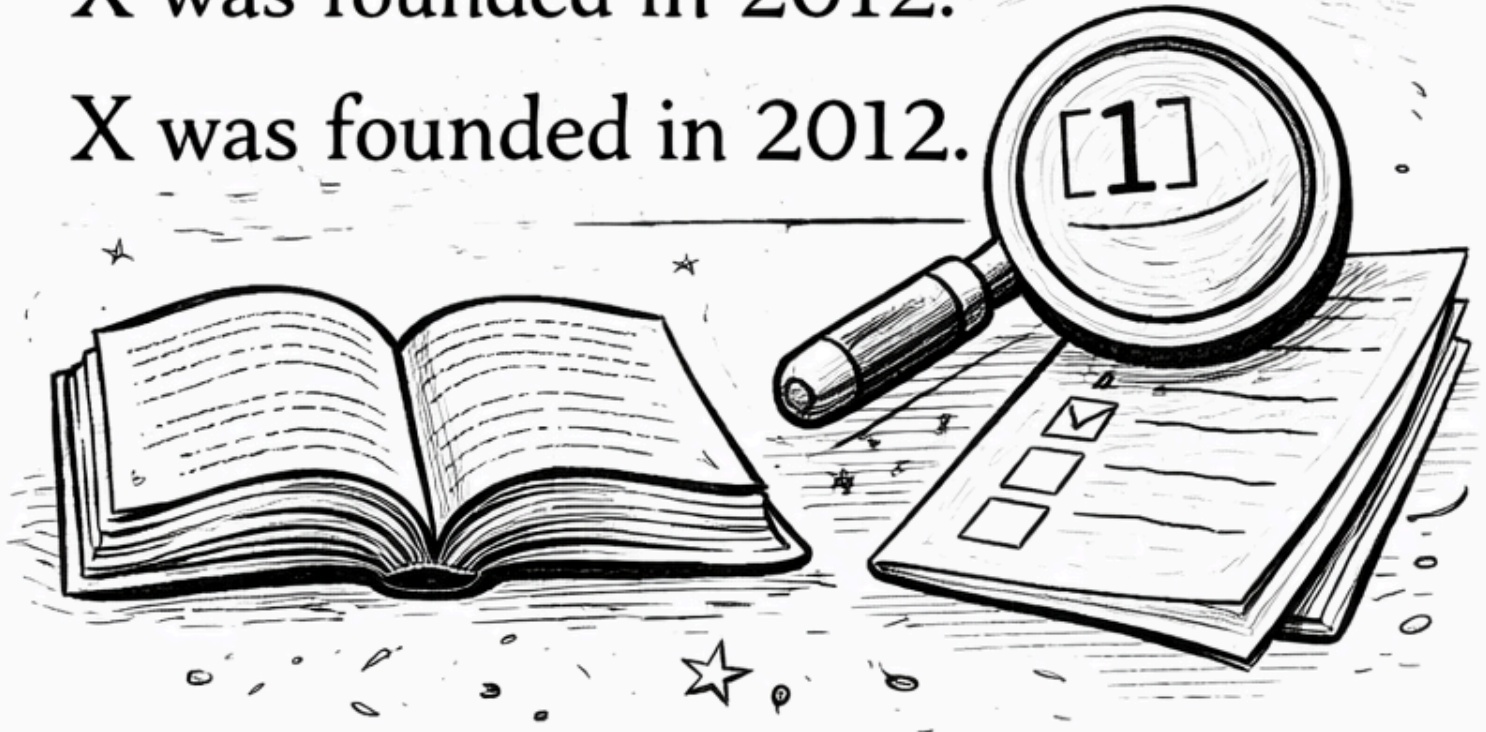
Review (10 minutes). Go to your watchlist and open 5 diffs from recent changes. For each diff, run the same three micro-steps: describe what changed in plain language ("This edit did ____."), judge it quickly (**good / bad / more info needed**), and if you chose *more info needed*, take 10 seconds to click the username or the article history to see if context clarifies what you're looking at.

Trap to watch for: *Diff Blur*. If the diff starts looking like code, reduce the task to one line. Describe only that.



X was founded in 2012.

X was founded in 2012.



Level Two: Verifiability, Reliability, Discretion

How you learn Wikipedia's core move: claims that point to published sources

North Star: *You are learning to replace instinct with evidence and proportion.*

By the end of Level Two, you are not trying to be an expert editor. You are building four foundational capacities: you can explain verifiability in one sentence, you can tell the difference between a strong source and a weak one, you can create a correct basic citation in your sandbox, and you can use Talk, History, and Contributions to understand how Wikipedia works in practice. Those capacities determine whether your future edits feel grounded or shaky.

2.	<i>Verifiability, Reliability, Discretion</i>	Talk, History, Contribs, Sandbox citation, citationhunt.org (narrow down by topic).	WikiBlueprint Core Policies Guide (read the key excerpts)
Cite.	<i>Sources are the essence of Wikipedia. In arguments, they are the ammunition. Using them wisely and strategically requires judgement.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk: Pick a Watchlist article and examine the discussion on its Talk page. • History: Check the History of the article and parse a line. Check a prev/diff. • Sandbox: In the sandbox, make a dummy citation. Any fact cited to cnn.com. • Contribs: Go to the person icon and see what only you have done. Read a line. • Citationhunt.org: Pick a topic then research a [citation needed] as best you can. 	This is the 'law'. It needs to be read line-by-line, word-by-word, like a lease. Notice Due Weight means we don't have a 50-50 view on subjects; we mirror the proportions in good sources. Verifiability is hypothetical not practical. Original research means your sources have to do the work not your experience, and you can't combine sources to make a new claim.
<p>Wikipedia runs on sources. When you add information, you are not asserting your own knowledge. You are pointing to published work that already carries weight. That shift changes everything. Instead of asking, "Is this true?" you ask, "Has a reliable source stated this clearly?" Discretion matters here. Not every fact warrants equal space. Strong sources determine proportion. As you practice citing with care, you move away from instinct and begin building from evidence.</p>			

Cite.

Level One teaches you how to arrive. Level Two teaches you how to speak.

On Wikipedia, you do not “add what you know.” You add what the world has already published, and you make that publication easy for anyone else to verify. This is the most counterintuitive shift for smart, capable people. In everyday life, credibility comes from lived experience, expertise, confidence, reasoning. On Wikipedia, credibility comes from something quieter: you show your work by pointing outward.

So begin Level Two with a stance that keeps you steady when you feel annoyed, constrained, or tempted to argue. Here is the sentence you will return to: **Wikipedia runs on sources, not conviction.** Say it once now. It will save you later.

Level Two often feels like a humility practice. You may read something and think, “Of course that’s true.” You may even know it is true. Wikipedia still asks: can a reader verify it without trusting you? This is not Wikipedia being fussy for sport. This is Wikipedia protecting the one thing it can reliably offer: verifiable claims anchored in published work.

This level is called **Verifiability, Reliability, and Discretion** because Wikipedia is not just “cite everything.” It is “cite the right things, from the right places, in the right proportion.”

Verifiability means a reader can check your claim against a published source. It does not mean the claim is objectively true in the universe. It means it is supported by something readers can inspect.

Reliability is about what kinds of sources deserve that trust. A personal blog is verifiable in the sense that it exists, but it is not necessarily reliable. A reputable newspaper, academic book, or peer-reviewed paper usually carries more weight. A press release might be accurate, but it is written to persuade. Wikipedia prefers sources that are **independent** of the subject and written with editorial oversight.

Discretion is the part that separates Wikipedia writing from school writing. You will find facts that are true and sourced, but not worth including. You will find strong sources that mention something once, in passing, and that is not enough to justify making it a major point. Wikipedia cares about proportion. If strong sources treat an idea as minor, Wikipedia treats it as minor too.

Before you do anything else, learn the basic terrain terms as you use them. A **citation** is the footnote that points to the source. A **Talk page** is the discussion page attached to most articles, where editors debate content and process. A page’s **History** is the log of edits, which you can browse to see how the article changed over time. Your **Contributions** page is the public list of edits you have made. Your **Sandbox** is your private practice page, where you can draft without changing the live article. A **citation needed** tag is Wikipedia’s way of saying: “This statement might be fine, but it needs a source.”

Now you are ready to start practicing Wikipedia’s method, in the same spirit as Level One: small moves that build real confidence.

Start with **Talk**. Pick an article from your watchlist and click **Talk**. Your job is not to participate yet. Your job is to read the conversation like an anthropologist. What are people disagreeing about? What counts as “evidence” in this thread? Are they asking for sources, debating wording, arguing about undue weight, or negotiating what belongs in the lead?

Micro-check: *What are they debating, and what counts as evidence here?*

Trap to watch for: *Rule Friction.* If you feel the urge to argue with what you’re reading, treat that feeling as a sign you are touching the real core of Wikipedia. Your job is to learn the method, not win the debate.

Bonus tip: Notice repeated words like *source, reliable, undue, primary, consensus*. Those are the levers.

Next, move from social process to visible change: open **View history** on the same article. History is where you see what Wikipedia actually did, not what people say Wikipedia should do. Open one diff and do the same thing you practiced in Level One: describe what changed. Then add one new layer: guess why the change was made. Was it adding a citation, removing unsourced content, softening tone, correcting a date, reverting vandalism, tightening a claim.

Micro-check: *What problem was this edit trying to solve?*

Trap to watch for: *Pattern Fog*. If everything feels equally important, start with the easy edits: citations and wording changes. You are training pattern recognition before judgment.

Now locate yourself in the system: visit your **Contributions** page. Click your user icon and go to Contributions. This is your public footprint and your map back to your own work. Read one line. Notice that Wikipedia is transparent by design. That transparency can feel exposing, but it is also a form of protection: your edits are accountable, and so is everyone else's.

Micro-check: *Do I know how to find my edits later?*

Trap to watch for: *Visibility Discomfort*. If you feel uneasy that this is public, remind yourself that transparency is one of the reasons disputes can be resolved at all.

Now do the heart of Level Two: make a correct practice citation in your **Sandbox**. Your sandbox is your private practice page where you can experiment without touching a live article. Write one harmless practice sentence, then add a citation to a reputable publication. The point is not the topic. The point is the habit: **claim + source**.

If you do not know how to format the citation, use the Visual Editor's **Cite** tool if it is available, or copy a citation format from an existing article's references and swap in your source. After you add the citation, preview it and click it. Confirm that it displays cleanly and links where you expect.

Micro-check: *If I click the footnote, does it go where it should?*

Trap to watch for: *Formatting Freeze*. If you stall because the tool feels fiddly, copy a working example and keep moving. You are building the habit, not mastering every option.

Now practice judgment in the real wild: find a statement marked **citation needed**. Use a citation-hunting tool or scan an article until you see the tag. Pick one statement and search for a source. Then make a three-part decision: does a source exist, is it strong enough, and does it actually support the exact claim.

This is where novices often learn the most important sourcing lesson: a source can be related to a topic and still fail to support the specific sentence in front of you. That is not a defeat. That is the work.

Micro-check: *Does this source actually say this, clearly, in its own words?*

Trap to watch for: *Citation Mirage*. If you find something that seems relevant but does not support the claim, label it honestly and keep searching. Accuracy beats momentum.

At this point, you have practiced Wikipedia's core method across three environments: the Talk page (how decisions are argued), the History page (how changes land), and your sandbox (how you craft claim + source). You are no longer guessing. You are building from evidence.

If Level One reduces fear of the room, Level Two reduces fear of being wrong. You start to feel a new kind of confidence. Not "I am right," but "I know how Wikipedia decides."

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Open the WikiBlueprint Core Policies Guide excerpts and read them slowly, like a lease. Do not try to memorize. Notice three phrases you keep seeing, especially anything about **due weight**, **verifiability**, or **original research**. Then explain each phrase to yourself in one plain sentence.

Trap to watch for: *Rule Friction*. If you feel the urge to argue with the rules, treat it as a sign you are learning the real system. Your job is method, not victory.

Return (10 minutes). Go to your sandbox and add **two** more cited sentences. After each citation, click it to confirm it displays correctly and links where you expect. If formatting is confusing, copy a working reference format from a live article and swap in your source.

Trap to watch for: *Formatting Freeze*. If you stall, copy a working example and keep moving.

Review (10 minutes). Go to your watchlist and open five diffs. For each diff, do three micro-steps: describe what changed in plain language, judge it quickly (**good / bad / more info needed**), and if you chose *more info needed*, take 10 seconds to check the Talk page or the editor's recent contributions for context. Then find one citation-needed statement and do a fast source screen:

strong / weak / more info needed.

Trap to watch for: *Citation Mirage*. If the source is related but does not support the exact claim, label it honestly and keep searching.

Extra: Source Strength Ladder

A simple rubric you can use in every level

When you ask “Is this a good source,” you are usually asking two things: is it reliable, and is it independent. This ladder helps you judge quickly.

Generally strongest for Wikipedia

These tend to have editorial oversight and durable credibility.

- Books from reputable publishers
- Peer-reviewed journals and academic presses
- Major newspapers and national outlets with established editorial standards
- Reputable magazines with staffed editors
- High-quality investigative reporting
- Government publications and official statistics for basic facts
- Institutional reports from reputable organizations, used carefully and with context

Often usable, but check carefully

These can be fine, but you must verify independence, depth, and accuracy.

- Regional newspapers and local reporting
- Trade publications with editorial oversight
- High-quality niche outlets with a strong reputation in their field
- Interviews conducted by reputable outlets
- Reputable organization websites for non-controversial facts, not for notability

Usually weak for notability, sometimes usable for basic facts

These frequently fail independence, oversight, or depth.

- Press releases and corporate announcements
- The subject’s own website, biography, or blog
- Partner organizations describing each other
- Event listings, directories, routine calendars
- Social media posts
- Wikipedia itself, as a source

Micro-check: Does this source treat the subject as a subject, or merely mention it?

LEVEL 3



Level Three: Notability and Systemic Bias

How you learn what belongs on Wikipedia, and how to build the source foundation before you write

North Star: *You are learning to separate importance from inclusion, and to turn curiosity into evidence.*

By the end of Level Three, you are building four foundational capacities: you can generate multiple topic candidates, you can assemble a source set and label it honestly, you can decide Ready / Unclear / Not Ready without spiraling, and you can explain how systemic bias shows up as a sourcing problem rather than a personal failure.

3.	<i>Notability, Systemic Bias</i>	Topic list in Sandbox, Gather and analyze sources to test Notability.	WikiBlueprint Notability Guide (analyze source quality)
Research.	<i>Wikipedia's barrier to inclusion can only be overcome with sources, good sources, lots of sources. Lack of sources in particular areas perpetuates massive systemic bias.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics ideas in Sandbox: Make a header and a numbered list. • Gather sources: Pick 1 to research. Paste sources in numbered list. • Test Notability: Look at what you have that meets the criteria. 	These notability Guidelines and Subject Guides lay out the general case you want to make for notability: lots of significant coverage in good sources that are independent and not primary. But also some subjects have additional <i>options</i> for notability, any <i>one</i> of which can get your article in.
<p>Wikipedia doesn't ask whether a topic feels important. It asks whether independent sources have treated it as significant. That distinction can feel strict, but it aligns the rules for all. Notability lives in coverage, not conviction. When you gather sources and test them, you begin to see that inclusion depends on evidence that exists beyond personal belief. You will also notice the gaps. Some subjects lack coverage not because they lack value, but because institutions failed to document them.</p>			

Research.

By the time you reach Level Three, you can do two crucial things. You can enter Wikipedia without panic, and you can speak in Wikipedia's language: claims that point to published sources. Now you are ready for the question that saves most people the most time.

Not: "Is my topic interesting?"

Not: "Does my topic deserve a page?"

Not even: "Is this true?"

The question is: **Has the world written about this topic in a way that Wikipedia can summarize?**

Wikipedia is not a place where you argue that something matters. It is a place where you show that independent sources have already treated it as significant. This is why Level Three is called **Notability**. Notability does not mean "famous." It means "covered." It means the topic has received **significant coverage** in **reliable, independent sources**.

That can feel strict. It can even feel unfair. Sometimes it is unfair. Whole communities have been under-covered by major media, under-published in academic venues, and under-documented by institutions. Wikipedia reflects that world. It does not fully escape it. That is where **systemic bias** comes in.

Systemic bias is not mainly about individual prejudice. It is about the shape of the record. If only certain people and institutions get written about, then only certain people and institutions get to be "notable" in the sense Wikipedia can verify. So Level Three teaches you two things at once: how to follow Wikipedia's rule, and how to see the injustice that the rule reveals.

Here is the core mindset shift: **you do not draft an article until the sources can carry it**. Writing first and sourcing later is the fastest way to get attached to a page you will not be able to publish.

Sourcing first feels slower, but it is actually faster. It tells you whether you are building on rock or sand.

So open a fresh page in your **sandbox** and make a simple header: **Topic Ideas**. Then list five to ten candidates. Pick topics that genuinely interest you, because curiosity creates stamina. But also pick topics where you can plausibly find independent coverage: profiles, reviews, investigative pieces, academic analysis, books from reputable presses, major interviews that are not self-published.

Micro-check: *Am I choosing a topic because I love it, or because I can already see the sources? Ideally, both.*

Now choose one topic and do the work that determines everything else: build a **source set**.

A source set is not a pile of links. It is a collection you can defend. You are looking for sources that are:

- **Independent** (not written by the subject, their employer, their PR, or their friends)
- **Reliable** (editorial oversight, reputation for accuracy)
- **Substantial** (more than a passing mention)
- **Multiple** (not just one great article, but several independent pieces over time)

Wikipedia does not ask for perfection. It asks for enough. Enough coverage to justify a standalone page. Enough depth to write more than a stub without stretching.

As you gather sources, you will feel a common temptation: grabbing anything that mentions the topic, just to hit a number. Resist that. A single sentence in a listicle, a directory entry, a routine event listing, a press release, or an "about" page is not the kind of coverage Wikipedia means. The word you want in your head is **treatment**. Did this source *treat* the subject as a subject, or merely *mention* it?

Micro-check: *If I removed this source, would my notability case meaningfully weaken?*

As your source set grows, keep it honest by labeling each source in three buckets:

- **Strong:** independent, reputable, and substantial coverage
- **Weak:** independent but thin, or reputable but only passing mention
- **Primary:** from the subject or closely affiliated (useful for basic facts later, but not for proving notability)

This labeling is not moral judgment. It is clarity. It keeps you from fooling yourself when you really want a topic to work.

Now make the decision that Level Three exists to produce: **Ready, Unclear, or Not Ready.**

- **Ready** means you have multiple strong, independent sources with substantial coverage.
- **Unclear** means you have some good sources but not enough depth or independence yet.
- **Not Ready** means the topic is not covered enough to meet Wikipedia's inclusion standard right now.

This moment can sting. It can feel like rejection. It is not rejection of the topic's value. It is a measurement of the published record.

Trap to watch for: *Worthiness Drift.* If you start arguing that the topic "deserves" a page, you are drifting from evidence to advocacy. Come back to the rule: Wikipedia summarizes what reliable, independent sources have already treated as significant.

Write your verdict as one plain paragraph in your sandbox. Name the best sources you found, and be honest about what is missing. If you would feel uncomfortable showing your paragraph to another editor, that is a signal you are still negotiating with the evidence instead of following it.

Micro-check: *If someone challenged me, could I point to coverage rather than conviction?*

If your verdict is **Ready**, you now have something precious: permission to write without panic. Your article will not be floating on belief. It will be anchored in coverage.

If your verdict is **Unclear**, this is not failure. It is direction. You either keep researching, broaden your source search, or narrow your topic. Sometimes the subject is notable, but the angle you chose is too specific. Sometimes the coverage exists in books, magazines, or archives you have not looked in yet.

If your verdict is **Not Ready**, you do not force it. You pivot. You pick another topic from your list. This is one of the most mature editing skills you can develop: letting the evidence choose the project.

And now we name the harder truth: sometimes your verdict is Not Ready because the world did not document the subject fairly. That is systemic bias. Wikipedia can't cite what does not exist. But you can still act. You can choose adjacent topics with better coverage. You can expand your search into non-obvious reliable sources. You can improve existing articles on under-covered subjects. And over time, as the record grows, what is "not ready" today may become ready later.

That is not a consolation prize. That is how knowledge work moves.

If Level One reduces fear of the room, and Level Two reduces fear of being wrong, Level Three reduces fear of wasting your effort. It teaches you to build only where the ground can hold you.

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Read the notability guidance you're using for this course slowly. Your goal is not memorization. Your goal is to notice how it defines: independent, reliable, and significant coverage.

Trap to watch for: *Rule Friction.* If you feel annoyed, treat that as contact with the real system.

Return (10 minutes). Add five more sources for your chosen topic, then re-label your set. If your “Strong” bucket is still thin, broaden where you search. If your “Primary” bucket dominates, stop and pivot to independence.

Review (10 minutes). Re-read your verdict paragraph. Then do two quick checks: is it about coverage, not worthiness, and can you point to at least two strong independent sources as the backbone of the case. If not, change the verdict to Unclear or Not Ready and pick a new topic.

Trap to watch for: *Attachment Spiral*. If you feel yourself clinging to one topic, remember the purpose of Level Three: to save you time and protect your morale.

LEVEL 4



No synthesis

+ CITATION

Stop

ATtribution

X was described by
ADA in 2012. ✓ ...

Level Four: Fact + Cite

How you turn sources into Wikipedia prose, and build a draft that stands on evidence rather than voice

North Star: You are learning to translate published sources into clear, restrained sentences, so your draft can survive scrutiny and improve over time.

By the end of Level Four, you are building four foundational capacities: you can create a draft skeleton based on a strong model, you can extract and write a fact bank from sources, you can use attribution to keep claims honest, and you can reduce promotional tone through restraint and specificity.

4.	<i>Copy Format, Fact + Cite,</i>	Draft in sandbox. Extract facts. Use as many of the best sources you can.	Wikipedia:Plain and Simple COI Guide (neutrality requires restraint)
Write.	<i>The basic unit of an article is a fact plus a citation. Use this basic structure to flesh out your article. For inspiration, follow a similar good article's outline, organization, and style.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft in sandbox: This is the art of encyclopedic writing. ● Extract facts: Pull details from the sources in your own words. ● Use as many of the best sources you can: Order facts and citations. 	<p>You may or may not have a conflict of interest, but you should know what it means and why it raises scrutiny about 'associated' efforts. Writing about your interests is fine; writing about your company is a whole different game with its own rules.</p>
<p>Writing on Wikipedia means translating sources into clear, restrained prose. The basic unit is simple: a fact supported by a citation. When you draft, you practice turning published material into balanced sentences in your own words. The structure of other strong articles can guide you as you reflect what reliable sources emphasize and in the proportion they present it. As you extract facts and order them, the article begins to stand on its own, supported by evidence rather than voice.</p>			

Draft.

By the time you reach Level Four, you have done the hard invisible work. You can enter Wikipedia without panic. You can speak in citations. You can tell whether a topic is ready. Now you get to do what most people think Wikipedia editing is: writing.

But Wikipedia writing is not the same as school writing. It is not persuasive. It is not expressive. It is not a performance of insight. It is a disciplined kind of translation. You read what reliable sources say, and you re-state it in your own words, in a calm tone, in the proportion that the sources themselves imply.

This is why Level Four is called **Fact + Cite**. The basic unit of Wikipedia is not a paragraph. It is a single claim paired with a citation. When you build that way, your draft becomes sturdy. Other editors can check it. They can adjust it. They can improve it. The page is no longer “your writing.” It becomes a shared object the community can maintain.

If you feel an urge to sound impressive, notice it. That urge is normal. It is also the fastest path to promotional tone, speculation, and conflict. Wikipedia rewards something quieter: accuracy, restraint, and clean sourcing.

So open your **sandbox** and create a new draft page for your article. Give it a simple working title at the top. Then do something that feels almost too basic: paste in an outline.

Do not invent an outline from scratch if you are unsure. Find one good Wikipedia article that is similar to your topic, and use its section structure as a model. You are not copying sentences. You are borrowing a proven shape.

Micro-check: Am I trying to be original, or trying to be readable?

Now create your **skeleton**. At minimum, include:

- A lead section (a short summary of what the topic is and why it matters)
A background or history section (how it began, where it comes from)
- A main section that covers the core activities or significance
- A reception, impact, or controversy section, if reliable sources treat that as significant
- References

The outline is not decoration. It is a promise to the reader that the page will be navigable. It also protects you from rambling, which is the hidden enemy of neutral writing.

Now you will build the draft the way Wikipedia wants you to build it: **from a fact bank**.

Open your source set from Level Three. Choose the strongest sources first. Then, for each source, extract facts that can be stated plainly. Facts include dates, roles, events, accomplishments, descriptions, and reported interpretations, as long as the source itself states them.

Do not start by “writing paragraphs.” Start by writing **ten to twenty individual fact sentences**, each with a citation. You are building bricks before you build the wall.

A fact sentence has three qualities:

- It is specific.
- It is attributable to a source.
- It does not contain your opinion.

Micro-check: If someone asked “How do you know that,” do I have a source ready?

As you write, keep one rule in your mind: **do not synthesize**. That means you do not combine two sources to imply a new conclusion that neither source explicitly states. Wikipedia calls this original research. Even if your conclusion is reasonable, your job is not to be reasonable. Your job is to be citeable.

Trap to watch for: Synthesis Drift. If you catch yourself thinking "So this proves that...", you are leaving Wikipedia and entering essay mode. Come back to what the sources actually say.

Now practice the most important writing move in Wikipedia: **attribution**.

If a source expresses an interpretation, claim, or evaluation, you often need to attribute it rather than state it as fact. Instead of "X is the leading organization," you write "X has been described as the leading organization by Y," and you cite Y. This is not hedging. This is accuracy. It shows readers where the claim came from.

Micro-check: Is this a fact, or is this a claim that needs attribution?

Next, take control of tone. Wikipedia prose is not cold. It is restrained. The goal is to remove unnecessary heat: adjectives that praise or condemn, rhetorical flourishes, and framing that sounds like marketing.

If you see words like "renowned," "groundbreaking," "world-class," "incredible," "major," "unique," "leading," pause. Sometimes those words are supported by sources. Usually they are not. Replace them with concrete, sourced statements. Replace "leading" with "one of the largest, by membership," if the source provides numbers. Replace "renowned" with "has received X award," if the source supports it.

Trap to watch for: Hype Reflex. If your sentence would sound normal in a press release, it probably does not belong as written.

Once you have your fact bank, start grouping your sentences into your outline sections. This is where the draft begins to feel like an article. You are not trying to be elegant yet. You are trying to be accurate and well-structured.

Write a lead last. A good lead is a summary of what the article already contains, not a mission statement. It should be short, factual, and sourced.

Now do a quality pass that is uniquely Wikipedia: **citation coverage**. In general, every paragraph should have at least one citation, and every claim that is likely to be challenged should have a citation. If you have a paragraph with no citations, assume it will be questioned.

Micro-check: If I deleted the citations, would the paragraph still be convincing? If yes, that paragraph is too opinion-shaped.

Finally, remind yourself what drafting is on Wikipedia: it is preparation for revision. Your goal is not to publish perfect prose. Your goal is to publish a draft that other editors can verify and improve.

If Level One taught you to enter, Level Two taught you to cite, Level Three taught you to choose a viable topic, Level Four teaches you to write in a way that is compatible with collaboration.

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Read a short guide on neutral writing and conflict-of-interest awareness. Your goal is to notice the difference between neutral description and persuasive framing.

Trap to watch for: Rule Friction. If you feel irritated by "restraint," remember that restraint is what makes collaboration possible.

Return (10+ minutes). Add five more fact sentences to your draft, each with a citation. At least one should use attribution (“X has been described as...”). Then, there's no easy way to say this, keep adding fact sentences until you've used up all the good facts and sources. This takes times, but it's the only way.

Trap to watch for: Formatting Freeze. If citations slow you down, copy a working reference format from an existing article and swap in your source.

Review (10 minutes). Do a “hype scan.” Read your draft and circle any words that sound like praise, marketing, or certainty without support. Replace them with sourced facts or attributed statements. Then check citation coverage: does every paragraph have at least one citation.

Trap to watch for: Hype Reflex. If it sounds like a brochure, rewrite it as a sourced description.

LEVEL 5



Level Five: Structure and Presentation

How you make your draft feel like a real Wikipedia article, and help readers trust what they're reading

North Star: You are learning that credibility is communicated through structure, links, and clean references, not through confident wording.

By the end of Level Five, you are building four foundational capacities: you can improve the lead and section structure for navigability, you can add purposeful wikilinks that integrate the page into the encyclopedia, you can add appropriate media or an infobox with restraint, and you can clean and verify references so citations display correctly.

5.	<i>Appearance, Links + References</i>	Finish drafting: Infobox, images, wikilinks, references.	Good article criteria (quality recipe)
Polish.	<i>How an article looks affects how people judge and interact with it. Putting together text, citations, wikilinks, sections, and images turns flat text into an engaging article.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finish drafting: Take time to integrate every good source. ● Infobox: Maybe add a box on the right side with summary info. ● Images: Illustrate the page with available media, if it exists. ● Wikilinks: Link <i>out</i> to high-relevant pages from your article text. ● References: Check to make sure there are no formatting errors. 	These qualities are what make an article excellent. Every sentence is cited. There is clear organization and structure. The topic is completely described in balanced detail. The page links out to other pages, etc.
<p>An article does not earn trust through words alone. Structure matters. Clear organization helps readers navigate the subject with confidence. Presentation signals care. Links connect your topic to the wider encyclopedia. References show that every statement rests on published work. Thoughtful layout strengthens credibility. As you refine flow and formatting, the page begins to feel integrated rather than isolated, part of a living network of knowledge rather than a standalone block of text.</p>			

Polish.

By the time you reach Level Five, you have something rare: a draft that stands on sources instead of instinct. You have an outline. You have a fact bank. You have citations. The page is no longer a blank screen. It is an object.

Now your job shifts. You are no longer mainly writing sentences. You are shaping a reading experience.

This is the stage where many first-time editors underestimate Wikipedia. They think credibility comes from tone alone. It does not. Credibility comes from structure. Readers trust what they can navigate. Editors trust what they can verify. A well-presented page signals care before anyone reads a word closely.

So Level Five is about **presentation as proof of seriousness**. When you add structure, links, references, and basic formatting, your draft stops feeling like notes and starts feeling like an encyclopedia entry.

Start by opening your sandbox draft and doing a simple move: scroll from top to bottom as if you are a stranger. You are not judging content yet. You are looking for navigation.

Do you immediately understand what the topic is? Do the sections make sense? Does the page feel balanced, or lopsided? Does it look like a wall of text?

Micro-check: If I landed on this page from Google, would I feel oriented within 20 seconds?

Now improve the **lead**, because the lead is the handshake. It should summarize the article's key points in two to four calm sentences. A good lead does three things: defines the subject, signals why it is notable, and previews the main dimensions the article will cover.

Do not put hype in the lead. If the lead is persuasive, the whole page will look like advocacy. If you need to include an evaluative claim, attribute it.

Trap to watch for: Lead Hype. If your first paragraph reads like a pitch, rewrite it as definition plus sourced context.

Next, tighten your **section structure**. Wikipedia favors predictable headings. If your outline is too idiosyncratic, it becomes harder for other editors to collaborate. Your job is not originality. Your job is legibility.

Look at each heading and ask: is it broad enough to hold multiple facts, or is it a one-off? Merge tiny headings. Split headings that have grown too long. Aim for sections that feel inevitable.

Micro-check: Does each section have at least two solid, sourced points, or is it a placeholder?

Now strengthen your **wikilinks**. A wikilink is an internal link to another Wikipedia page. Wikilinks are not decoration. They are how your article becomes part of the encyclopedia rather than an isolated essay.

As a general habit, link the first meaningful mention of key concepts, organizations, places, and notable people. Do not link every repeated word. Do not link common words. Link what helps a curious reader explore.

Micro-check: If I removed all wikilinks, would the article feel disconnected from Wikipedia?

Trap to watch for: Link Spam. If you are linking every other word, you are making the page noisy. Use links as bridges, not glitter.

Now consider **images** and an **infobox**, if appropriate. An infobox is the summary box that appears on the right side of many articles. It can be helpful for people, organizations, places, and other structured subjects. Images can add legitimacy and comprehension, but only if they are properly licensed and truly relevant.

This is a place where restraint matters. Do not force an infobox if it does not fit. Do not add low-quality images just to have an image. A clean page without an image is better than a cluttered page with a dubious one.

Micro-check: Does this image or infobox genuinely help a reader understand the subject faster?

Now do the most important mechanical work of Level Five: **references**.

Your citations should not merely exist. They should display cleanly. Footnotes should format correctly. Links should work. Sources should be consistent. If your references section is messy, other editors will distrust the entire draft, even if your claims are solid.

Scroll to your references. Look for error messages, red text, or inconsistent formatting. Click a few citations at random and make sure they go to the right source. This is boring, and it is also the backbone of Wikipedia's trust model.

Trap to watch for: Citation Sloppiness. If you rush references, the page will look unreliable. Slow down here.

Now do one more pass for balance. Wikipedia is not "everything good about X." It is "what reliable sources say about X, in proportion." If your draft reads like a highlight reel, it will trigger skepticism. If reliable sources cover criticism, controversy, limitations, or debate, your article should reflect that in a calm, sourced way.

That does not mean manufacturing negativity. It means mirroring the record.

Micro-check: Am I reflecting the proportions in the best sources, or am I telling the story I want to tell?

At the end of Level Five, your draft should feel integrated: structured, linked, verifiable, and readable. It should no longer feel like a private document. It should feel like a page that belongs in a network of pages.

If Level Four taught you how to draft from evidence, Level Five teaches you how to present that evidence so it can be trusted.

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Read the Good Article criteria once, quickly, to get a sense of what "good" looks like in Wikipedia's own language. Do not memorize. Notice structure, sourcing, and coverage expectations.

Trap to watch for: Perfectionism Spiral. If you start thinking your draft must meet every criterion now, return to the goal: steady improvement.

Return (10 minutes). Add ten wikilinks to your draft and improve your lead. Focus on clarity and orientation, not flourish.

Trap to watch for: Link Spam. If you are linking repeated or obvious words, stop and link only what helps a reader explore.

Review (10 minutes). Do a reference hygiene pass. Fix any formatting issues, make sure every section has citations, and click three random footnotes to confirm they lead to what they claim.

Trap to watch for: Citation Sloppiness. This is where trust is won or lost.

LEVEL 6



Level Six: Publishing and Discoverability

How you move your work into the encyclopedia and connect it so people can find it

North Star: You are learning that publishing is the beginning of collaboration, not the end of your control.

By the end of Level Six, you are building four foundational capacities: you can choose an appropriate publishing pathway, you can connect your article through short description, categories, and links, you can invite collaboration through WikiProjects, and you can respond to post-publication edits with calm, evidence-based judgment.

6.	<i>Discoverability, Categories</i>	Move it live! Categories, WikiProjects, What Links Here, Description.	One Woman's Brilliant "Fuck You" to Wikipedia Trolls (stay resilient)
Publish.	<i>Publishing is exciting! But it's not the end. Next you need to make the article widely discoverable so people will actually read it!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move it live: You did it! Feel good. But it's not over yet... ● Categories: Install Hotcat in Preferences. Add the main topics. ● WikiProjects: Add Talk page groups that care about this subject. ● Short description: Add this template to clearly identify the article. ● What Links Here: Find places for linking to this article from afar. 	This is a powerful, poignant, painful essay. But it speaks to a truth about falling down and <i>jumping</i> back up. Even bad experiences can propel immensely positive contributions. Don't let anyone else keep you down. Keep going.
<p>Publishing is the moment your work enters a larger conversation. Help others find and understand what you built. Connections matter. Increase the page's visibility to invite shared stewardship. Edits may follow. Some will improve the page. Some may challenge it. That is part of how the project grows: steadily, over time. Wikipedia improves through revision, not control. When you respond with patience and clarity, your article will strengthen as part of the ever-evolving encyclopedia.</p>			

Publish.

By the time you reach Level Six, you have done what most people never do. You did not just write. You built a page that can survive: sourced, structured, linked, and readable. You have a draft that looks like it belongs.

Now comes the moment that feels thrilling and vulnerable at the same time: moving it into public view.

Publishing on Wikipedia is not like publishing elsewhere. You are not releasing a finished product. You are placing a living draft into a living system. Other people will touch it. Some edits will improve it. Some will confuse you. A few may irritate you. That is not failure. That is the project.

Level Six is about two things: **how your article becomes discoverable**, and **how you stay calm once it is**.

Start by choosing your publishing pathway. There are three common routes, and the right one depends on your situation:

If your topic is straightforward, well-sourced, and uncontroversial, you may be able to publish directly into mainspace. If your topic is borderline on notability or you are new and want a gentler review, you can submit through **Articles for Creation**. If you have any conflict of interest or close association with the subject, slow down and choose the path that invites review rather than surprise. The goal is trust.

Micro-check: Am I trying to publish quickly, or publish in a way that will hold?

Trap to watch for: Finish-Line Rush. If you feel urgency, treat it as a signal to slow down. Speed is not the prize. Stability is.

Before you publish, do one last quiet integrity pass. Open your draft and scan for three things: every section has citations, your lead is calm and factual, and nothing reads like a pitch. If any paragraph feels like advocacy, fix it now. This is not about pleasing gatekeepers. This is about protecting your work from predictable skepticism.

Now publish through your chosen route, and then immediately shift your mindset. The page is no longer private. You do not defend it like property. You steward it like a garden.

Once the page is live, your next job is to make it findable in Wikipedia's internal ecosystem. Wikipedia is not only search. It is also navigation through categories, templates, and link networks. A good article is not just written. It is connected.

Start with a small but powerful element: the **short description**. A short description is a one-line label that appears in search and at the top of the page. It helps readers quickly understand what the subject is. Keep it neutral and concise.

Micro-check: If someone saw only this short description, would it mislead them?

Now add **categories**. Categories are how Wikipedia groups related pages. They are a major driver of discoverability. Choose a few categories that fit the subject's main identity. Do not over-categorize. Think of categories as shelves in a library. You want the right shelves, not every shelf.

If you have not installed a category helper tool yet, you can. Many editors use a tool that makes adding categories easier, but you can also add them manually. Either way, the principle is the same: categories should match what reliable sources would say the subject is.

Trap to watch for: Category Overreach. If you are adding categories that feel aspirational rather than descriptive, pull back. Categories are not branding. They are classification.

Now connect your article to the rest of Wikipedia through links from other pages. Use **What links here** to find where your new page might reasonably be linked. This is a quieter art than it sounds. You are not spamming. You are integrating.

Look for places where your subject is genuinely relevant. A list page. A related concept. A parent organization. A location. A historical event. Add one or two links from other pages only if it improves those pages for readers.

Micro-check: Would this link help a reader, even if my page didn't exist?

Trap to watch for: Promotion Drift. If your linking feels like marketing, it will be treated like marketing. Link only where it improves the encyclopedia.

Next, consider **WikiProjects**. A WikiProject is a community of editors focused on a topic area. Adding the relevant WikiProject banners to the article's Talk page can invite knowledgeable editors to watch and improve it. This is one of the healthiest ways to ask for attention: you are inviting stewardship, not defending territory.

Micro-check: Am I inviting collaboration, or trying to recruit allies?

Now prepare for what happens next: edits by others.

Wikipedia evolves through revision, not control. Some edits will be routine cleanup. Some will add sources. Some will challenge wording. Occasionally someone will remove something you wrote. Your nervous system will want to treat removal as rejection. Do not.

When an edit surprises you, do the simplest thing first: open the diff. Read what changed. Then ask: is the change improving accuracy, clarity, sourcing, or neutrality? If yes, accept it. If no, slow down. Check the editor's pattern. Check the Talk page. Respond calmly and briefly, with sources.

Trap to watch for: Ownership Reflex. If you feel possessive, remind yourself: the goal was never control. The goal was to contribute something that can outlive you.

If someone challenges the page's notability or tone, treat it as a request for evidence, not a personal attack. Strengthen citations. Improve balance. Tighten wording. The best response is rarely argument. The best response is improvement.

Finally, decide what stewardship looks like for you. You do not need to monitor the page obsessively. But you should return a few times early on. Think of it as checking on a new plant: regular attention at first, then less as it roots.

A simple stewardship rhythm works: check your watchlist tomorrow, then in a week, then once a month. If the page is stable, you can relax. If it is volatile, you can ask for help in the right venues.

Level Six is the moment your work joins a larger conversation. That is the point. Publishing is not a finish line. It is the moment your work becomes part of a living network of knowledge.

The 30-minute homework loop (Read + Return + Review)

Read (10 minutes). Read a short piece about Wikipedia collaboration and dispute habits. Your goal is to notice what "calm editing" looks like in practice.

Trap to watch for: Threat Sensitivity. If feedback feels like danger, return to diffs and sources.

Return (10 minutes). Add or refine your short description, add three categories, and add at least one relevant WikiProject banner to the Talk page.

Trap to watch for: Category Overreach. Choose descriptive categories, not aspirational ones.

Review (10 minutes). Open five diffs on your page or watchlist and label each one quickly: **good / bad / more info needed**. If you see something concerning, check the Talk page and respond with one calm sentence and a source, or leave it alone if it is not important.

Trap to watch for: Ownership Reflex. Your goal is stewardship, not control.

Conclusion

The crash course is over. The car is yours.

Six hours ago, Wikipedia probably felt like a stage. You could sense the invisible audience. You might have imagined invisible judges. You might have hovered over **Edit** and felt the quiet pressure of being visible in a space that looks calm but is quietly alive.

Now you have a different relationship with the site.

You can enter without panic. You can read what changed. You can tell the difference between a clean improvement and something that needs context. You can use the Talk page without treating it like a courtroom. You can build a watchlist that turns the encyclopedia from an ocean into a neighborhood. That is belonging. It is not a warm feeling first. It is a set of practices that makes warmth possible.

You also learned the central discipline that makes Wikipedia work at scale: you do not ask readers to trust you. You give them something they can check. You learned how to pair a claim with a citation, how to favor independent reliable sources, and how to keep proportion aligned with what the best sources emphasize. That is not only a writing skill. It is a civic skill. It is what turns crowdsourcing into something that can be corrected instead of something that merely spreads.

Then you faced the hard question that determines whether a new page can live: not “is this worthy,” but “is this covered.” You learned notability as an evidence test, not a moral test. And you learned to name what the rule reveals: the world’s record is uneven. Some subjects are under-documented not because they lack value, but because institutions failed to document them. That does not make you powerless. It makes you strategic. You choose topics where the record can carry you now, and you keep an eye on what becomes possible later as coverage grows.

From there, you drafted the way Wikipedia wants you to draft. You built a fact bank instead of an essay. You learned restraint as a form of respect. You learned that the basic unit is not a paragraph, it is a verifiable claim. You learned attribution, so evaluations are framed as what a source says, not what you declare. You learned to watch for the familiar traps: synthesis drift, hype reflex, the urge to sound impressive. You learned to prefer the calm strength of clarity.

Then you polished. You made structure do some of the work that confidence used to do. You learned that readers trust what they can navigate, and editors trust what they can verify. You made the page legible: headings that make sense, links that connect, references that display cleanly, a lead that acts like a handshake instead of a pitch. Your draft stopped feeling like notes. It started feeling like an encyclopedia entry.

Finally, you published. Or you prepared to publish in the right pathway. You learned the most freeing idea in the entire course: publishing is not the end of your control, because control was never the goal. Publishing is the beginning of collaboration. You learned how to make the page discoverable, how to connect it into Wikipedia’s internal networks, and how to stay steady when other people touch your work. You learned how to respond with diffs, sources, and calm.

That is a real accomplishment.

Wikipedia in an ever-challenged information ecosystem

It is worth zooming out for a moment, because what you just learned is bigger than a single article.

We live in an information environment that is constantly stressed. The internet makes publishing frictionless. That is beautiful and dangerous. Anyone can share anything instantly, and the incentives often reward speed over care, outrage over nuance, certainty over humility. In that environment,

falsehood travels easily. Disinformation is engineered. “Fake news” becomes both a real tactic and a rhetorical weapon. Trust erodes, and when trust erodes, people become easier to manipulate.

Wikipedia is not immune to this world. It is part of it. It is edited by humans, and humans have biases, blind spots, and limited time. Wikipedia gets things wrong. Articles can be incomplete. Sources can be weak. Arguments can be exhausting.

And yet, Wikipedia remains one of the internet’s most important counterweights, because its core incentive is different.

Wikipedia does not ask you to believe a person. It asks you to check a source. It does not reward the loudest voice. It rewards the most verifiable claim. It does not treat revision as embarrassment. It treats revision as the mechanism of truth-seeking in public. In an ecosystem where people are constantly pushed toward certainty, Wikipedia is built to prefer something braver: **traceability**.

That is what you learned to do in this course. You learned to take a statement and attach it to something inspectable. You learned to resist synthesis, hype, and agenda. You learned to mirror the proportions in good sources rather than manufacturing a 50/50 balance that the record does not support. You learned to distinguish what you believe from what the evidence can carry. You learned a method of guardianship.

“Guardianship of public discourse” sounds grand. In practice, it is small, steady work. It is fixing an unsourced sentence. It is replacing a weak source with a stronger one. It is removing a claim that cannot be verified. It is adding context where the record has been distorted. It is writing in a voice that can survive scrutiny because it is built from evidence rather than force.

That kind of work matters. Not because Wikipedia is the only place people learn, but because Wikipedia is one of the places people check when they are trying to figure out what is real. It is a shared baseline. It is a public reference point. When it is careful, it quietly raises the floor of discourse.

What you know now

You now know how Wikipedia actually holds together.

You know that Wikipedia is not a machine you master. It is a room you enter. You belong by becoming legible: a human presence, reachable, not promotional, not defensive.

You know that Wikipedia is not powered by belief. It is powered by published sources. Your job is to summarize the record, not to manufacture it. Your job is to make it possible for strangers to verify you.

You know that Wikipedia is not an arena where you win. It is a workshop where you build. When you treat edits as reversible and revision as normal, you can keep moving.

You know that Wikipedia is not only writing. It is structure, linking, referencing, and proportion. It is presentation that signals care.

And you know that Wikipedia is not a place to perform your intelligence. It is a place to practice restraint. The voice that survives is the voice that can be checked.

What will let you belong

Belonging on Wikipedia is not an identity. It is a rhythm.

Return to your watchlist. Read diffs. Do small, calm edits. Add citations. Fix a sentence. Improve a paragraph. Ask a question on a Talk page when you’re uncertain. Thank someone when they improve your work. Leave a note that is brief, sourced, and respectful. When you make a mistake, correct it. When someone else corrects you, learn from it.

This is how you become the kind of editor other editors want to work with. Not by being perfect. By being steady.

The crash course is over. Where do you want to go next?

You have a car now. It is not flashy. It is not fragile. It is reliable. It starts. It can take you places.

You can take the neighborhood road and tend the pages you care about. You can take the citation road and become someone who strengthens the floor of verifiability. You can write a second article, more calmly, now that you know the cycle. You can work at the edges of the record, where systemic bias shows up as missing coverage, and contribute strategically where evidence exists. You can join a WikiProject and learn the culture of a topic area from the inside.

You do not need to pick one road forever. The point is that you are no longer standing at the curb wondering if you're allowed inside.

You will still feel small sometimes. You will still encounter bluntness. You will still have moments where a removal stings. That does not mean you are failing. It means you are participating in a public process.

When you feel that sting, return to what you now know: open the diff, check the source, read the Talk page, and respond with calm evidence or let it go. Wikipedia improves through revision, not control. So will you.

And you are not driving alone.

There are millions of other cars on this road. Some are fast and technical. Some are quiet and meticulous. Some are focused on medicine, history, music, science, or local places you have never heard of. Some are fixing typos. Some are arguing about a comma that changes meaning. Some are fighting vandalism. Some are patiently adding citations one by one.

What they share, at their best, is a belief that free knowledge is worth maintaining, and that public discourse deserves at least one place where claims can be traced, challenged, and improved in the open.

You came here to write your first Wikipedia article in six hours. You did something larger than that. You learned a method for contributing to a shared record without needing to be loud, certain, or perfect.

The crash course is over.

The car is yours.

Now drive.

About the Author

Jake Orlowitz is a Wikipedia editor, educator, and strategist focused on helping people contribute in ways that are calm, ethical, and durable. He founded and led The Wikipedia Library at the Wikimedia Foundation, building global partnerships that expanded editor access to high-quality research and strengthened Wikipedia's sourcing ecosystem. As the Founder of WikiBlueprint, Jake has trained and advised nonprofits, cultural institutions, and mission-driven organizations on how to work with Wikipedia responsibly, with deep respect for community norms and the integrity of the encyclopedia.

His open knowledge work centers on the idea that public discourse improves when evidence is accessible, claims can be traced, and more people feel empowered to participate. His writing and advocacy focus on verifiability, information literacy, and the ethics of representation, with particular attention to who gets documented, who gets cited, and what systems shape the public record. He brings an organizer's mindset to collaboration: creating practical pathways for newcomers, building trust across institutions, and practicing allyship through patient support, credit-sharing, and a commitment to lowering barriers without lowering standards. Reach Jake at jorlowitz@gmail.com or JakeOrlowitz.com.

About WikiBlueprint

WikiBlueprint is a Wikipedia consulting and training practice built on a clear premise: Wikipedia is a public good, and work on it should be done with care. WikiBlueprint helps clients engage Wikipedia ethically through evidence-first research, policy-aligned writing, and collaborative process. The goal is never to "game" Wikipedia or control a narrative, but to build improvements that can stand on independent sourcing, survive community review, and remain useful long after a project ends.

Offerings include cohort-based and custom Wikipedia training, strategic guidance for organizations navigating visibility and conflict-of-interest constraints, and hands-on support for research, drafting, and publication workflows. WikiBlueprint also supports institutions in designing Wikipedian-in-Residence programs and contributes to the ecosystem through citation tooling and workflows that strengthen sourcing, improve reliability, and support long-term stewardship. Contact WikiBlueprint at info@wikiblueprint.com or WikiBlueprint.com.

About The Harnisch Foundation

The Harnisch Foundation has practiced creative, progressive, spirited philanthropy since 1998. Founded by Ruth Ann and Bill Harnisch, the New York City-based foundation is guided by a belief in a fairer world, with special attention to gender and racial equity. Ruth Ann, a former Emmy-nominated television anchor and radio host, serves as president, leading support for journalism, professional development, coaching, women's leadership, and independent film. TheHF is the home of Funny Girls™, a Social-Emotional Learning program for girls in 3rd through 8th grades that uses improv to teach leadership skills. Funny Girls supports girls+ to find their voice in leadership at a critical juncture in their development. Learn more about this groundbreaking work at funnygirls.org.

Other strategic priorities include Creative Mornings, the Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital and Harvard, journalism programs at Kennesaw State University and Baruch College, the TED Fellows coaching program SupportTED, and Awesome Without Borders, which distributed \$1,000 weekly grants to creative project makers. The foundation's support for this training reflects its long commitment to knowledge access, media literacy, and the equitable flow of information. Learn more at thehf.org.