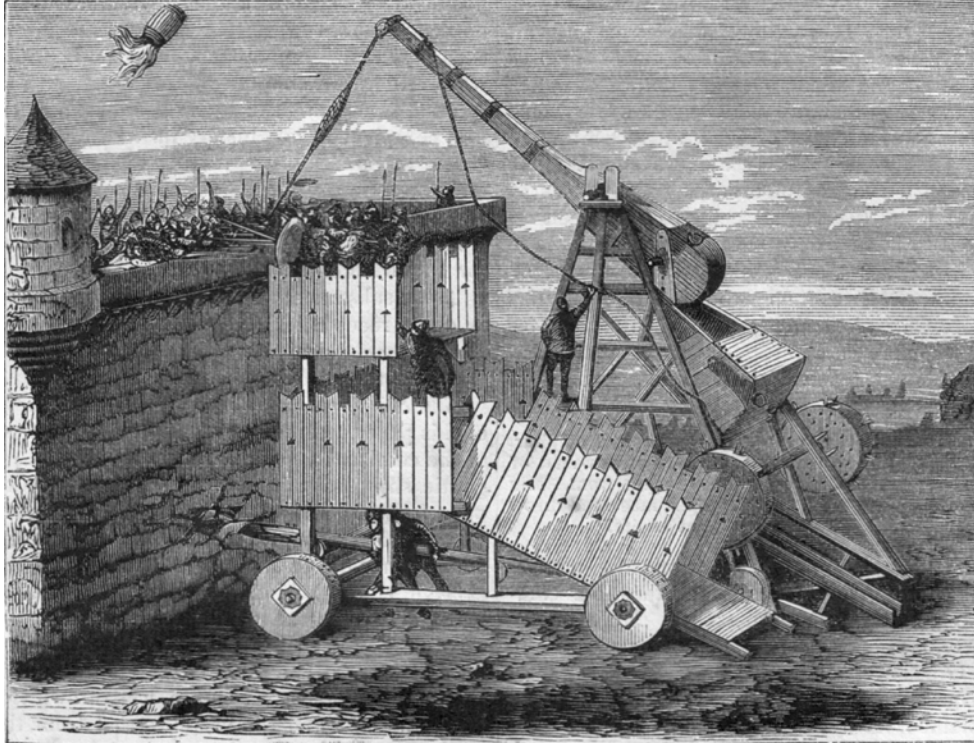# Wikipedia and Academic Research

A guide on interacting with the free encyclopaedia.

Greek Fire Catapult (Harper's Engraving) Public domain image from Wikicommons.

Wikipedia is under 'siege'.

It may be helpful, in the first instance, to think of Wikipedia in terms of it being under *siege*.

Whether this is from politicians, PR companies or from private individuals seeking to either gain an advantage in some way or denigrate a rival in some way, the point remains that the Wikipedia community is primed to protect the integrity of its main Open Knowledge project in order to hold on what is good about it. Wikipedia administrators will often immediately revert any changes they perceive as a threat as part of their default safety-first approach.

Consequently, the advice from Wikimedia UK is to adopt a '*softly, softly*' approach when making edits to Wikipedia articles i.e. not overloading the encyclopaedia with too many external links at one time without due consideration of the relevance of the link to the article or if it really adds anything.

Protecting the integrity of Wikipedia

Parliament WikiEdits Twitter account - Screengrab 28/03/2016

With preserving the integrity of Wikipedia in mind, those Wikipedia edits made from Parliamentary IP addresses are routinely monitored through the Parliament WikiEdits Twitter account ([@parliamentedits](#)).

> **Did you know?**
>
> There are PR companies out there offering *'Wikipedia sanitisation'* as a service.

Imagine the following situation:

> *A new Wikipedia User account has appeared and its only activity is to add external links- all to the same site- to a lot of articles.*

To a Wikipedia editor this looks promotional and doesn't look like building an encyclopaedia. Under 'siege', Wikipedia editors are primed to see things that way.

So what's the answer?

What to do instead comes naturally: be cautious of *excessive* external linking, do try to make substantive improvements to the article as well as adding any external links, and propose addition on the article's **Talk** page so it's clear it's not spam.

After all, Wikipedia is a crowd-sourced collaborative effort which is built on editors *engaging* with the Wikipedia community in a discourse on how an article can be improved.
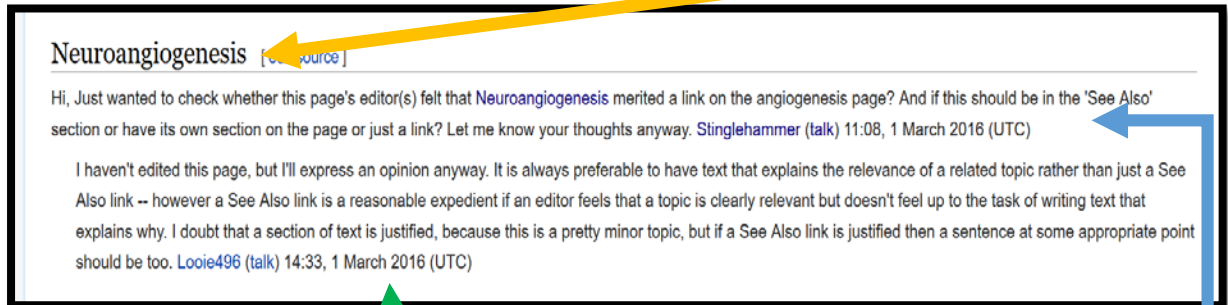
The best way to do this is through the '**Talk'** page.

The 'Talk' page for Wikipedia's article on Alzheimer's disease.

Once on the **Talk** page, create a new section heading related to the subject you wish to raise and explain the edit you wish to make.

1. Heading

Neuroangiogenesis [edit source]

Hi, Just wanted to check whether this page's editor(s) felt that Neuroangiogenesis merited a link on the angiogenesis page? And if this should be in the 'See Also' section or have its own section on the page or just a link? Let me know your thoughts anyway. Stinglehammer (talk) 11:08, 1 March 2016 (UTC)

I haven't edited this page, but I'll express an opinion anyway. It is always preferable to have text that explains the relevance of a related topic rather than just a See Also link -- however a See Also link is a reasonable expedient if an editor feels that a topic is clearly relevant but doesn't feel up to the task of writing text that explains why. I doubt that a section of text is justified, because this is a pretty minor topic, but if a See Also link is justified then a sentence at some appropriate point should be too. Looie496 (talk) 14:33, 1 March 2016 (UTC)

3. Response from Wikipedia editor suggesting a way forward.

2. Proposed edit (polite, requesting help/guidance & includes signature)

In addition, you should make it clear in your description of your proposed edit:

- How the edit is *relevant* to the article,
- How it will *benefit* the article & the wider Wikipedia community and
- Outline your *good intentions* (always consider whether the main beneficiary of adding the edit is the Wikipedia community, your employer or yourself).

- ***Declare*** if it is your work you are suggesting should be included.

It is very difficult for a Wikipedia administrator to know, straight off, that your edit is well-intentioned so making clear the relevance, benefit & your good intentions overall makes this abundantly clear and your edit is much more likely to be accepted.

While this may seem a slower, more convoluted way of editing, it avoids the Wikipedia administrator reverting all your changes back, which they may do if they are unconvinced that the edit is relevant or genuine, so that you have to start over (which would be even more time-consuming and frustrating).

If you receive no reply to your message on the **Talk** page within a certain amount of time (a few days for instance), it maybe that the article is less regularly maintained than other related areas of Wikipedia.

Thereupon, you can also try and leave a message on the **Talk** pages of a *Wikiproject* page that your article is related to which is likely to be patrolled much more often.

Wikiprojects related to the article on Alzheimer's disease.

For instance, all the above Wikiprojects have links on the *Alzheimer's Disease* '**Talk**' page. Click on the one that you deem most relevant to your edit and leave a message on the **Talk** page of that Wikiproject in order to get a response.

It is worth remembering that Wikipedia can be thought of as an academic encyclopaedia with a collaborative social media aspect built in.

Both elements are important to observe in getting the best from Wikipedia.

In summary

Wikipedia is built on Wikipedia administrators understanding the good intentions of the editor and vice versa.

- Therefore, imagine how your links *could* be challenged & consider how to counter these challenges in a polite, reasoned way.
- Always emphasise the edit's relevance. Tie this in *closely* to the article's topic(s).
- Make clear your own good intentions.
- Ask for help & guidance from more experienced Wikipedia editors/admins.
- Avoid adding links in bulk (especially where the links' relevance has not been established).
- Avoid purely editing the article without *any* engagement with the wider Wikipedia community who may have been previously involved with the article's creation.
- Write on **Talk** pages first, in most instances, as this is where the article's creation & maintenance is discussed. This is especially true for contentious, high profile or protected pages.

Engaging with the Wikipedia Community through an article's **Talk** page, a **Wikiproject** Page or the Wikipedia **Teahouse** page (another good area to ask for help & advice) in this way will invariably be well-received.

The vast majority of Wikipedia editors will see the contributions of an expert editor as a boon, even if it just a case of linking to some research.

In addition (some things to ALWAYS bear in mind):

- Articles on Wikipedia must be [notable](#) and accurate.
- Facts should be backed up with citations from [reliable published sources](#) (new articles should be at least 250 words in length and backed up by at least 3 references from reliable sources with a reputation for accuracy & fact-checking).
- Information should be [*neutrally* written](#) avoiding any [peacock terms (puffery) or weasel word (unsupported attributions)](#) which cannot be evidenced.
- Any [conflict of interest](#) should be declared, making it clear in your post on the **Talk** page how you relate to the topic you are writing about: whether it be through a family member, a friend, or through an employer. Ask yourself is the content of my article likely to be called into question or challenged through my

involvement? Do I derive any benefit from editing this page? Or is this perceived benefit eclipsed by the wider benefit to the Wikipedia community?

Take the Trust test – Ask Yourself:

- *"Would relevant others … [readers, editors, admins, arbitration committee, Wikimedia Foundation] … trust my judgment if they knew I was in this situation?"*

Further reading:

Wikipedia editing guidance and its central tenets

1. Ten simple rules for editing Wikipedia
2. Wikipedia:Conflict of Interest
3. Wikipedia:Conflict_of_interest: Citing_yourself
4. Wikipedia:No_original_research
5. Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view
6. Wikipedia:Notability
7. Wikipedia:ManualofStyle/Words_to_watch (Peacock terms & Weasel words)
8. Wikipedia:Verifiability

Altmetrics and Wikipedia as the gateway to digital research

1. Abstract:The_fount_of_all_knowledge: Wikipedia_as_the_front_matter_to_all_research (Wikimania 2014)
2. Tim_Berners-Lee_quote_from_Wikimania_2014_submission 'The_fount_of_all_knowledge'
3. Wikimedia and metrics: A poster for Altmetrics
4. Wikipedia 15 and Education - WikiEdu blog.
5. Wikipedia's ongoing search for the sum of all human knowledge - Oxford Internet Institute.
6. Wikipedia amplifying impact of Open Access publications - The LSE Impact Blog
7. Wikipedia: The Digital Gateway to Academic Research - Referencing Made Easy Blog site.
8. Brits trust Wikipedia more than the news: survey (CNBC.com)

9. 97% of instructors would teach with Wikipedia again - WikiEdu.org blog 25/03/2016