

## **Editing a Wikipedia article**

### **OAS Skill Module**

The internet, believe it or not, totters along by a sequence of unlikely acts of individual generosity. A lot of the most interesting and informative content out there is provided by individuals sharing their narrow area of expertise with the world.

Yet, most individuals on the web do not contribute content. A reasonable rule of thumb may be the 90-9-1 breakdown: 1 percent of people upload real original work; 9 percent curate and correct that content; and the other 90 percent merely consume.

**In this skill module, you will move into the 1 percent.**

There are things you know and care about. Indeed, if you define your field narrowly enough, you are the world expert in something! Chances are you've even stumbled across a useful Wikipedia article touching on your pet topic. Who knows what unqualified people (or dogs) wrote that article! Even if the article is pretty high quality, there's bound to be something that needs improvement.

**Your job is to significantly raise the quality of a Wikipedia article.** Your options are:

- \* Learn about something new (e.g. literally check out a book or two and thumb through them) and incorporate your new knowledge into an existing Wikipedia article.
- \* For the especially ambitious among you, you can even start a brand new article. You know those links colored in red that you see throughout the Wiki? That means that the page linked to does not exist yet. Find out something, even a tiny amount, about the subject in question, and throw it onto the blank page!
- \* Alternatively, find an article you care about that has a "needs work" banner at the top. Find out what's wrong with the article and fix it! Perhaps you'll have to add references, or rework some section, or remove vandalism.
- \* Don't be self-conscious about the quality of what you're doing. Something is always better than nothing on the internet. Before long, someone else will come along and fix your mistakes. But a lot more people are capable of fixing solecisms than of throwing down bold, original content. Feel good about yourself!

**MAKE SURE TO CITE ANY NEW CONTENT!** (Figure out how this is done. It's easy.) Every statement in Wikipedia ideally should come from a secondary source. (Citations are those neat numbered links in superscript next to nontrivial statements in articles.)

**To edit a Wikipedia article:**

- \* Go to the article.
- \* Click "Edit" in the blue banner at the top.

Please do not edit anonymously, but instead make an account and sign in. This will allow an UGTA to verify your work.

**When you are finished**, write up a short document (a paragraph is fine) about what you did. In particular, point to the changes that you made and discuss what you did and why it's useful. Include your username, a link to your Wikipedia profile, and a link to the articles you edited. To see a summary of the changes you've made, click "View History", right next to "Edit", at the top of the article. May it be a record you're proud of!