

Developing Content

Helping communities to help themselves

Isaac "FishTank" Fischer, Community Technical Specialist

Every community is unique

There's no single way to make a perfect article for your community, just like there's no perfect book or movie. Developing and maintaining a consistent set of community guidelines can help unite a crew of contributors to have a coherent vision.

Building a Manual of Style together can be just as important as building out the content itself. Some communities create lengthy guides, and focus a lot of attention on keeping articles standard. On the other hand, some communities do without one entirely.

Whatever your community chooses, the article guidelines should be simple enough for new editors to follow without being too intimidating. If you're a new editor to a community, you should read established guidelines before you've made 10 edits.

PRO-TIP: Not sure where to start making some guidelines? Try [Help:Community_guidelines](#).



Quality writing

For most communities to thrive with a large audience, they have to have quality articles. Proper spelling and grammar are good standards to start with. Keep in mind, though, that communities might choose a regional variation as a guideline. English writers may not immediately think that American or British English (and beyond) is an important battle, but some communities set this strictly. The same regional variation applies in many other languages, too.

There are libraries worth of materials on how to be a better writer. What you write today may be re-written tomorrow by someone else; that doesn't mean you wrote it badly, just that someone else saw it differently. Creating content on a wiki is almost always about collaborating with a team to make something of reasonable (and above) quality.



Setting the right tone

Consider the tone of the topic your wiki covers - is it a drama/comedy? Is it sci-fi/fantasy? Take cues from the source material and allow them to be reflected back in the wiki's article tone. Games tend to be more fact-based, but games with a story component (such as those with associated animes or other media) might have a balance of both.

Encyclopedic tones are strongly fact-based, with no speculation or theory allowed. The only writing acceptable is about things all parties can observe to preserve the universal "canon" of the topic.

Narrative-based tones are a bit more personal, and allow more "reading between the lines" as far as theories and speculations go. If a character might have a background or motivations they don't declare, for example, referring to known events might give a reader insight into their actions.



Finding other balances

Keeping track of what's canonical (certain to have happened in the topic's universe) and what's not (deleted scenes may not be, for example) should be in guidelines. So should things like acceptable secondary sources ("A tabloid published this rumor; can we add it to the article?") and how (and how often) they should be cited.

Any text where characters have action might be written in present or past tense, but real-life events are almost always written in past tense.

When is a spoiler no longer a spoiler? It could be before an episode premieres, or a year afterwards.

Does your community allow fan fiction, if it's kept separate from canonical material?



Is it significant?

How closely your community should document a given topic is also important to have a guideline about. Whether articles are important enough to be created starts that question. Some scenarios:

- If a main character says "I have a girlfriend", but that un-named girlfriend is never seen. Does she get an article?
- Two main characters are a romantic pair. Does their pairing deserve its own article?
- Characters are portrayed by actors. Do the actors need articles?
- Some characters are married during the course of the series. Should there be a list (or Category) of married characters?

Finally, how much detail should be included in the actual text?



Some notes from pros

- Have one article of every category-type fleshed out first as an example that all other articles should adhere to.
- If adding many stub pages of new content, make sure to include headers for sections, so editors can know where to flesh out their articles.
- Look to other high traffic wikis to provide a template for how you wish to write your articles. Look to high WAM sites in TV/Movies/Video Games/Lifestyle and take lessons from their information and organizational templates on articles.
- Ask yourself and the community, "What is the most important piece of information on the article page?" and build your page around that. If it's a video game with a lot of lore and story, make sure all articles relevant to that topic are fleshed out and set a standard across all others.
- Utilize "Quality" templates - if a wiki article is not up to a set standard, link in a template at the top of the page that notifies the community it does not meet the quality standards (and invite users to chip in)





FANDOM



**COMMUNITY
CONNECT**