

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What do I need?**

Internet access and curiosity! While a laptop is easiest, particularly for new editors, you can edit Wikipedia from most devices with internet access, including iPads and mobile phones.

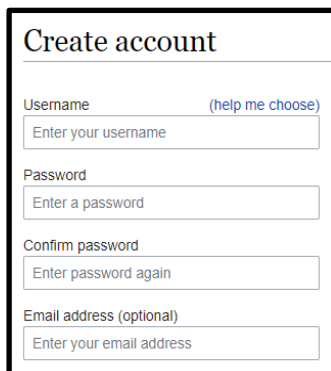
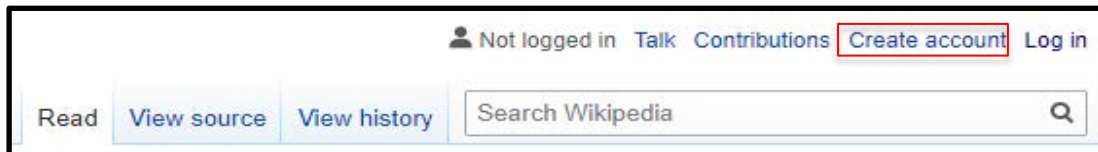
2. **How much time do I need to commit?**

Totally up to you! Once you have an account you can edit whenever you like, ranging from adding timely information i.e. someone has won an award, to long format writing where you work on a biography over the course of days or weeks.

3. **I'm not sure if my writing is good enough.**

Writing style on Wikipedia is supposed to be accessible, simple and clear – don't worry about style, speed or creativity! Start by making small additions to existing pages before building up to creating new page. You can also try writing short factual sentences in subject pages before trying a biography. The community helps each other with finding typos, editing grammar and re-structuring pages so don't worry about leaving a page unfinished, as long as there is sufficient information for the page to exist. You can also create a page in your Sandbox or Draft and get feedback before it goes live.

4. **How do I become an editor?**

A screenshot of the 'Create account' form on Wikipedia. The form has a title 'Create account' and four input fields: 'Username' (with a '(help me choose)' link), 'Password', 'Confirm password', and 'Email address (optional)'. Each field has a placeholder text: 'Enter your username', 'Enter a password', 'Enter password again', and 'Enter your email address'.

On the [Wikipedia main page](#) at the top-right hand side of the page click on 'Create account' or 'Log in' if you already have an account.

Fill in the 'Create account' form if this is your first time. You may choose any username, as long as it is available. Advice on usernames below...

5. **Should I use my real name as my username?**

You do not need to reveal any identifying information about yourself. As Wikipedia is volunteer-led, and 'self-governing' you should consider the community in a similar way to a public online forum. We therefore recommend that you do not use your full name or the name of an organization.

## 6. What are the easiest task I can do?

In order of time commitment and effort:

- ✓ Link Wikipedia pages. For example, a biography about the inventor of a vaccine could be linked to and from a Wikipedia page about the disease. A biography that has no links to help people find it can be lost in Wikipedia (known as 'orphan pages') doing this helps ensure visibility.
- ✓ Edit and expand existing pages.
- ✓ Join a Wikipedia project and work collectively. For example, join [Wikiproject Women in Red](#) to discover new monthly editing themes and to protect pages at risk of deletion by lending your expertise and vote in 'Articles for Deletion' debates.

## 7. What's the citation style?

Wikipedia takes care of the citation itself, you just need to add the reference *after the punctuation*: i.e Sentence will finish now.<sup>1</sup>

## 8. Which citations are valid?

Think about what sources you would trust for information – a peer-reviewed academic journal article from a trusted title is ideal. Books published by academic presses, broadsheet newspapers and scholarly society magazines are usually good sources. University news pages can be a helpful starting point but must be supplemented with independent sources. Avoid sensationalist tabloid sources and personal websites, blogs or social media accounts. Visit [Wikipedia Reliable Sources page](#) for more tips.

## 9. How do I find a subject to write about?

Join the [Optica Wiki Page](#) for a list of fantastic women in optics who either need their pages updated or do not have a page. You can also search award winners, recently appointed fellows of societies and news articles. Bear in mind, Wikipedia has notability criteria. Editors sometimes highlight biography pages for the subject not being notable and can happen when editors are biased or do not understand academic career paths or achievements (a professorship and/or national/international awards and/or fellow status and/or significant publicity). Visit [notability requirement for academics](#) for more.

## 10. What should I include in a biography?

Put key information in the first paragraph: say what someone is best known for (e.g. field of work, big awards / best-known publication or theory). Then look at Wikipedia biographies of people in similar fields to gauge the level of detail usually included. You could include these sections: early life, education, career, awards and honors, and legacy.

## 11. What should I *not* include in a biography?

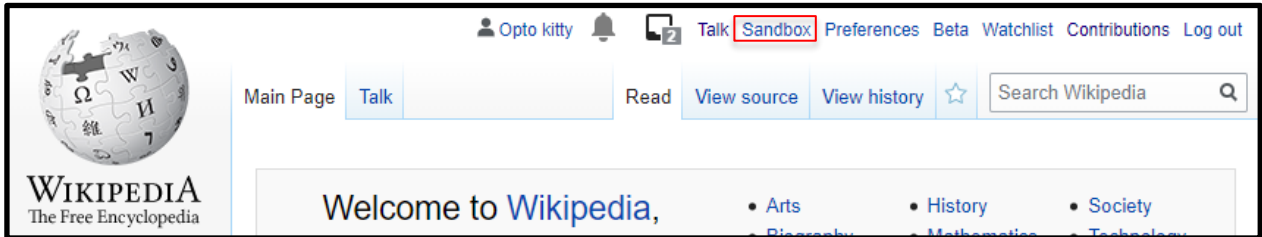
Be cautious when writing about the personal details of someone's life and think about what you would want people to be able to read about you. You do not need to include every piece of information – some people might prefer not to have their date or place of birth online. For more complete biographies, information gathered from public interviews about someone's upbringing or experiences is suitable.

Consider balance of information – in biographies about female or BAME scientists, avoid (or remove) big paragraphs about famous male relatives or white collaborators, keep focused on your article's main subject. When writing about people with protected characteristics (i.e. gender, disability, race, religion), take care that you do not 'out' them unintentionally – find legitimate sources that show that the person has willingly publicly discussed these parts of their identity. If in doubt, leave it out!

## 12. What about pictures?

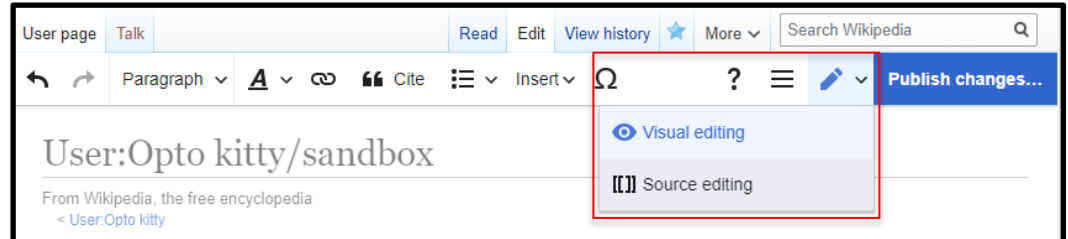
If you personally took a photograph of someone then you can add it to their Wikipedia page – if you did not personally take the photograph then you cannot add it yourself. You could ask the person who did take it to upload it (or ask the place that has the archive, in the case of very old images!)

## 13. Can I practice editing without affecting the 'live' site?

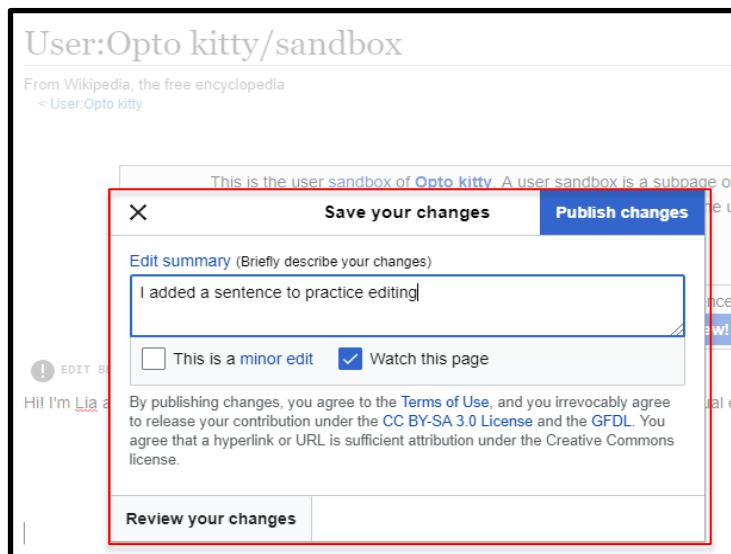
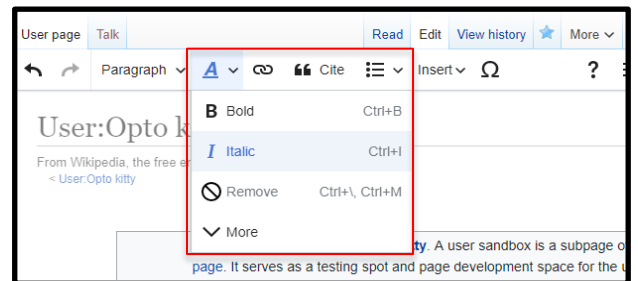


Yes! We recommend that you practice in your 'Sandbox' you can access in the top right hand side once you login to your account. The first time you go to your Sandbox, you may be told it doesn't exist yet – just click to start drafting things!

Use 'Visual editing' to make the experience simpler. You can switch edit mode at any time using the button that looks like a pencil.



Use the 'style text' dropdown menu to bold or italicize text. You can add links and citations with the two buttons next to the text style menu.



**You must press 'Publish changes' to save.** A good habit is to always write a summary, i.e. corrected a typo, added a citation.

To resume editing, you can just click the 'Edit' button and start to add more information to your article.

#### 14. What mistakes should I avoid?

- ✓ Do not write your own biography
- ✓ Do not write articles for people close to you (conflict of interest)
- ✓ Do not use social media as citations
- ✓ Do not 'deadname' or 'out' people
- ✓ Do not use 'fake news' sources

#### 15. I'm worried about making a mistake.

The Wikipedia community works together to review, edit and manage pages. If you are not sure about the credibility of the information you want to add to a page, you can share your suggestions and ask questions in the 'Talk' page that accompanies every page. The Talk page is also where you might see discussions on what should be included in an article, especially for articles with contentious subjects! Talk pages are for discussions that improve the article, not to debate the subject. Here's a fun one:

The screenshot shows the 'Talk: Cultural feminism' page on Wikipedia. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Article' and 'Talk', and a search bar. Below the title, there is a yellow box with instructions: 'This is the talk page for discussing improvements to the Cultural feminism article. This is not a forum for general discussion of the article's subject.' It lists guidelines such as 'Put new text under old text', 'Be polite, and welcoming to new users', and 'No original research'. Below this, there are sections for 'WikiProjects' (Feminism and Gender Studies) and 'Wiki Education' assignments. At the bottom, it says 'No counterpoint' and provides a link to edit the page.

#### 16. I've made a huge mistake! Help!

If you haven't pressed 'Publish changes' then no permanent changes have been made so close the window or press back in your browser. If you have published the change and it is live, you can edit the page again and delete your mistake. You can also revert to a previous version by clicking 'View history' tab and then 'undo'.

The screenshot shows the 'Cultural feminism: Revision history' page on Wikipedia. It features a 'Filter revisions' section and a list of revisions. The first revision is from 01:02, 24 March 2020 by InternetArchiveBot. The second revision is from 17:05, 12 March 2020 by PumpkinButter, which is highlighted with a dashed box. The third and fourth revisions are also from PumpkinButter on the same date, with the fourth one being a minor edit. Each revision entry includes a link to compare it with the current version and an 'undo' button.