

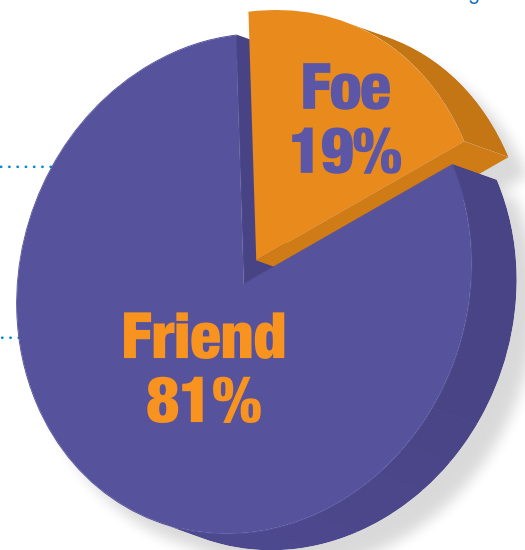
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POLL RESULTS

Wikipedia: Friend or Foe?

The vast majority of our readers agree that Wikipedia is a good starting point for research and a valuable tool to teach critical thinking.



What Is Truth?

By showing students how Wikipedia entries are developed by dynamic consensus, as opposed to “authoritative” sourcing, we can get to deeper levels of the “what is truth” conversation. Shifting students’ minds from the “Deus ex machina” definitions of truth they get from middle school to an analytic viewpoint where they evaluate the validity of information based on multiple sources and references creates a foundation for their high school research careers, validates their own experience of reality, and prepares them for citizenship in a world of conflicting ideas and opinions.

*Jade Tippett
Ukiah High School
Ukiah, California*

Window on the Culture

Each contribution to a Wikipedia page is also a real-world and real-time cultural reflection of the value and impact of a particular topic. For instance, users made numerous attempts to include information on the Barack Obama page that was censored by the moderators. Regardless of your opinion on the politics or agendas of those posting the information, the information contributed is reflective of a popular cultural viewpoint. I wouldn’t go as far as to call Wikipedia factual, but I would certainly conjecture that there is an incredible value in these posts.

*David Geary
Harris County Department of Education
Cypress, Texas*

In the Hands of Users

“Friend or foe?” is a question we should ask more often about most tools. Much as is the case with knives and cars, I would say the answer depends on how the tool is used. On the positive side, Wikipedia can provide a broad overview or references for additional research on many topics. However, as with any reference source, information should be corroborated from additional resources.

*Ira Goldstein
Northeastern Regional Information Center
Albany, New York*

Not a Primary Source

As staff and students learn how to evaluate information on the Internet, they can more effectively use Wikipedia as a resource. But I still feel that because of the possibility of inaccurate information or vandalism to articles, it should not be used as a primary source for research at any level.

*Theresa Pierce
New Castle Community School Corporation
New Castle, Indiana*

Check Your References

Wikipedia should be used as an instructional tool in conjunction with Shared-Copy (Google it). That way, the teacher knows what’s on the page and can annotate. Wikipedia should not be used as a reference in a paper, but instead students should use the references posted in the Wikipedia article and verify that the article reflects the reference.

*Mike Shumake
Wake County Public Schools
Raleigh, North Carolina*

Time Will Tell

My superintendent, who has been a teacher for a number of years, feels that Wikipedia should NEVER be an option to students, as it contains glaring errors and inaccuracies and is never vetted by the experts. I, on the other hand, not being a teacher but a technology person, believe that valid information is in a constant state of revision. In the 1930s, Hitler was viewed merely as a political leader, but by the mid-1940s he was a monster. Time tends to sort good information from bad.

*Ross Learn
Nunavut Department of Education
Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada*

Better Than Books

Should books be banned as a classroom resource? In any given book there are errors, even though these books are edited. Wikipedia is a phenomenal resource, because if there is an error, it can be corrected immediately, whereas in books there could be months or years until the next edition is published. Over the course of those many months, thousands of unknowing students will be misinformed.

*Keri Willis
Brian Piccolo Middle School
Far Rockaway, New York*