

# Using wikipedia as a source



## **Why is Wikipedia an unreliable source**

Most of the instructors usually consider Wikipedia as an unreliable source hence discouraging students from using it in their research. A close look at various articles published by Wikipedia reveals that Wikipedia editors and contributors do not always use their actual names as well as providing relevant information regarding their works. When it comes to validating the information availed by various internet sources, it is essential to identify the author, that is, who had written it. It is also imperative to establish the purpose upon which the article was written. Apparently, Wikipedia do not necessarily comply with these requirements since in most cases it is characterized by anonymous authors thus making it unreliable. It can, therefore, be contended that Wikipedia is bad and students should avoid using them in their studies.

The analysis of the Wikipedia's credibility involved the use of the "enlightenment" as a research term, in comparing the Wikipedia entry with the same entry in Encyclopedia Britannica (EB). The results from the EB entry has been specific when it comes to highlighting when the article was written and by whom. For instance, the EB results on the "Enlightenment: European History" clarifies that the article was written by the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. It is also specified that the article last update was done on August 3, 2015. Furthermore, there are also details provided regarding the history of the article regarding the changes made. On clicking on the "See Article History" link, various contributors/authors have been listed, together with the corresponding dates upon which they made some changes to the article. However, when using similar analytic parameters in <https://assignbuster.com/using-wikipedia-as-a-source/>

the same entry, it is revealed that Wikipedia has not specified the author of the article. It has also not indicated the last time the article was updated or edited. This shows that the EB is a stable reference source since answers the questions “ who wrote the article?” and “ when was the article written?” Apparently, these two questions are important as far as the validation of referencing source is concerned.

## **Is Encyclopedia Britannica reliable**

When it comes to the explanation and description of the entry “ enlightenment,” both Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica give similar meanings. The EB considers Enlightenment as “...a European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and humanity were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent in the West and that instigated revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics.” On another hand, Wikipedia describes Enlightenment as “ an intellectual movement which dominated the world of ideas in Europe during the 18th century, The Century of Philosophy” From these two versions, it is both Wikipedia and EB are at par as far as the meaning of the research term “ Enlightenment” is concerned. Their specific description approaches on the subject matter might be different, but at least they portray similar concepts and ideologies associated with Enlightenment.

From this analysis, it can be asserted that Wikipedia cannot be trusted as a convenient or a reliable referencing source as compared to established reference sources such as Encyclopedia Britannica. This can be as the result of Wikipedia’s tendencies of using anonymous authors, culminated with its inability to specify publication date of an article. Wikipedia can be an

excellent avenue where an individual seeks for a quick reference on general information but not suitable for to be used for scholarly purposes.