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**Title:** Using Wikipedia for Academic Research

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**Target Audience:** Undergraduates

**Learning Objective:** Students will learn to use Wikipedia as an exploratory tool and where it can appropriately fit in the research process

**Keywords:** Wikipedia, encyclopedia, research, exploring

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## **Slide 2**

Do you know that you can use Wikipedia when doing academic research?

Wikipedia? Yep, Wikipedia.

You shouldn't cite Wikipedia as a source in your research paper. And no, it's not because Wikipedia is a bad source for information.

The reason you shouldn't use it as a source for your paper is because it is just an encyclopedia. College level work requires more sophisticated source materials such as books and journal articles.

## **Slide 3**

In fact, a 2005 study by the journal *Nature* showed that Wikipedia is as accurate as Encyclopedia Britannica.

## **Slide 4**

If you shouldn't cite Wikipedia in your paper how can you use it for academic research?

When you know more about your topic, you can use that information when you search in other places like the Internet and the library.

As you read through a Wikipedia entry write down:

- + topic phrases
- + names of organizations
- + names of people
- + relevant dates
- + related items / issues

The reason for this is to generate a list of keywords and phrases you can use when searching for articles on your topic.

### **Slide 5**

For Example: Here is the entry for the gamma-ray burst

And here is a list of key words and related terms from the entry: gamma-ray, GRBs, electromagnetic events, supernova.

You can use these keywords to search the web, your library catalog, databases or other resources.

### **Slide 6**

While Wikipedia entries can be edited by anyone, they do include citations with links to the original information. Citations can link to web pages, 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. If the citations are for articles and books, do any authors seem to be listed several times? Bloom would be a good example in this list. Save their name to your list of keywords.

### **Slide 7**

When you click on a reference link, it 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 this list could be great sources to use in your paper. Do not assume that everything in the list is peer-reviewed or scholarly, you will need to evaluate each source to be sure it suits the needs of your assignment.

### **Slide 8**

At the end of the Wikipedia entry, you will also find a list of External Links. These are typically links to related information such as web sites, projects, and organizations.

In this case, a mission website from NASA on observing gamma-ray bursts.

While you wouldn't 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 are just right.

### **Slide 9**

So, Wikipedia can be used for academic research after all.

Here is a quick list of things to remember:

- + Wikipedia shouldn't be used as a source for your paper
- + It is good for background information
- + You can use it to create a list of phrases, organizations, people, dates, and related terms.
- + Use these terms when searching for information on your topic
- + Look at the Reference and External Links sections at the end of Wikipedia entries for sources you can cite in your research