



# Common pitfalls in engaging with Wikipedia, and how to avoid them

Martin Poulter, Wikimedia UK  
BathCamp #26, 5 October 2011

WIKIPEDIA  
*The Free Encyclopedia*



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I don't like "Like". I like "Edit".  
I'm a Wikipedian.

## Why bother with Wikipedia?

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- To make the sum of human knowledge available to everyone on the planet, in their own language.
- It's rewarding, fun and you get appreciated.

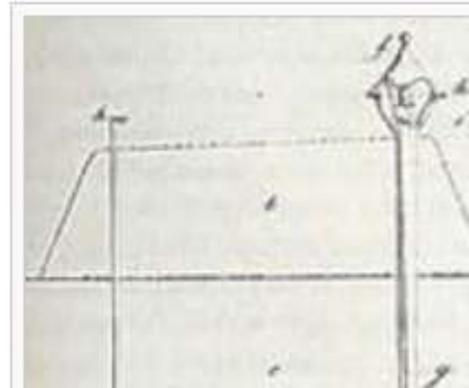
# Death

<b>Boston Molasses Disaster</b>	Twenty-one people died in 1919 when a huge tank at a confectionery factory burst, sending a wave of molasses down the streets of Boston.
<b>Chess-related deaths</b>	Chess can be surprisingly dangerous.
<b>Collyer brothers</b>	When packratting was taken to a tragic extreme.
<b>Death erection</b>	It is possible to die happy, even if you've lived a less-than-stellar life.
<b>Defenestration</b>	The time-honoured tradition of throwing people out of windows.
★ <b>Execution by elephant</b>	An unusual form of capital punishment used throughout history. (See also <a href="#">History of elephants in Europe</a> .)
<b>Fan death</b>	A persistent urban legend in South Korea, where the media, and even many medical professionals, regularly report on people dying because of having left a fan on in a closed room.
<b>Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead</b>	An early catch phrase used on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> , based upon the dictator's lengthy death.



*An Execution by an Elephant*

Execution by elephant



# Wikimedia: open (& *free*) to the max

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- Page history is open
- Discussion is open
- Open processes for policies & guidelines
- Open data
- Open source software
- Open, transparent organisation



## Pitfall #1

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- Thinking you have to *write articles*

## What else can you do?

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- Fact-check and review
- Upload files
- Discuss
- Write code
- Thank and encourage

## What *else* can you do?

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- Translate
- Read aloud -> spoken Wikipedia
- Advise users on helpdesk or IRC
- Rewrite for Plain English
- Create publicity or training materials

## Pitfall #2

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- Forgetting it's an encyclopaedia



This article **may be written like an advertisement**. If so, please help [rewrite this article](#) from a [neutral point of view](#).



WIKIMEDIA  
UK

## Pitfall #3

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- Editing in a self-serving way



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## Pitfall #4

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- Forgetting it's an *encyclopaedia*



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## Pitfall #5

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- Forgetting *it's an encyclopaedia*



This article **may be too technical** for most readers to understand. Please help improve this page to make it understandable to non-experts, without removing the technical details. The [talk page](#) may contain suggestions.



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# Amitsur–Levitzki theorem

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In algebra, the **Amitsur–Levitzki theorem** states that the algebra of *n* by *n* matrices satisfies a certain identity of degree *2n*. It was proved by **Amitsur** and **Levitsky (1950)**. In particular matrix rings are **PI rings** such that the identity they satisfy has degree exactly *2n*.

## Statement

If  $A_1, \dots, A_{2n}$  are *n* by *n* matrices then

$$\sum_{\sigma \in S_{2n}} \text{sgn}(\sigma) A_{\sigma_1} \cdots A_{\sigma_{2n}} = 0,$$

where the sum is over all  $(2n)!$  elements of the symmetric group  $S_{2n}$ . (This polynomial is called the standard polynomial of degree  $2n$ .)

## Proofs

Amitsur and Levitsky (1950) gave the first proof.

**Kostant (1958)** deduced the Amitsur–Levitzki theorem from the **Koszul–Samelson theorem** about primitive cohomology of Lie algebras.

**Swan (1963)** and **Swan (1969)** gave a simple combinatorial proof as follows. By linearity it is enough to prove the theorem when each matrix has only one nonzero entry, which is 1. In this case each matrix can be encoded as a directed edge of a graph with *n* vertices. So all matrices together give a graph on *n* vertices with  $2n$  directed

## Pitfall #6

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- Pulling Rank



A “ranker”

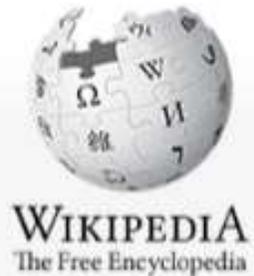
## Pitfall #7

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- Rushing in  
i.e. making really big changes before  
you've had a chance to build up trust

# Pitfall #8

- Being too timid



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## Wikipedia:Be bold

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
(Redirected from [Wikipedia:BOLD](#))

*"WP:BOLD" redirects here. For the Manual of Style guideline on the use of boldface in Wikipedia text formatting, see [MOS:BOLD](#).*

*"WP:BB" redirects here. For Wikipedia Bounty Board, see [WP:BOUNTY](#).*



**This page documents an English Wikipedia editing guideline.** It is a generally accepted standard that editors should attempt to follow, though it is best treated with [common sense](#), and occasional exceptions may apply. Any substantive edit to this page should reflect [consensus](#). When in doubt, discuss first on the [talk page](#).

Shortcuts:  
[WP:BB](#)  
[WP:BOLD](#)  
[WP:BEBOLD](#)  
[WP:SOFIXIT](#)



**This page in a nutshell:** if you see something that can be improved, improve it!

## Be bold!

**Just do it!** (with [civility](#), of course!)

**Wikipedia:Be bold** (WP:BOLD) is best summed up in three words: "Just do it!" The Wikipedia community

Contents [\[hide\]](#)

- 1 Be bold!
  - 1.1 ...but please be careful
  - 1.2 Non-article namespaces

## Pitfall #9

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- *Not* being really, really anal about copyright

- Works which contain other copyrighted works (*derivative works*) - these are **not permitted**, so don't upload them!
  - Screenshots of TV shows, movies, DVDs, and software.
  - Photographs of art, statues, commercial packaging and often toys.
  - Drawings of copyrighted characters from TV, Comics, or Movies, *even if you drew them yourself.*





## Pitfall #10

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- Failing to show off

Recently featured: [Film noir](#) – [Free State of Galveston](#) – [Northrop YF-23](#)

[Archive](#) – [By email](#) – [More featured articles...](#)

### Did you know...

From Wikipedia's newest content:

- ... that the function of the [Gorgon and panther reliefs](#) (*Gorgon pictured*) on the [pediment](#) of the [Temple of Artemis](#) in [Corfu](#) is believed to be [apotropaic](#)?
- ... that, after going bankrupt as Receiver General of Finances for Paris, [Pierre Perrault](#) developed the theory of the [hydrologic cycle](#)?
- ... that Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* is **structured** in three parts, the first two about the [creation as narrated in Genesis](#), the third about [Adam and Eve in Paradise](#)?
- ... that [Brian Jamieson](#) received several citations for reconstructing *The Big Red One*?
- ... that the [blushing tricholoma](#) fungus formed a [fairy ring](#) in Germany which was 80 m (260 ft) across and contained an estimated 10,000 mushrooms?
- ... that in his early life, [David Hoberman](#) couldn't walk on cracks, and had to touch poles?



[Archive](#) – [Start a new article](#) – [Nominate an article](#)

**October 3: Labour Day** in [Australian Capital Territory](#), [Wales](#) and [South Australia](#) (2011); **National Day** in [South Korea](#)

- 1918 – [World War I](#): Following his armistice and defeat to the [Allied Powers](#), [Bulgarian King Ferdinand I](#) abdicated in favor of his son [Boris III](#) (*pictured*).
- 1951 – [Korean War](#): The **First Battle of Seoul**, primarily pitting [Australian and British](#) forces against [communist China](#), began.
- 1981 – The **hunger strike** by [Irish Republican Army](#) prisoners at the [Maze jail](#) in [Belfast](#) ended after several days.
- 1990 – [East and West Germany](#) **officially** reunited as the first fully sovereign [united German state](#) since [World War II](#).
- 2003 – [Roy Horn](#) of the American entertainment duo [Siegfried & Roy](#) was mauled by a tiger at the [The Mirage](#) hotel and casino resort on the [Las Vegas Strip](#).

More anniversaries: [October 2](#) – [October 4](#)

[Archive](#) – [By email](#) – [List of October 3 events](#)

It is now [October 3, 2011](#)

### Today's featured list

A **group of Italian monks and priests** was sent by Pope [Gregory the Great](#) to Britain in the late 6th and early 7th centuries to convert and [Christianize](#) the [Anglo-Saxons](#) from their native [Anglo-Saxon paganism](#). Most of the known members of the [Gregorian mission](#) became [bishops](#) or [archbishops](#), and all but one of the remainder, [James the Deacon](#), became [abbots](#): as his name implies, James never rose beyond the rank of [deacon](#). Among the [archbishops](#) were the first five [Archbishops of Canterbury](#): [Augustine](#) (*statue*

## Pitfall #11

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- Getting lost in rules & policies



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# Wikipedia:Ignore all rules

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



This page documents an English Wikipedia [policy](#), a widely accepted standard, that all editors should [normally](#) follow. Changes made to it should reflect [consensus](#).

**Shortcuts:**  
[WP:IAR](#)  
[WP:IGNORE](#)

If a [rule](#) prevents you from improving or maintaining [Wikipedia](#), **ignore it**.

## See also

[\[edit\]](#)

- [Wikipedia is not a bureaucracy](#)
- [What "Ignore all rules" means](#)
- [The fifth pillar of Wikipedia's five pillars: "Wikipedia does not have firm rules."](#)
- [Editing policy](#)

## Wikipedia policy

### Principles

[Five pillars](#)

[What Wikipedia is not](#)

**Ignore all rules**

### Content standards

[Neutral point of view](#)

[Verifiability](#)

[No original research](#)

[Biographies of living persons](#)

[Article titles](#)

### Working with others

[Civility](#)

[No personal attacks](#)

[Harassment](#)

[No legal threats](#)

[Consensus](#)

[Dispute resolution](#)

### More

[List of policies](#)

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## Listen to this page [\(info/dl\)](#)



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# Don't be a dick

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[\[translate\]](#)

***The presence of this page does not itself license any editor to refer to any other identifiable editor as "a dick".***

**Don't be a dick.**<sup>[1]</sup> If people abided by this, we wouldn't need any other policies about behaviour. This is a [corollary](#) of [ignore all rules](#), and most behavioural rules are special cases of this one.

Implicitly or explicitly calling people dicks is a dick-move: don't use this essay as a justification to do so.

## Fundamentals

[\[edit\]](#)

"Don't be a dick" is a fundamental rule of all social spaces. Every other policy for getting along with other humans is a special case of it. Although nobody is expected to ban or block somebody for dickery (as this itself would be an instance of such), it is still a bad idea to be a dick. So don't be one. If a significant number of reasonable people suggest, whether bluntly or politely, that you are being a dick, the odds are good that you are not entirely in the right.

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UK

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[martin.poulter@wikimedia.org.uk](mailto:martin.poulter@wikimedia.org.uk)

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