Species

Editing Wikipedia can be daunting for newcomers, especially for student editors contributing to Wikipedia for the first time as part of a class assignment. This guide is designed to help you add or expand articles about species to Wikipedia.

Be accurate

You're contributing to a resource millions of people use to inform themselves about the world of science. Your work for this class will be read by thousands of people, so it's important to be accurate.

By documenting and sharing your knowledge about living things, you'll help Wikipedia provide a wider spectrum of information about the world. With great power comes great responsibility!

Understand the guidelines

Take time to read and understand the suggestions here to make the most of your contributions to Wikipedia.

If you post something that doesn't meet these guidelines, it may take up valuable volunteer time that could have been spent making your contributions, or other content, even better. If you aren't comfortable with these guidelines, talk to your instructor about an alternative, off-wiki assignment.

Engage with editors

Part of the Wikipedia experience is receiving and responding to feedback from other editors. Don't wait until the last day to make a contribution, or you may miss comments, advice, and ideas. Volunteers from the Wikipedia community might respond or ask questions about your work. If they do, make sure to acknowledge it, and work with them to improve the article. Discussion is a crucial part of the Wikipedia process.

Watch out for close paraphrasing

Use your own words. Plagiarizing by copying-and-pasting, or close paraphrasing — when most of the words are changed, but the structure and meaning of the original text remains — is against the rules.

Plagiarism is a violation of your university's academic honor code. Plagiarism on Wikipedia will be caught by other editors, and there will be a permanent online record of it tied to your account. Even standard resources or authors, such as textbooks, are under copyright and should never be directly copied.

The best way to avoid this hassle is to make sure you really understand your material, and write about it in your own words. If you aren't clear on what close paraphrasing is, contact your university's writing center.

Be bold!

Take the time to understand the rules and guidelines, and soon you'll be contributing important knowledge to a resource you and millions of other people use every day.

Wiki Edu

Getting started

• Choose topics with plentiful and interesting literature in peer-reviewed journals or books, but not much coverage in Wikipedia.

• Before creating a species article, check if one already exists by searching for both its common and scientific names.

• Check the article's rating on its Talk page. "Start-class" or "stub" articles need your help! Avoid "featured" or "good" articles.

• If you are making statements related in any way to human health, there are strict sourcing standards. See | *shortcut* `WP:MEDRS` .

Use reliable sources

Learning to evaluate sources is a core component of engaging critically in your field — and on Wikipedia.

Consider the **author**. Authors published in a peer review process are preferred to self-published authors, such as a blog post or book series. Many writers lack proper training as scientists. Weigh the conclusions of pop press sources against the dominant conclusions in your field. Even quality sources of news should be built on the work of research, so try to find and use a scholarly source to contribute the same information to an article when possible. Second, consider the **publisher**. Cite books, textbooks or monographs from a reliable publisher of biology or science.

Don't use these sources:

• Blogs

• Popular press articles

• Any other non-peer-reviewed source

For more about finding sources, check out | *shortcut* `WP:RS` .

Organize your article

It can be helpful to gather your information and think about your *lead section* first, which you can use as an outline for the rest of your article.

Depict information accurately

Unlike most school assignments, Wikipedia doesn't permit original research. Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, and should cover only what the literature says. It's not the place for interpretation or analysis. Never use material from different sources to suggest a conclusion that isn't *explicitly* stated by those sources. If one reliable source says A, and another says B, resist the temptation to connect A and B in your article.

You can find out more about Wikipedia's policies on Original Research at | *shortcut* `WP:NOR` .

What's a shortcut?

The text `WP:MEDRS` is what's known on Wikipedia as a *shortcut*.

You can quickly type shortcuts like this into Wikipedia's search bar to pull up specific pages.

What's a lead section?

The *lead section* is the first section of a Wikipedia article.

Good leads summarize the entire article in 2–3 paragraphs, providing context and briefly covering all of the important aspects of the topic. The first sentence usually starts with the **common name of the topic** in bold (if there is one), and the scientific classification in italics:

Sheep (*Ovis aries*) are quadrupedal, ruminant mammals typically kept as livestock.

For a style guide for plants and organisms, check out | *shortcut* `WP:MOSLIFE` .

Tip! Naming species

Scientific names are italicized, genus is capitalized, specific epithet is lower case:

• *Bombus vestalis*

Types of species articles

Every article is unique, but here are some rough outlines. You can add, remove, or reorder sections for your own topic.

Writing about an animal species

- **Lead section:** Write the combination of common name, plus scientific name (italicized, genus capitalized) in the lead.
- **Anatomy and morphology:** What does it look like? Describe appearance, noting variations by sex.
- **Distribution and habitat:** Where it lives and its relationship with that habitat, such as diet. Note historical changes, such as introductions, range expansions, or extinctions.
- **Behavior:** Social behavior, hunting or foraging techniques, threat responses, breeding and courtship, etc.
- **Taxonomy:** Discovery, description, changes in nomenclature. Relationship to other members of the genus.
- **Conservation status:** Endangered, extinct, etc. Follow the IUCN Red List. Note threats, population changes, and conservation efforts.

Good examples of species article are the common tern, slow loris, or banded sugar ant.

Writing about plants and fungi

- **Lead section:** Include genus and species (italicized, genus capitalized) and growth form (annual, perennial, shrub, tree, etc).
- **Description:** How would you identify it? Describe leaves, flowers, and fruiting bodies (for fungi).
- **Taxonomy:** When was it discovered and described? Mention etymology, major synonyms, and changes in classifications.
- **Distribution and habitat:** Where does it grow? Mention geography, elevation, climate, soil types, and growth density (singly or in clumps?). An ecology subsection can describe interactions within the environment, including pests, pollinators, and disease. Conservation concerns can go here, or add another section.
- **Uses (or Culture):** How is the species used by humans? You can include details on cultivation.

Good examples of plant articles are durian, or *Amanita bisporigera* fungus.

What is a Taxobox?

A Taxobox is a small information table found at the top right corner of an article. It often includes a picture of the species, along with its placement in a classification system (i.e., Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species, etc.).

Domestic goat
Temporal range: .01–0 Ma

Neolithic – Recent

A pygmy goat on a stump.

Conservation status
Domesticated

Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Artiodactyla
Family:	Bovidae
Subfamily:	Caprinae
Genus:	*Capra*
Species:	*C. aegagrus*
Subspecies:	*C. a. hircus*

Trinomial name
Capra aegagrus hircus
(Linnaeus, 1758)

Synonyms
Capra hircus

"Hausziege 04" by Kuebi = Armin Kübelbeck / CC BY-SA 3.0

There are unique Taxoboxes for animals and plants, with templates that make it easy to add one to your article. You don't have to fill in every section, but don't delete any fields that you don't know — blank sections won't appear on the page.

You can copy and paste the code for a Taxobox at | *shortcut* WP:TX .

How do you find an image?

You can add any image found on Wikimedia Commons to illustrate your article (http://commons.wikimedia.org). Commons is international, so you'll find more images using a Latin name (*Erinaceus europaeus*) rather than the common English name (Hedgehog).

Read more on uploading or using images in our "Illustrating Wikipedia" handbook, linked from your course page.

Key points

As you start writing, keep these guidelines in mind:

- When mentioning technical terms for the first time, provide a short plain-English explanation in parentheses, if possible.

- Keep species articles focused on the species. Steer away from unrelated facts, such as details about researchers.

- Likewise, avoid excessive detail. For example, rather than listing all of the insects a bird eats, it's appropriate simply to say it is an insectivore.

- Let the facts speak for themselves. Respect your readers and recognize that empirical data doesn't always lead two readers to the same conclusion.

- If you mention medical or health information related to humans, be sure to understand the sourcing and citation requirements found at | *shortcut* WP:MEDRS .

- Always cite your sources. If you find a statement in an existing article that isn't properly cited, you can add one.

Final thoughts

- Don't procrastinate! Writing good, reliable Wikipedia articles takes time. Don't wait until the last minute. If you get stuck, always ask your instructor for extra time, rather than adding content to Wikipedia that doesn't meet these guidelines.

- Check back on your page. It can be interesting to see how your article grows, but you may also have comments and suggestions from other editors, and want to get involved in new developments.

- Be sure you're writing impersonal, fact-based encyclopedic content, not an essay or blog post. See the "Editing Wikipedia" handbook linked from your course page for a refresher on the difference in tone.

Have more questions?

Do you have more questions about finding good sources, notability, or, really, anything at all? You can always ask the Wikipedia Content Expert listed on your course page. You can also post a question to Wikipedia volunteers at the Teahouse: | *shortcut* WP:TH .