Using Wikipedia for Research – English Transcript

Do you know that you can use Wikipedia when doing research? Wikipedia? Yep, Wikipedia.

Typically, you should not cite Wikipedia as a source in your research paper. Why? Like professors in college, your teacher may require sources that are more sophisticated or detailed than general encyclopedias, such as books and articles from journals, magazines, newspapers, and trusted websites. Also, some people do not consider Wikipedia and sources like it as reliable, because anyone can write and edit articles regardless of their qualifications.

If you should not use Wikipedia as a source, how can you use it for research? First, reading Wikipedia articles can help you build background knowledge. When you know more about your topic, you can use that information to search for other sources. As you read through a Wikipedia entry, write down topic phrases, names of organizations, names of people, relevant dates, and related items or issues. Do this to generate a list of keywords and phrases you can use when searching for sources on your topic.

For example, here's the Wikipedia entry for the gamma-ray burst. And here is a list of keywords and related terms for your entry. Gamma-ray, GRBs, electromagnetic events, supernova. You can use these keywords to search the internet, your library catalog, databases, and other resources.

While Wikipedia entries can be edited by anyone, they include citations with links to the original information. Citations can link to webpages, articles, books, and a variety of other sources. You can see a list of the citations used at the end of a Wikipedia article in the references section.

Do any authors seem to be listed several times? If so, that could indicate the person is an expert on the topic. Bloom would be a good example in this list. Save the name to your list of keywords.

When you click on a reference link, it usually takes you to the original source. In this case, an article on naked-eye observations from Astrophysical Journal is used as a reference. This article and many other references in the list could be potential sources for your paper. Remember to evaluate sources before using them.

At the end of the Wikipedia entry, you'll also find a list of external links. These are typically links to related information, such as websites, projects, and organizations. In this case, it leads to a mission website from NASA on observing gamma-ray bursts.

While you would not use Wikipedia as a source for your paper, you can see how it can lead to

many quality books, articles, magazines, news reports, and websites that could be just right. By the way, you can also use these strategies to gather keywords and references from other sources. So, Wikipedia can be used for research after all.

Here's a quick list of things to remember. Wikipedia typically cannot be used as a source for your paper. It's good for gaining background knowledge. You can use it to create a list of phrases, organizations, people, dates, and related terms. Use these terms to form keywords when searching for information on your topic. Look at the references and external links section at the end of Wikipedia entries for sources you can use in your research.

For specific examples, and for more information about this topic and the entire research process, explore OSLIS. Thank you to the Oregon CLIP project for allowing the OSLIS Committee to adapt their tutorials. OSLIS -- Learn to Research. Research to Learn.