



Wikipedia: The Good and the Ugly

Wikipedia can be a helpful tool, but it should be used cautiously in an academic environment. Articles can change from day to day, or even moment to moment. Although the information on Wikipedia is often correct, most articles can be edited by anyone. This means that anyone can write anything in Wikipedia. Wikipedia itself admits it isn't a credible source.



Good Academic Uses of Wikipedia

1. Getting an overview of a subject you don't know much about.
2. Brainstorming topics and ways to narrow a topic.
3. Finding keywords you can use to search for more information on the Web and in Library databases and catalogs.
4. Some Wikipedia articles have lists of references, notes, or external links at the end that can guide you to other sources of information.



Ugly Academic Uses of Wikipedia

1. *Never ever* copy information from a Wikipedia article and paste it into a paper. That's plagiarism.
2. *Don't* believe what you read on Wikipedia without first finding another source to verify the information.
3. *Don't* use Wikipedia as a source of information for an essay or a research paper. For college-level research and writing, you need more comprehensive and authoritative sources.

Having trouble finding information in a format you can use? Try visiting the Lane Community College Library website at library.lanecol.edu

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