

# WIKIPEDIA BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS

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*#CIPRSM*



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# ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to provide clear and detailed advice on how PR professionals should engage with the Wikipedia community. Any discussion referring to public relations 'best practice' or professional conduct is informed by the CIPR's code of conduct even when this isn't specifically referenced, and this code is taken as a good proxy for what constitutes good conduct in other countries.

Wherever possible, these guidelines give added detail to existing advice given to PR professionals by Wikipedians and have given examples of dos and don'ts. These guidelines aim to highlight best practice and equip public relations professionals with the guidance needed to navigate the grey areas of Wikipedia engagement and understand how to protect an organisation's or client's reputation openly and transparently.

PR practitioners should make themselves aware of the legal considerations of engaging with social media in the relevant legal jurisdiction (CIPR members should refer to the [CIPR social media guidelines](#)<sup>1</sup>). You should also review regulations specific to the relevant industry. For example, a member working in the UK pharmaceutical industry is advised to review the policies and guidance of the [Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry](#)<sup>2</sup> (ABPI), and members working in the UK financial services industry should refer to the [Financial Services Authority](#)<sup>3</sup> (FSA).

These guidelines do not constitute legal advice. The CIPR, supporting institutes and associations, and Wikimedia UK cannot accept any liability for any action taken or not taken as a result of this information.

*Note: These guidelines have been written collaboratively on an open wiki with input from public relations professionals and Wikipedians. The text above and below is a 'snapshot' of the content of the wiki at midnight on Sunday 24 June. This document lives and breathes at: [http://uk.wikimedia.org/wiki/Draft\\_best\\_practice\\_guidelines\\_for\\_PR](http://uk.wikimedia.org/wiki/Draft_best_practice_guidelines_for_PR).*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/social-media-guidance>

<sup>2</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Association\\_of\\_the\\_British\\_Pharmaceutical\\_Industry](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Association_of_the_British_Pharmaceutical_Industry)

<sup>3</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Financial\\_Services\\_Authority](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Financial_Services_Authority)

# THE DEFINITION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics<sup>4</sup>.

There is another interpretation of public relations, commonly referred to as "spin". If this is your mode of operation then you are urged to steer clear of Wikipedia altogether in the performance of your job.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/about-us/about-pr>

# “DARK ARTS” ON WIKIPEDIA

Comments about the use of “dark arts” on Wikipedia, whereby PR professionals manipulate Wikipedia entries to favour an organisation or an individual, made the front page of the *Independent* national newspaper in December 2011<sup>5</sup>. This was not an isolated incident - for example, in August 2007, the BBC reported instances of Wikipedia pages being manipulated by staff from the office of Australian Prime Minister John Howard<sup>6</sup>.

You are reminded that “dark arts” are the antithesis of best practice public relations. Intentional deceit and anonymous or incognito activities are breaches of professional codes of conduct. [Further information about the CIPR Code of Conduct can be found here](#)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/wikipedia-founder-attacks-bell-pottinger-for-ethical-blindness-6273836.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6961575.stm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/about-us/about-cipr/code-conduct>

# CURRENT DEBATING POINTS

Wikipedia is the world's [sixth most-read website](#)<sup>8</sup> with editions of Wikipedia in 285 languages. It is an online encyclopaedia with more than 20 million articles and often the first port of call for millions of people researching a topic, individual or company. And, at the heart of Wikipedia is its community. Wikipedia has more than 100,000 active contributors, known as 'Wikipedians', an online community in the most positive, engaged and pro-active sense.

There is no doubt amongst PR professionals that the site and its community are influential but many believe that the community is not taking its power seriously enough (although see [Wikipedia is in the real world](#)<sup>9</sup>). Some PR practitioners have formed and participate in a Facebook group called CREWE ([Corporate Representatives for Ethical Wikipedia Engagement](#)<sup>10</sup>) to lobby Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, and the wider Wikipedia community to review the site's process and policies.

Jane Wilson, CIPR CEO, broadly supports the movement to engage the Wikipedia community but adds that changes to the site are not going to be made over night and PR professionals must respect the site and community workings as it stands now. Generally speaking, there is no support for changing Wikipedia processes and policies amongst the Wikipedians that have helped prepare this guidance. They feel that their existing policies, as described here, are adequate. This is how they wish PR professionals to interact with their community.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://mostpopularwebsites.net/>

<sup>9</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Wikipedia\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_real\\_world](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Wikipedia_is_in_the_real_world)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/groups/crewe.group>

# THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA THAT ANYONE CAN EDIT?

Wikipedians spend their free time editing Wikipedia because they want to help create a great encyclopedia which is freely available to every one on the planet, in their own language. There are [Wikipedias in more than 280 languages](#)<sup>11</sup>, English Wikipedia is just the biggest. If your aim is to help them make the encyclopedia better then you are welcome there. If this is not your aim then you are not.

As PR professionals have a vested interest in an organisation, individual or client, we naturally have a potential conflict of interest. Wikipedians have found that editors with a conflict of interest find it difficult to maintain a neutral point of view. [Conflict of interest](#)<sup>12</sup> and [neutral point of view](#)<sup>13</sup> are core concepts here. Wikipedia policy is that editors are strongly discouraged from editing articles where they have a conflict of interest. This leads us to the most important assertion in this guidance: PR professionals should not edit articles about their clients, their employer, related brands and issues, or competing organisations and associated brands (ie, when there is a conflict of interest).

You are, however, free to contribute to articles related to your hobbies and interests where you do not have a conflict of interest. In fact, you are encouraged to do so, particularly as this is a great way to get to know how Wikipedia works.

If a Wikipedia article about a client is unbalanced and a PR professional wishes to address this, they can engage with the regular contributors on the article's talk page. It is here that anyone can make a case for a different point of view to be included. If a request for a different point of view is ignored by Wikipedians on the talk pages, there are ways to progress the issue further. See page 10, A Step-by-Step Guide: How to improve articles.

There are exceptions when dealing with, for example, obvious vandalism relating to a living person. In practice however, if you have not edited Wikipedia before, you should leave this to Wikipedia's own, very effective, anti-vandalism task force. When you have more experience in interacting with Wikipedia then you will be ready to try to help with this.

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<sup>11</sup> [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Wikipedias](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias)

<sup>12</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Conflict\\_of\\_interest](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Conflict_of_interest)

<sup>13</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Neutral\\_point\\_of\\_view](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view)

# PRACTICAL APPROACHES

Wikipedia was founded as a reference site, and before "social media" became a concept in common use. That means that many of the assumptions behind its operation go back quite a way. Without entering into the history of 15 years of wikis, it can be helpful to bear in mind two points:

## WIKIPEDIA IS AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Material in Wikipedia articles should be reference-quality information, and nothing else. Besides the skills needed to write in that fashion, what is needed to participate successfully in the site is a set of social and collaborative talents.

So remember that Wikipedia is not a social media service, even if its content is user-generated. It is an online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. It is designed to be starting point for research, not an ending point. It is an online destination where you get a general understanding and an amalgamation of third party credible sources that you can check out further.

## ASK FOR HELP

It is often missed that it is possible to ask other editors for information, help and advice. A good example would be "where do I go to raise this issue I have?" Another would be to ask how a guideline should be applied in a given case. Just remember that the other editors are unpaid volunteers. Ask them to help you do it. Don't make them feel like you've asked them to do your homework for you.

## OPERATE WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Be honest and open at all times. On the positive side, don't be afraid to "escalate the query". If you post to an article's talk page and nobody responds, there are ways to progress your query further. If Wikipedia editors don't reply to you within a certain time scale (the time scale is dependent on the severity of the issue, the history of the article and the people involved) then take further action. Decide on the course and next step on a case-by-case basis. Whatever route you take, be sure to leave a detailed note on the talk page about edits and route of action. This will save the time of others doing any "audit", and probably your time also.

## UNDERSTAND THE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

It is not so widely known that Wikipedia has a general email system allowing anyone to raise issues about its pages (see OTRS below). You should always try to work with the community on the web site first, but this is an excellent fall back option.

## BE PATIENT AND REASONABLE

Getting changes made for the better in Wikipedia pages is sometimes a lengthy process when you act with the co-operation of the volunteer community. But changes made that way, with well-documented reasoning on the site and proper references, are more likely to be permanent. You must also [act as if you believe the other parties are working in good faith](#)<sup>14</sup> too. On the English Wikipedia there are editors for whom English is not their first language.

## USE GOOD JUDGEMENT

As with most elements of public relations, one size does not fit all. There will undoubtedly be times where you will have to interpret the guidelines and apply the code of conduct principles to real situations with all their complexities. Here you should use good discretion, particularly since Wikipedia is a very public place.

In these instances, keep your professional body's code of conduct forefront of mind, use common sense and your experience in public relations to make a judgement call, and act accordingly. If you are not an experienced PR professional, please seek help from a senior PR consultant within your organisation or consultancy. And if you're still stuck, call your professional body and they should put you in touch with another PR professional who can help.

## HANDLE CONFLICT OF INTEREST

You must recognise what constitutes [conflict of interest](#)<sup>15</sup>. Wikipedia works with a clear definition, which you can find in the Glossary here.

<sup>14</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Assume\\_good\\_faith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Assume_good_faith)

<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Plain\\_and\\_simple\\_conflict\\_of\\_interest\\_guide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Plain_and_simple_conflict_of_interest_guide)



# THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WIKIPEDIA

To engage with the community and edit pages successfully, you must have a decent overview of the site, but also a good understanding of its content principles. The basic principles of Wikipedia are presented via the "[Five Pillars of Wikipedia](#)<sup>16</sup>":

1. Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia
2. Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view
3. Wikipedia is free content that anyone can edit, use, modify, and distribute
4. Editors should interact with each other in a respectful and civil manner
5. Wikipedia does not have firm rules.

In addition to these pillars, Wikipedia has three [core content policies](#)<sup>17</sup>. It is imperative PR professionals understand these fully.

1. Neutral point of view – All Wikipedia articles and other encyclopaedic content must be written from a neutral point of view, representing significant views fairly, proportionately and without bias. Fundamentally, where there is a contentious issue associated with a topic, Wikipedia content should be a good reference for the debate. In a few words, neutrality means this: report the debate, don't take part in it.
2. Verifiability – Material challenged or likely to be challenged, and all quotations, must be attributed to a reliable, published source. The threshold for inclusion in Wikipedia is verifiability, not truth — meaning, in this context, whether readers are able to check that material added to Wikipedia has already been published by a reliable source, not whether we think it is true.
3. No original research – Wikipedia does not publish original thought: all material in Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable, published source. Articles may not contain any new analysis or synthesis of published material that serves to advance a position not clearly advanced by the sources.

The core content policies are framed by this assertion: "These policies determine the type and quality of material that is acceptable in Wikipedia articles. Because they complement each other, they should not be interpreted in isolation from one another. The principles upon which these policy statements are based are not superseded by other policies or guidelines, or by editors' consensus."

Wikipedia works with the concept of "reliable sources". Like talking about "mainstream media", this concept cannot be pinned down completely; and just as news media can get things wrong, reliable is not the same as infallible. For current events the mainstream media are the main reliable published sources, and (for example) most press releases and blogs are not taken as reliable.

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<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five\\_pillars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars)

<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Core\\_content\\_policies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Core_content_policies)

# A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE: HOW TO IMPROVE ARTICLES

This is a brief step-by-step guide outlining how to improve an article, leading up to "worst case scenarios".

1. All editing should be conducted in an open and honest manner. PR professionals should create an account with Wikipedia and create a user page associated with this which discloses their place of work and a list of their clients. Wikipedia policy doesn't allow user accounts to be shared so each person should have their own account and user page. Company accounts are not allowed.
2. First go to the Talk section of the article (the tab at the top of a Wikipedia entry labelled "Talk"). "If something's been written about your client, tell them your client has a response, or a response that has been published elsewhere and should be on the site. This is effective almost always," says Jimmy Wales. He adds: "Talk to the community with respect. State your job title, identity, interest and company. Escalate with kindness." Get your clients response published elsewhere (e.g. a press release) where it is clearly attributable to your client and can be referenced by an editor with a neutral point of view in the article as your client's / organisation's position).
3. See who wrote the article originally; click through to their User page, and to their Talk page (the tab at the top of the User page labelled "Talk"). Say you have got some tips or suggestions for the article and ask them to have a look. By going to the 'Toolbox' section in the left-hand sidebar and looking for their list of contributions, you will be able to check if they are still active on the site. If not then try other more recent editors.
4. If you get no response from the Talk pages, go to a relevant noticeboard. These pages are watched by groups of people with a particular interest: in effect specialists. According to Wales, noticeboard pages are very active and provide help quickly. If you are concerned about an entry for an individual, you can go to the [Biography of Living Persons Noticeboard](#)<sup>18</sup>. Or if you want to make changes to a company page, or you think that someone editing the article is biased, it is a good idea to ask someone from the [Conflict of Interest Noticeboard](#)<sup>19</sup> to have a look.
5. Email [info-en@wikimedia.org](mailto:info-en@wikimedia.org) in any situation where it may be hard to disclose yourself as a public relations practitioner on the Talk pages, because it might inflame the situation for example. The mail address leads into what is known as the OTRS system. There are select people who manage this inbox who will act as your advocate within the community and offer advice. When you have a reply, keep the OTRS ticket number for future reference; it will be important if you need to chase up the query.
6. If a subject is controversial, or there are continual 'edit wars' occurring, then you can apply for the page to be protected. There are various stages, from full protection, where only a Wikipedia administrator can make an edit, to semi-protection, where only Wikipedia editors who have been registered on the site for more than four days and have made at least ten edits are allowed to make changes. To apply, ask an administrator, email [info-en@wikimedia.org](mailto:info-en@wikimedia.org), or go to the [BLP](#)<sup>20</sup> (biography of living person) page. But note - you cannot choose which page version is protected.
7. There is a dispute resolution system within Wikipedia, but the best advice, almost always, is to seek informal negotiation or low-level mediation through a third party. The [Administrators' Noticeboard](#)<sup>21</sup> can be effective in dealing with obnoxious conduct. Wikipedia's conflict resolution mechanisms are almost entirely devoted to one question - Have people been working in good faith to achieve the best possible Wikipedia page? They will almost never get involved in disagreements over the content of a page but they may ban one of the parties (from the page or from the whole site) for incivility or sabotaging efforts to get a consensus. If they get involved then listen to any advice they have to give you, even if it is not what you want to hear.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:BLPN>

<sup>19</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:COIN>

<sup>20</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:BLP>

<sup>21</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators%27\\_noticeboard/Incidents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators%27_noticeboard/Incidents)

8. Even if you think the other guy is only there to push his point of view you should nevertheless act as if you believe he is acting in good faith. This will help you later if the issue gets escalated to any of the dispute resolution mechanisms. [Assume Good Faith](#)<sup>22</sup> is policy on Wikipedia.
9. "See you in court" will not help you or a client. It can get you banned from editing while the issue is referred to lawyers. See [Wikipedia:No legal threats](#)<sup>23</sup>.
10. Remember that sometimes consensus is against you. Sometimes you won't be able to convince the other editors that your wording is the best. If you refer the dispute to the dispute resolution and they come back and say you are wrong and the other guy is right then you should probably accept that and move on.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:AGF>

<sup>23</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No\\_legal\\_threats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_legal_threats)

# DOS

Do...

1. Be respectful. Understand the rules of the road. This is one of the basic principles of engaging with social media, and also applies to Wikipedia. Make sure you understand the basics and familiarise yourself with the features and functionalities of Wikipedia. You can visit the talk pages of articles on prominent figures to observe and learn how people interact and how contributors shape an article.
2. Disclose your interests and be transparent at all times. When you join Wikipedia as a PR professional, pick a professional username, always make sure you're logged in before contributing, and be up-front on Talk pages. Write something on your user page about whom you work for and why you have joined the site; include any relevant links to your organisation / your clients. If you have a Wikipedia account that you use on a personal and professional basis then make this clear and outline your personal areas of interests. This is to clarify that edits made to pages relating to your personal interests are not connected to your employer or client. It is perfectly OK on Wikipedia to have two different accounts such as an 'at home' and an 'at work' account, provided they are both declared and the respective user pages link to the other. (But of course you may only vote once in each discussion!)
3. Engage and earn goodwill with the Wikipedian community before you are seen to need it (a core principle of social media is to 'pay it forward'). Get to know key people within the Wikipedia community. Treat Wikipedia engagement as akin to media/blogger relations. Pages of interest to your organisation or client (and Wikipedians who follow those pages) should be identified and contact established from the beginning of a PR programme. It doesn't help simply to contact Wikipedians abruptly during a reputational crisis. Caveat: If a PR professional does not have time to build a relationship then it can be safer to raise the issue elsewhere and then people who do have a relationship / track record can raise it on Wikipedia.
4. Look at the bigger picture. If a Wikipedia article references a scandal or includes words related to your organisation's / client's wider reputation it is likely that there is a need for a wider campaign that clearly addresses the reputational issue at hand.
5. Remember that Wikipedia keeps a record of everything you do, forever, and makes it available for anybody to see, so don't try to hide or spin things. Wikipedia does have processes for removing certain types of edits such as defamatory ones. In extreme cases where information should be removed not just from the current page but from the readable history also, you may ask for [revision deletion](#)<sup>24</sup> (selective removal of individual edits from the history by an administrator), but note this is not a routine action.
6. Remove obvious vandalism about living people if you consider yourself an expert Wikipedian. Wikipedia takes vandalism on living people's pages particularly seriously. If a person's entry has been sabotaged, remove the content and leave a message on the talk page to let Wikipedians know what you've changed and why. [See the page here for more](#)<sup>25</sup>.
7. Do use [warning templates](#)<sup>26</sup> when you revert vandals. This will bring greater scrutiny to the subsequent edits of those vandals, and if you are seen to be using the templates correctly, other editors will have more confidence in you.
8. Use your [watchlist](#)<sup>27</sup> to track changes on pages you need to follow. An alternative is to apply the ["related changes"](#)<sup>28</sup> function to a page listing those articles: in effect an open watchlist. Since an open watchlist is particularly transparent and can be used by others in your organisation, it has some advantages.

<sup>24</sup> <http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:WP:REVDDEL>

<sup>25</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Reverting>

<sup>26</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WARN>

<sup>27</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Watching\\_pages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Watching_pages)

<sup>28</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Related\\_changes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Related_changes)

9. [Draft versions in your userspace<sup>29</sup>](#) and invite feedback. A successful draft may be copied as is or in part into an article by someone else; and it is an ideal way to display alternative wording and better references.
10. Attend a Wikipedia meet-up near you to get to know the community and understand how it works. These events are just social, so leave the business cards at home. The [list of meet-up events in your area can be found here<sup>30</sup>](#).
11. Release images. If you'd prefer to have the Wikipedia article of your client illustrated by good quality recent (and historical) photographs, you can [release a better quality image<sup>31</sup>](#). There is some work to do here: you will need to clear the release carefully with your photographer and legal department, given that Wikimedia uses licenses that they may not be familiar with. Are there any other images you could release? If your client has an archive of diagrams and photos of sprockets going back 200 years then see if you can get them released - wouldn't it be good if the photos on articles about sprockets in 200 different languages have a link back to your site?
12. Work to put significant technical information under free licenses, or at least make it easily accessible on your website. Wikipedia researchers are always looking for authoritative sources of information.
13. Promote some volunteer editing at Wikipedia. If you are an agency or otherwise employ PR people give your staff time to write about their interests outside work.
14. Use noticeboards when it's appropriate to get admin help. For example, if a page is frequently vandalised or moved to an inappropriate name, Wikipedia's administrators can "semi protect" it to stop editing by new accounts and unregistered editors. You can [post requests for protection<sup>32</sup>](#). Using noticeboards rather than contacting individual admins will be regarded by Wikipedians as more open and transparent, and will usually get you a faster response.
15. Use the [requested edit<sup>33</sup>](#) facility on talk pages if no-one has responded to your talk page comment in a reasonable time. When you want to propose a change, start a new section at the bottom of the talk page. Disclose your conflict of interest and explain that this is why you aren't editing the article yourself. Describe the changes that you consider are needed, explain why they are needed and provide a reliable independent reference for the facts you want added or altered. (A professional news service such as the BBC would be fine for example). Some talkpages have Wikipedians who keep an eye on them and will action or discuss your proposal. If no-one has responded in a reasonable time then escalate matters by prefacing your remarks with "Requested edit" – this will alert other Wikipedians to look at that talk page.

## CONTENTIOUSLY

It's clearly stated earlier in this guidance that PR professionals should not edit articles about their clients, their employer, related brands and issues, or competing organisations and associated brands (ie, when there is a conflict of interest). However, the following are [possible exceptions<sup>34</sup>](#), albeit contentious exceptions. You should seriously consider simply sticking to the talk pages rather than making even these types of changes directly, if only to avoid the considered wrath of any Wikipedians unfamiliar with any ambiguity here.

- Add or update facts such as a date, location or numbers. For example, if a company was founded in 1962 but the Wikipedia article states it was founded in 1965, you might consider editing the page directly and changing the date, making sure you reference / cite your edit for contributors to verify the change. If the facts are being disputed in the talk pages, make sure you engage with contributors there rather than edit directly.

<sup>29</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Userspace\\_draft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Userspace_draft)

<sup>30</sup> <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Meetup>

<sup>31</sup> <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Special:UploadWizard>

<sup>32</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:RPP>

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Requested\\_edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Requested_edit)

<sup>34</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:FAQ/Article\\_subjects#I work in PR.2C and would like to fix up the article about the person or company I represent. Is that okay.3F](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:FAQ/Article_subjects#I_work_in_PR.2C_and_would_like_to_fix_up_the_article_about_the_person_or_company_I_represent._Is_that_okay.3F)

- Fix grammatical or spelling errors. For example, correct a misspelling or your organisation's name or CEO's name.
- Provide accurate references for information, statement or opinion that is already in the article. For example, if a Wikipedia article says your company recently won an award for good customer service but it doesn't have a citation, feel free to add in a third party reliable source.

# DON'TS

Things to avoid range from infringements of 'netiquette' aspects that may be unfamiliar, through to editing that cuts across guidelines and policies, to (at the extreme) contravening the [terms of use](#)<sup>35</sup> of the site. Here are pointers to some matters that are most likely to come up.

1. Don't share your account by giving anyone your password: it's a no-no.
2. Don't include a business name or product name in your account name, this is seen as promotional and will probably get you blocked. There is a [user name policy](#)<sup>36</sup>.
3. Don't create a Wikipedia entry from scratch for your organisation / client, brands or an individual for which you have a conflict of interest. Also, do not create an article relating to a phrase or term coined by your client. If a person, company or concept is of noteworthy significance a member of the Wikipedia community will create a Wikipedia entry. If you would like to bring it to the community's attention, please add it to [the articles for creation](#)<sup>37</sup> (a list of articles waiting to be created by the community) and [requested articles](#)<sup>38</sup> (where you ask Wikipedians to create an article on a particular subject or organisation).
4. Don't use Wikipedia to promote or advertise your employer or client. Remember Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia; it is not your company or client's website. As a rule of thumb, if you wouldn't have submitted it to be included in a hard-copy reference work then don't add it to or suggest a Wikipedian add it to a Wikipedia page.
5. Don't remove negative material (exception: PR professionals can remove material that violates Wikipedia's policy regarding living people). Remember a Wikipedia page aims to present different points of view. If a Wikipedian has included a sentence about your organisation or client from a reliable source then you do not have the right to remove it. If you feel your organisation or client is being unfairly represented and the Wikipedia entry fails to be neutral, then raise this point first on the talk page. Seek balance by following this guidance only.
6. Don't casually copy-and-paste content from another site, even if you manage the other site. There is [guidance for the release of copyright content submitted by the author or by someone on their behalf](#)<sup>39</sup>.
7. Don't try to cultivate individual Wikipedians, or intrusively identify the people behind pseudonyms. Wikipedians, unlike journalists and some bloggers, do not operate in a public sphere. The systems and processes of Wikipedia do offer help, and you can access them in a way that Wikipedian volunteers are comfortable with. At an extreme, those who do favours for you can risk being suspected of covertly being a paid editor.
8. Don't over staff your Wikipedia effort. Limit the number of people a Wikipedian speaks to. Having several points of contact for a Wikipedian could be irritating or confusing. Where possible, we suggest restricting the number of people per organisation that maintain a relationship with a Wikipedian. Where you are trying to get a consensus on changes, it is not going to help to say your colleague agrees with you!

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<sup>35</sup> [http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Terms\\_of\\_Use%20\(2012\)/en](http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Terms_of_Use%20(2012)/en)

<sup>36</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Username\\_policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Username_policy)

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles\\_for\\_creation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles_for_creation)

<sup>38</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requested\\_articles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requested_articles)

<sup>39</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IOWN#Copyright\\_owners\\_who\\_submitted\\_their\\_own\\_work\\_to\\_Wikipedia\\_.28or\\_people\\_editing\\_on\\_their\\_behalf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IOWN#Copyright_owners_who_submitted_their_own_work_to_Wikipedia_.28or_people_editing_on_their_behalf)

# NEXT STEPS FOR PR PROFESSIONALS

Contact your professional body to ascertain the availability of Wikipedia training. The CIPR social media panel for example runs workshops to explain and test attendees on Wikipedia best practice. All those who attend and pass the assignment receive a certificate.

Log all of your Wikipedia activity relating to your employer or client (i.e., to your conflicts of interest). Just as PR professionals keep a note of journalists they speak to and their areas of interest, PR professionals should keep a log of Wikipedians they've spoken to and their areas of interest. You may find that the history of your personal contributions to entries and talk pages, available from your user page, suffices, although your team may benefit from collating and centralising this information. This diligence will help identify bad practice internally before an external party identifies it for you.

Keep up to date on the codes of conduct and social media guidance from your professional body. Wikipedia is ever evolving, and this guidance will evolve too.

This document lives and breathes at:

[http://uk.wikimedia.org/wiki/Draft\\_best\\_practice\\_guidelines\\_for\\_PR](http://uk.wikimedia.org/wiki/Draft_best_practice_guidelines_for_PR).

Updates to the PDF version will be published and publicised whenever it's deemed that the updates to the wiki version warrant a new PDF version.



# THE GLOSSARY

## CODE OF CONDUCT

[All CIPR members agree to abide by a Code of Professional Conduct<sup>40</sup>](#), and other professional bodies in other countries may do so similarly. The Code of Conduct is one means by which the CIPR and its Members fulfil the purpose set out in the Institute's royal charter: 'to promote for the public benefit high levels of skill, knowledge, competence, and standards of practice and professional conduct on the part of public relations practitioners'.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A Wikipedia conflict of interest is an incompatibility between the aim of Wikipedia, which is to produce a neutral, reliably sourced encyclopaedia, and the aims of an individual editor. Conflict of interest editing involves contributing to Wikipedia in order to promote your own interests or those of other individuals, companies, or groups. Where advancing outside interests is more important to an editor than advancing the aims of Wikipedia, that editor stands in a conflict of interest.

## CREWE (CORPORATE REPRESENTATIVES FOR ETHICAL WIKIPEDIA ENGAGEMENT)

A Facebook group started in January 2012. CREWE lobbies for greater involvement by PR professionals in Wikipedia, with the stated goal of maintaining accurate articles about corporations.

To participate in CREWE go to <http://www.facebook.com/groups/crewe.group/>

## MEET-UP

Regular (or more spontaneous) face-to-face meetings of Wikipedians take place in cities around the world.

## NEUTRAL POINT OF VIEW

All Wikipedia articles and other encyclopaedic content must be written from a neutral point of view, representing significant views fairly, proportionately and without bias.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.

Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

## SEMI PROTECTION

[Semi Protection<sup>41</sup>](#) is a process by which a Wikipedia article can be restricted so that it can only be edited by established editors who are logged in. Typically this is introduced for articles that have experienced high levels of vandalism. For example, as of mid-2012, Wikipedia's articles on Sarah Palin and Barack Obama are both semi-protected. The article on the Deepwater Horizon explosion had to be protected for two weeks during 2010.

## TALK PAGES

A discussion page which Wikipedia editors and contributors can use to discuss improvements to an article or other Wikipedia page.

## WIKIMEDIA

The Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. is an American non-profit charitable organisation headquartered in the United States. It operates several online collaborative wiki projects, including Wikipedia, collectively called wikimedia. Local chapters, including Wikimedia UK, are self-dependent organisations that share the goals of the Wikimedia Foundation and support the Wikimedian communities on the various wiki projects, including Wikipedia.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/about-us/about-cipr/code-conduct>

<sup>41</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Semi-protection\\_policy#Semi-protection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Semi-protection_policy#Semi-protection)

## WIKIPEDIAN

The [Wikipedia community](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Community_of_Wikipedia)<sup>42</sup> is a network of volunteers that make contributions to Wikipedia. Members of that community are known as Wikipedians or more generally Wikimedians if they also edit other projects. A division of labour exists whereby certain editors are elected as [administrators](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Administrators)<sup>43</sup> gaining extra editing facilities in order to better administer Wikipedia.

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<sup>42</sup> [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Community\\_of\\_Wikipedia](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Community_of_Wikipedia)  
<sup>43</sup> <http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Wikipedia:Administrators>

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