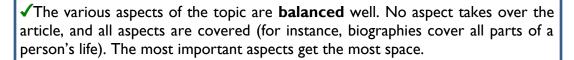# How to evaluate a Wikipedia article

Wikipedia (http://wikipedia.org) is the biggest encyclopedia ever created. It exists in hundreds of languages. Anyone may contribute by writing or editing articles, and articles are developed over time, which means articles can be of varying quality. It is important for readers to recognize whether an article is a good or poor. To evaluate Wikipedia article quality, look in three places: the **article text and references,** the **article talk page** and the **page editing history.**

Look at the **text of the article** and the **article references**

Signs of **high quality** include:

✓The **lead section** gives an easy to understand overview and summarizes the article's key points.

✓The **structure** is clear. There are several headings and subheadings, images and diagrams at appropriate places, and references at the end.

> "Featured" and "good" articles have been determined by editors to be high quality. They are indicated by a star or plus sign: ⭐ ⊕

✓The various aspects of the topic are **balanced** well. No aspect takes over the article, and all aspects are covered (for instance, biographies cover all parts of a person's life). The most important aspects get the most space.

✓Coverage is **neutral**. Articles must be written without bias; where there is disagreement among scholars, different views should be covered, and positive and negative views should be included in proportion to their coverage in reliable sources. Language should also be neutral, and claims backed up by sources.

✓ The article has plenty of footnotes and links to **reliable sources** at the bottom. Sources should be high-quality and scholarly: the article about the moon should have links to NASA's website, but not to an amateur astronomer's blog. Some articles have a bibliography or list of further reading as well.

Look at the article's **talk page**

At the top of each article is a tab labeled **"Talk"**. Click on it and you will see the **talk page,** a place for discussion of the article. Check to see if there have been comments left there. Maybe a concern you have has already been discussed; if not, click the "Edit" tab to leave a comment for other readers and editors.

Tabs at the top of an article. The "Talk" tab leads to the article talk page, and "View history" shows page editing history, while "Edit" lets you change the text of the article.

Look at the **article's history**

Wikipedia's articles are not created all at once. They grow, edit by edit, often by many different users in collaboration. One contributor may start the article, another may add more text, and yet another may reorganize it to make it easier to read. Every change that's made to each article is recorded in the article history. You can look at how each article evolved by clicking the "**View history**" tab; every previous version of the article can be found there.

Watch out for these warning signs of **poor quality** articles!

⚠The article has a **warning banner** at the top (such as "this article needs additional citations for verification"). While some banners are for information or requests (such as asking for help expanding the article) some indicate problems or unresolved disputes with neutrality, sourcing or other parts of the article.

⚠The language contains unsourced **opinions and value statements**, which are not neutral and should be removed. For example, instead of saying: "She was the best singer," the text should say: "She had 14 number one hits, more than any other singer." Or the article might refer to "some", "many", or other **unnamed groups of people**: this is too general and needs a source.

⚠There seem to be aspects of the topic that are **missing** from the article (for instance, a biography that skips an entire period of its subject's life), or **some sections seem overly long** in proportion to their importance (for example, a big "criticism" section in an otherwise short article about a company suggests that the article is biased against the company).

⚠ The article has very **few references**, or substantial parts of the article lack footnotes. If an article is based on too few sources, it may have been written without complete information about the subject.

⚠ One warning sign is if the discussion page is filled with **hostile dialogue**. If the editors working on the article are not finding common ground, the article may be heavily biased in one direction, or may reflect too much detail about one the controversial aspect of its subject without sufficient attention to other aspects.

⚠ Is there lots of vandalism in the edit history, or have not many people worked on the article? Keep an eye out for resulting problems in the text.

You can help improve articles! Learn how to edit at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Help