

RULE

The key rules under which Wikipedia operates are: Neutral Point of View, Verifiability, No Original Research. The rule I chose to work on was ***Verifiability***. Verifiability means that information in an article must come from other, previously published and verifiable sources. Articles and information on Wikipedia are subject to being challenged and information needs to be attributed to sources by inline citations. The burden to show that information in an article comes from a verifiable source is on the person editing the article. He or she should cite sources about where the information has been previously published so others reading the article can validate the information.

Additional information on Wikipedia's information page on Verifiability¹ outlines reliable sources and unreliable sources. Reliable sources include information that has been published, such as text books, journals, and mainstream newspapers. Some newspapers and magazines also have websites where they also publish information. Not reliable sources include social media sites or someone's personal blog. A person could claim to be an expert, but information again needs to be validated. This could also cross the lines into *no original research* if the person is presenting new information. Self-published information could cross into this realm also. Another danger of using social media or self-published sites could be that people are stating their opinion on information and this violates the *neutral point of view* rule. Information needs to present facts, either basic or detailed, but not give an opinion or present a certain point of view.

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>

ARTICLE

The article I chose to work on is for a group in the ska genre of music, called **Bim Skala Bim**. After investigating dozens of articles, for which I could offer nothing to improve upon, I happened to look at this article and I found it was sorely lacking in any real information. There was also a comment at the bottom indicating it was a *stub* and requesting assistance in updating the information. The founder of this group, Dan Vitale, is from my home town and I grew up with his brother and sister. I went to see his group perform in Somerville several weeks ago, so I believed I could at least begin making improvements. When I reached out to Dan, he was delighted to have assistance and hopes to have even more information added, (which I plan to do in the future, aside from this assignment).

There was only basic information in the article, an overview of the group, previous influences and what their musical style was. I also found the exact information, verbatim, in another website advertising a previous concert. I captured that site and added a citation pointing to this site. Interestingly, this same overview is also provided (almost verbatim) on the group's Facebook page.² (While I do not consider Facebook a reliable source, I know for certain that Dan Vitale maintains it and uses it as an information source for fans.) Dan sent me a list of their discography, which I painfully compared to two other websites featuring discography for hundreds of groups. I organized the information based on whether the production was solely a Bim Skala Bim album, whether it was an appearance in compilation of other music, or a single or EP release. I added a citation for each of the pages where I found the information. Additionally, I found a page of band members which included whether they were still a part of

² https://www.facebook.com/#!/?tab=page_info#!/BimSkalaBimMusic/info

the group or if they were former members, so I added that section to the Wikipedia article.

Finally, I added an Awards section and entered basic awards they received for albums or concerts and also made sure I cited that information. I did notice that subsequent to my adding this information, someone edited the basic information and removed a comment about upcoming appearances for the Summer of 2014, since that was outdated.

RELATIONSHIP – ARTICLE and RULE

Since none of the information originally posted showed any verifiable sources, my edits helped by elaborating on information regarding Bim Skala Bim that was already available elsewhere, and adding citations for where I found the information. If someone looking for information on the group is interested in learning more about their albums or music, they can go to one of the website pages I cited and read more. Prior to my edits, none of the information showed citations, and therefore was not necessarily verifiable. After my edits, in addition to adding some content, I added citations so readers could verify the information I added.

RELATIONSHIP – RULE and COMMUNITY

This rule is very important in maintaining the integrity of Wikipedia. There is a vast amount of information posted, (as mentioned, over 4.4 million articles), and with millions of people editing pages, there has to be guidelines on what information can be added. If there were no rule of verifiability, anyone could post any opinion or point of view, or falsehood about events and that could subsequently perpetuate false beliefs by those who read the articles. There are plenty of other sites where people can post opinion, or even re-write events from their own perspective, but in order to maintain the integrity of Wikipedia being *the* online

encyclopedia of information, it makes perfect sense that all information needs to be verifiable from a previously published, reliable source. It would be very detrimental to the reputation of Wikipedia if information were not verifiable, and since people tend to believe online content, could possibly harm the community if information from unreliable sources were perpetuated.

In my recent Extension School classes where I have written scholarly papers, professors are quick to advise that we can consult Wikipedia for overview information, but we are not allowed to use it as an original source. So as a common user of Wikipedia, I will review articles for the information they can provide, and then go to the sources that are cited in the article to possibly use as more acceptable sources.