wikiHow
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**wikiHow** is an online wiki-style community consisting of an extensive database of how-to guides. Founded in 2005 by Internet entrepreneur Jack Herrick, the website aims to create the world’s most helpful how-to instructions to enable everyone in the world to learn how to do anything. [2][3]

wikiHow is a hybrid organization, a for-profit company run for a social mission. [4][5] wikiHow is an open source and open content project. [6] The modified MediaWiki software is freely released [7] and the content is released under a Creative Commons (by-nc-sa) license. [8][9]
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History

wikiHow was founded by Jack Herrick on January 15, 2005, with the goal of creating an extensive how-to manual with accurate, up-to-date instructions in multiple languages.[10] The day of January 15 was intentionally selected as the launch date in order to honor Wikipedia, which was launched four years ago.

Headquarters
Palo Alto, California, United States

Created by
Jack Herrick and Josh Hannah

Slogan(s)
earlier on January 15, 2001.[11] Herrick drew inspiration to start wikiHow because he and Josh Hannah had previously purchased another how-to website, eHow in 2004. After running eHow, Herrick concluded eHow’s business model prevented it from creating the extensive, high quality how-to manual he desired to create.[12] Herrick and Hannah sold eHow in 2006, allowing Herrick to focus on wikiHow full-time. [13]

In 2006, the non-profit foundation One Laptop per Child selected wikiHow as one of the content sources for the educational laptops it distributed around the world.[14] In 2007, its 25,000th article was published on September 21.[8] In 2009, the website surpassed 20 million monthly visitors and completed a redesign.[15] In 2014, Google selected wikiHow as one of the launch partners for Google Contributor, an ad-free internet product.[16]

**Guidecentral acquisition**

It was announced on March 24, 2016 that wikiHow acquired Guidecentral, [17] a website focused on providing information about "hands on" projects. [18] The terms of the acquisition have not been released, although Guidecentral raised over $1 million from investors including NXTP Labs, Enterprise Ireland and South Ventures prior to the acquisition. [19]
Operations

wikiHow provides how-to content on the internet by allowing anyone to edit pages. As of February 2015, wikiHow contains over 180,000 how-to articles. Most how-to articles follow a similar format with steps, tips, warnings, a listing of things you'll need, and are complemented with images to help a reader learn how to complete a task.

wikiHow uses the wiki method of continuous improvement, allowing editors to add, delete, or otherwise modify content. Once an article is created, community members collaborate on it to improve its quality. Each edit is scrutinized during a process called Recent Changes Patrol where volunteers review the content according to wikiHow’s standards, discarding bad edits, like vandalism and test edits, and keeping improvements.

The central hub for editing is the Community Dashboard, which displays several dynamic applets that link users to different editing tools, such as the Spell Checker, in which articles are proofread for spelling errors; the Categorizer, in which articles are assigned categories according to their topic; and the Cleanup Greenhouse, in which low-quality articles are copyedited and rewritten for style and format.

By default, newly created articles are de-indexed from search engines; the article text is blurred and a notice indicating that the page is invisible to readers is shown. A system called New Article Boost allows experienced users to review these articles and bring them up to standards. Articles that meet these standards are "promoted", which removes the blurring effect as well as the notice, and makes the article publicly visible and searchable. Oppositely, articles below standards are "demoted", which removes them from the New Article Boost list but retains the blurring and notice. Articles with content that goes against the site's deletion policy are also demoted (such as articles centered around joke, sexually explicit, or hate-based topics, as well as severely inaccurate or incomplete instructions).
Like many other wikis, registration is optional and privileges such as creating and editing articles are still available to those without an account. wikiHow complies with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and users are required to be at least 13 years old to register an account. COPPA is regularly enforced and site administrators are expected to block anyone confirmed to be underage, though editing privileges may be restored if the company receives a consent form signed by the user's parents or legal guardian.[26] Over 1 million people have created accounts and over 13,000 people edit wikiHow a month.[27] This community of volunteer contributors call themselves "wikiHowians". The most active, experienced, and trusted wikiHowians may gain additional editing privileges which help them administer and protect the website. New Article Boost rights are granted to users who have done at least 300 edits and pass a test demonstrating they understand wikiHow policies.[28] People with these rights gain access to a special tool that allows them to edit recently written articles and ensure that their quality meets wikiHow’s standards before the articles are publicly visible to all readers. The most experienced users with levelheadedness and good judgment can be considered for adminship, which grants them additional powers to protect and improve wikiHow through various maintenance tools. [29] At least once a year, wikiHow organizes conferences where a small group of community members are invited to gather offline for an extended weekend to get to know one another. These conferences are known as "meetups".

wikiHow’s headquarters are located in a house in Palo Alto, California, dubbed the "wikiHaus". The staff team consists of a small group of employees ranging in specialties from engineering to marketing to community management.[5][13]
Business model

The site's initial start-up costs were, to some extent, financed from Herrick's sale of eHow. It is now funded from advertising on its pages.[30] It does not seek contributions, and it is run as a "hybrid organization" – a "for-profit company focused on creating a global public good in accordance with our mission".[31]

Licensing

wikiHow's content is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike (by-nc-sa) license, which means that the content can be modified and reused for non-commercial purposes as long as the original authors are attributed and the license is not substantially changed. The authors retain full copyright to their content and may publish it elsewhere under different licenses. They grant wikiHow an irrevocable license to use the material for any purpose.[32]

Deletion policy

[33]

wikiHow's deletion policy prohibits articles on topics that are:

- Advertisements/spams: Articles which take advantage of the website to advertise a product or service.

- Inaccurate: Articles which are inaccurate in their instructions.

- Jokes: Articles created for humorous purposes instead of instructional purposes.

- Potty humor: Articles which are considered overly vulgar in non-humorous ways, and are therefore, inappropriate.
- Sarcastic: Articles which patronize the reader by offering noticeably incorrect instructions.

- Sexually charged: Articles which are deemed sexually explicit and inappropriate.

- Hate/racist-based: Articles which are considered racist or hateful.

- Mean-spirited: Articles which either insult the reader or encourage them to act in cruel and harmful manners.

- Impossible instructions: Articles which feature instructions that are impossible to complete, as well as having impossible, often imaginary, implications.

- Societal instructions impossible for an individual to accomplish: Articles aimed at a specific group or organisation that one person alone could not follow.

- Universally illegal: Articles which encourage their reader to break the law.

- Incomplete: Articles which lack enough information to suffice as a proper article.

- Not a How-To: Articles which are not instructional in nature.

- Copyright violations: Articles which infringe copyright.

- Below character article standards: Articles which fail in their attempt to instruct their reader to roleplay a specific character.

- Focused on recreational drugs: Articles which encourage the production, usage or marketing of illegal drugs and substances.

- Political opinion: Articles which only express an individual's opinion.
- Promoting or criticizing a particular political party/candidate/official: Articles which promote or criticize a political party, and/or encourage readers to vote for or against them.

- Vanity pages: Articles deliberately aimed at the individual who made them or only aimed at a specific individual(s).

- Extremely dangerous and reckless: Articles which offer instructions that, when followed, may result in serious injury or likely death.

**Opt-out ads**

wikiHow allows readers to control whether advertising appears alongside content. Those who are registered and logged in do not see ads unless it is an external video provider.

In November 2014, wikiHow was announced to be a participant in Google Contributor, a service that allows website users to make a monthly donation in support of their favorite websites in order to not be shown advertising.

**Reception**

**Praise**

wikiHow has won multiple awards, including a Webby Award for Community in 2009 and the Co-Creation award in the Open Innovation competition, organized by The Guardian and Nesta, in 2010. In addition, Mashable selected wikiHow as the runner-up for best wiki in the Open Web Awards in 2008.

A PBS journalist reported that the "wikiHow app has an excellent set of articles to help you in just about any situation, from helping someone who is choking to handling vehicle emergencies, to natural disasters."
"New York Times" reported: "Type in a few key words about the problem into the app’s Search page and the guide will return some advice. Its information pages are clear and well laid out. They begin with an introductory description, then offer a list of steps to follow. The app displays the necessary tools and items, and includes tips and warnings."[42] Lifehacker has described wikiHow as the "ever handy guide site."[43] wikiHow has been positively described in many other media sources, including ones as diverse as Inc. Magazine,[5] Cosmopolitan,[44] TechRepublic,[45] Condé Nast Traveler,[46] and PC Magazine.[47]

Criticism

wikiHow has also been the target of satire and criticism. For example, American Public Radio show Wits has a segment called "wikiHow theater" where actors read obvious or ludicrous wikiHow topics, such as "How to Make People Respect Your Pet", for comic effect.[48] Two accomplished poets published a book called, "How To Feel Confident with Your Special Talents", in which each poem title is taken directly from a wikiHow article.[49] Vice.com parodied wikiHow's article "How to Break Up with Your Boyfriend".[50] The Huffington Post created a list of bizarre life skills, such as "How to React to an Ugly Baby", that "you could only learn from wikiHow". Other publishers have criticized wikiHow for hosting instructions on controversial topics of questionable social value such "how to get a thigh gap",[52] "how to stop a wedding",[53] or "how to be ghetto fabulous".[54] Other websites have created "worst of wikiHow" lists to highlight topics that are "deranged",[55] "brilliantly bizarre",[56] or otherwise problematic.

Popular culture references and notable uses

wikiHow is frequently referenced in popular media, including movies and television.
- In the 2013 American comedy movie *Identity Thief*, actress Melissa McCarthy playing Diana is asked how she easily survives getting hit by a car. McCarthy replies, "The trick is to just relax your legs. I read it on wikiHow." This scene also appeared in the movie's official trailer.[57]
- In the NBC drama series *Parenthood*, Max uses wikiHow to flirt with Dylan by saying, "It says on wikiHow's tips for teenage boys that I should compliment you to show my interest."[58]
- In "The Gothowitz Deviation", the October 5, 2009 episode of the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, Howard tries to use the wikiHow article "How to be Goth" to help him meet women at a goth bar.[59]
- wikiHow has been referenced in the Comedy Central show *@midnight*, multiple times. In one episode, the host, Chris Hardwick, says, "If you are a young person that needs guidance, you could turn to the previous generation and draw on their wisdom and experience, but honestly, grandma is probably drunk, so just go on the Internet to wikiHow.com."[60][61]

Several prominent figures and organizations have used wikiHow.

- American pop singer Miley Cyrus used wikiHow’s instructions on "How to Care for a Pet Pig" shortly after adopting a baby pig and posting it on Instagram. Over 238,000 Instagram users clicked "like" on the post.[62]
- The NPR show, "Wait, Wait Don’t Tell Me", used wikiHow's article on "How to Be a Badass" to quiz comedian Richard Lewis on confidence.[63]
- CNN TV host, Katie Linendoll, used wikiHow’s instructions to "How to Make Comic Book High Heels".[64]
- Bill Gross, billionaire and former head of investment firm PIMCO, quoted wikiHow's article on "How to Escape a Sinking Ship" in a communication to investors about the decision to exit the bond market.[65]
- Hackivist group Anonymous instructed people on "How to Delete Yourself from the Internet" using a wikiHow article.[66]

References

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### External links

- Official website (http://www.wikihow.com)