

Next Steps

Once you have an account, there are a few things that should be highlighted. Upon logging in you will have some new links at the top of each page: your user name, which links to your personal talk page; “My Talk”, which links to a page where you can receive messages and respond; “My Preferences”, which let's you customise how you interface with Wikipedia through the browser; “My Watchlist”, which you use to track changes to articles which you are interested in; “My Contributions”, that shows all of your edits since you first started on Wikipedia; and “Log out” for when you wish to stop for a bit (highly recommended when working from public terminals).

Setting Your Preferences

Clicking on the “My Preferences” option mentioned above will bring you to a page where you can change how you view Wikipedia and provide some additional functionality that can be useful. Your “user profile” will give some basic information about your account - how long you have been editing for, any special permissions you may have, your email account (only viewable by you, but if you set it, other people can send email to you, and you can send email to other people), the ability to change your password and an option to change your signature (used when leaving comments on discussion pages).

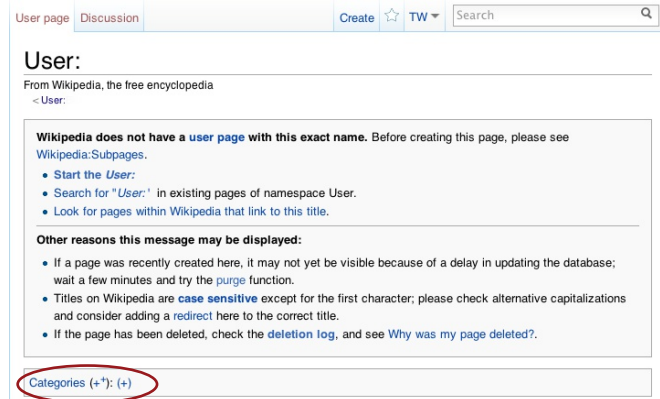
Two options may be particularly useful when starting out. The “Date and time” tab will allow you to set the timezone in which you reside, and this will automatically adjust some some information (such as the times that appear on your watchlist) to your local time. And the “Gadgets” tab provides extra features to make editing easier: in particular, “HotCat” is worth enabling, as it streamlines the all-important process of adding categories to pages.

Creating a User Page

Although by no means essential, one of the first things you may wish to do is create your own user page in order to let people know a bit about you. You can add as much or as little information as you wish - generally it is recommended that you do not include personal information, but you might consider adding some of your interests, any expertise that you would like to share, and some general information about yourself. Keep in mind, though, that it is your choice as to how much (or how little) to add. In working out what to say, you may wish to have a look around at some of the other user pages: whenever an editor signs a message, (using ~~~~), their username is linked to their page, so it is easy to check out what other editors have done.

One early change you might consider is to add a category to your user page. Presuming that you have enabled HotCat, if you click on your name, (which should be a red link if you

haven't created your user page yet, or blue if you, or someone else, has), you should see either your page or some instructions about creating your page, below which is a small blue link saying “Categories”. Next to that link should be a “+” sign - clicking on that will open a text box in which you can add your chosen category. If you start typing in that box, suggestions for possible categories will appear. While fully optional, one suggestion is that you let people know where you are based, in case there are any local Wikipedia events being held. Thus if you start typing “Wikipedians in ” you will be given the opportunity to select your region. Naturally, you will need to save it when done, and this will take two steps - saving the category, and saving the modified page.



User Talk

Your User Talk page, accessed through the “My Talk” option, is where you can expect to receive general messages about Wikipedia. Although it is initially blank, if someone wants to contact you they will do so through that page - and when they do, you will see a “You have new messages” banner when you log in. Don't worry - it is hard to miss.

Adding to your Watchlist

One major advantage of having an account is that you gain a watchlist. Your watchlist will let you track changes to any page in which you are interested - excellent if you wish to watch out for vandalism, or if you would like to have a say in how it is developed. To add an article to your watchlist, just click on the big star that is near the top of each page - if it is filled in, you're watching the article. Then when you view your watchlist, (by clicking on the “My Watchlist” link at the top of each page when you are logged in), any pages that have had recent changes will be highlighted.



Creating an Account on Wikipedia

Introduction

Wikipedia has been described as the “encyclopaedia that anyone can edit”, and doing so generally requires nothing more than visiting the site, selecting “edit”, and making your changes. There is no need to register, - you can edit straight away, without an account, and your changes will be shared with all.

That said, there are good reasons why one should consider creating a formal account, and this pamphlet is intended to be a quick guide to the process.

Why Create an Account?

There is no need to create an account to edit most of the pages on Wikipedia - the vast majority are open to anyone. Editing without an account, though, does tend to limit what you can do. In particular, there are; you will be unable to create new articles or upload files; there may be times when you may be prevented from editing the project (generally the result of trouble by someone who previously used the same IP address as you are now using); and each of your edits will not necessarily be associated with your contributions, preventing you from building a reputation as a valued contributor.

On the other hand, if you have an account, you will have some distinct advantages. You can upload files and create new articles; edit articles that have been semi-protected (generally used to prevent vandalism); customise how you view Wikipedia through your browser; gain access to specialised editing tools; track changes to articles you are interested in through your watchlist; and build a reputation as a valued contributor. In addition, through the use of the unified login, the account you create on one of the Wikimedia Foundation's projects can be extended to them all - including Wikimedia Commons, WikiNews, WikiSource and Wikiversity, along with the various language-specific versions of Wikipedia.

Choosing a Name

Before you start, though, you are going to need to choose a username. The first decision you need to make is whether it is better to edit under either your real name (or a variation thereof), or to use a pseudonym to provide a degree of anonymity. Generally, most users choose a pseudonym - it helps provide some security from harassment. (At times, editors may choose to involve themselves in controversial subjects, or they may find that

they have stumbled across one accidentally. Thus the extra security can be welcome).

If you are going with a pseudonym, there are a few additional rules to keep in mind:

- The use of names based on a company, product or organisation is generally prohibited.
- Usernames cannot contain an email address or web address (such as wikimedia.com.au).
- You cannot choose a misleading username, such as the real name of another individual, or a name that claims a relationship or responsibility that you don't possess.
- Names cannot be offensive, or chosen in order to be distributive.

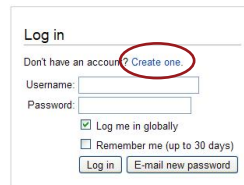
Other than these rules, there's quite a bit of flexibility, as even a quick examination of the usernames employed by other contributors will attest.

Creating an Account

When you access Wikipedia, in the top-right corner should be a small link saying “Log In/Create Account”.



Clicking on that link will bring you to the “log in” page, where you will be given an option to create an account.



Following the “Create one” option will take you to a page where you can create a new account. You will need to enter your new username, your password, an (optional) email address, and the random letters (the captcha)

displayed on the page. In choosing your password, it is best to select one that you have not used before. Generally speaking, passwords should be at least five characters in length, combining both letters and numbers.

That should be it. From here you should be able to log in and start using your new account.

Requesting an Account

In some cases, such as where you are unable to enter the letters that you are asked to type in, it may not be possible to create a new account yourself. In those situations you can ask for a new account to be created for you at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Request_an_account

Sockpuppets and Role Accounts

As each contributor to Wikipedia is recognised by their username, there are two rules which are worth taking into consideration. The first is that an account should only ever be used by a single person - role accounts, where the one username is shared by two or more people, are prohibited. The second is that, as a general rule, you can only have a single account. There are a few exceptions to this, but the rule is designed to avoid situations where people use multiple usernames in a debate in order to lend more weight to their side of the argument, or where an alternative account is used to disguise actions that would be prevented if they were using their original one. Such accounts are referred to as "sockpuppets", and investigations can lead to sanctions.

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