



# What is a Wiki?

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## Definitions

- **wiki**: “a Web application whose content is collaboratively added, updated, and organized by its users.” (Mitchell)
- Emphasis in a wiki is on:
  - Letting all users create pages quickly.
  - Making it easy to link pages to each other.
- **wiki engine**: the program that runs a wiki.
- **wiki markup language**: simple text-based system for writing pages.

## History

*“Wikis can be dated to 1995, when American computer programmer Ward Cunningham created a new collaborative technology for organizing information on Web sites. Using a Hawaiian term meaning 'quick,' he called this new software WikiWikiWeb.”* (Britannica)

## Typical wiki features

- Easy writing
- Editing history
- Editing protection

## Easy writing

- Central features of a wiki markup language:
  - simple text syntax for creating new pages
  - simple text syntax for creating crosslinks between internal pages
  - support for hyperlinks
- Each wiki engine tends to have its own markup language.
  - **Creole** is an attempt to create a standard markup language for wikis.

## Easy writing

- Sometimes, a **toolbar** will be provided on the editing screen with icons to insert the most commonly used markup.
- Sometimes a wiki will supply a **WYSIWYG** interface for writing pages, similar to what you would find in a word processor.

## Editing history

- Many wikis also maintain a **history** of your page editing.
  - Every change you make to a page is kept track of so you can compare the current version to an older one.
  - Especially important in an open wiki in case someone makes some really bad changes—on purpose or by accident.

## Editing protection

- Wikis can be
  - **open**: *anyone* can view and edit pages
  - **closed**: anyone can view pages, you must have an account to edit pages
  - **private**: you must have an account to view and edit the wiki

## Ways to get a wiki of your own

- It is easy to create your own wiki.
- Two choices:
  - Use a hosted service.
  - Install a service yourself.

## Hosted service

- There are a number of service providers that let you create a wiki on their servers (often at no cost).
- *Pro*:
  - They've done the hard work of setting up the service for you.
- *Cons*:
  - Typically will insert advertising into your pages to make money
  - Many limit the number and/or size of pages in their free offerings.
  - May go out of business—and take your wiki with them!

## Hosted service

- Popular hosted wiki services:
  - [Wikia](#)
  - [wikihost.org](#)
  - [wiki spot](#)
  - [Wikispaces](#)

## Self-installed service

- To install your own wiki service, you will need to have an account with a [Web hosting service](#). Then you can usually install a wiki engine by uploading the needed files or sometimes just enabling an engine in the Web host's control panel.
- *Pro*
  - Your wiki will be free from advertising and won't have space and other limitations.
- *Con*
  - You may have to fix any problems that come up and make backups yourself.

## Self-installed service

- Popular and/or easy to install wiki engines include:
  - [Dokuwiki](#)
  - [LionWiki](#)
  - [PmWiki](#)
  - [MediaWiki](#)

## References/sources

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