



Research Article

## Education and the usefulness of Wikipedia: A textual analysis of Wikipedia pages for those involved in education research

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### Abstract

This study examines three randomly chosen Wikipedia pages with content related to those who are involved in education research. Specifically, the texts were examined to see in what ways Wikipedia may be helpful to those who are involved in education research. The results show that Wikipedia pages are especially useful in three ways—the way they are organized, the linking system and the variety of content contained within a page. We conclude that Wikipedia websites are indeed useful to those involved in education research.

**Keywords:** Education Research, Wikipedia pages

### INTRODUCTION

Of course, we all know the importance of education. Education is extremely important from the viewpoint of society. That is why devoting adequate time, money and research to education study is so very, very vital. That is the primary basis for this research.

In education, being on the cutting edge is extremely important. That means we need to use technology whenever we can, and by any means possible. When we think about technology, we usually think about the computer these days. The biggest use of the computer by people recently has been the internet. People use the internet every day. The question that must be answered is, "Can the internet help us with education?" Of course, the answer to this and other questions is a resounding, "Yes!" The next question is, "How can the internet help us with education?" This is a very deep question, and it must be considered carefully and with a research-minded approach (Johnson et al., 2002). With a research-minded approach, these and other questions about education can be addressed and managed effectively (Bristow and Barlow, 2010).

There have been a few studies about using the internet and its usefulness to education. Some of these may be driven (Ganbaro and Funwari, 2007), but most of this research has proven to be quite fruitful (Manson, 1997; Curtin and Appleton, 2001; Wahper, 2004; Simpleton; 2005). Here is what Beaver (2007, p. 93) says:

Technology has been proven to be very important to education. It has in fact changed the way we think about education. In particular, technology using the internet has become vital to education. Without the internet, education as we know it would cease to matter. Researchers from all fields related to education use the internet each and every day. It is used in the classroom and in the computer lab by both students and teachers. Without it, education would be in a sorry state indeed.

## Purpose

One area of the internet that needs further investigation is the use of Wikipedia. Wikipedia has become a source of information helping many in education become better researchers and teachers. Our goal is to look at how Wikipedia helps researchers and teachers in education. In light of this, our research poses the following question, "How does Wikipedia help researchers in education in the classroom?"

## METHOD

We analyzed three Wikipedia websites that focused on education and analyzed them to see why they are so very useful as a research tool. To eliminate any bias, these website were chosen at random using a university computer system. A search engine was used on a university computer and a random search was conducted to find relevant Wikipedia sites. The search produced a large number of appropriate websites and three of these were chosen based upon random perusal. These three websites were then copied from the websites and pasted into word processing software. Graphics and tables were removed from the sites to make the pages more reader-friendly. Errors in spacing and spelling were retained to retain the natural feeling and nuance of each Wikipedia page. Long Wikipedia pages were truncated to keep this article short enough for readers of this journal. Following this, the Wikipedia websites were analyzed as to why they might considered as a valuable tool for researchers in education. The results and conclusions were drawn from this thorough analysis and are presented in the Results section and in the Conclusions.

## RESULTS

In this section, the results of the Wikipedia pages are analyzed in detail. We will examine the three separate Wikipedia pages one at a time, and then, we will provide commentary as to how each Wikipedia webpage can assist researchers in the field of education.

The following text is taken from the first Wikipedia site randomly selected.

**Course**, in the education context, is a word for which the meaning varies depending on which country it is used in.

In [higher education in Canada](#) and the [United States](#), a "course" is a unit of teaching that typically lasts one [academic term](#), is led by one or more instructors ([teachers](#) or [professors](#)), and has a fixed roster of [students](#). It usually describes an individual subject taken. Students may receive a [grade](#) and academic [credit](#) after completion of the course.<sup>[1]</sup>

In the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#) and [Singapore](#), "course" refers to the entire programme of studies required to complete a [university](#) degree, and the word "unit" or "module" would be used to refer to an academic course in the North American sense.

In between the two, in [South Africa](#), it is common for the word "course" officially to refer to the collection of all courses (in the American sense, these are often called "modules") over a year or semester, though the American usage is common parlance. In the Philippines, the word "course" can be used to either refer to an individual subject (usually referred to by faculty and school officials) or the entire programme (usually referred to by students and outsiders).

Courses in American universities are usually on a time restraint. Some courses are three weeks long, one semester long, last an academic year (two semesters), and on some occasions three semesters long. A course is usually specific to the students' major and is instructed by a professor. For example, if a person is taking an organic chemistry course, then the professor would teach the students organic chemistry and how it applies to their life and or major. Courses can also be referred to as "electives". An elective is usually not a required course, but there are a certain number of non-specific electives that are required for certain majors.

## Types of courses [\[edit\]](#)

Courses are made up of individual sessions, typically on a fixed weekly schedule.

There are different formats of course in universities:

- the [lecture](#) course, where the instructor gives lectures with minimal interaction;
- the [seminar](#), where students prepare and present their original written work for discussion and critique;
- the [colloquium](#) or reading course, where the instructor assigns readings for each session which are then discussed by the members;
- the [tutorial](#) course, where one or a small number of students work on a topic and meet with the instructor

weekly for discussion and guidance.

- the [Directed Individual Study](#) course, where a student requests to create and title an area of study for themselves which is more concentrated and in-depth than a standard course. It is directed under a [tenured](#) faculty member and approved by a [department chair](#) or possibly the [dean](#) within that specific college;
- the [laboratory](#) course, where most work takes place in a laboratory.

Many courses combine these formats. Lecture courses often include weekly [discussion sections](#) with smaller groups of students led by the principal instructor, another instructor, or [teaching assistant](#). Laboratory courses often combine lectures, discussion sections, and laboratory sessions.

Students are expected to do various kinds of work for a course:

- Attending course sessions.
- Reading and studying course readings assigned in the course [syllabus](#).
- Discussing material they have read.
- Writing short and long [papers](#) based on assigned reading and their own [library research](#).
- Completing homework or problem sets.
- Completing laboratory exercises.
- Taking quizzes and [examinations](#).

The exact work required depends on the discipline, the course, and the particular instructor. Unlike most European university courses, grades are generally determined by all of these kinds of work, not only the final examination.

### Elective and required courses [\[edit\]](#)

An elective course is one chosen by a student from a number of optional subjects or courses in a curriculum, as opposed to a required course which the student must take. While required courses (sometimes called "core courses" or "general education courses") are deemed essential for an academic degree, elective courses tend to be more specialized. Elective courses usually have fewer students than the required courses.

The term [elective](#) is also used for a period of [medical](#) study conducted away from the student's home [medical school](#), often abroad. Motivations for choosing such a program include a wish to experience other cultures, and to learn how to work in the clinical situations in other countries.<sup>[2]</sup>

Typically, North American universities require students to achieve both breadth of knowledge across disciplines and depth of knowledge in a particular chosen subject area, known as a major. Thus, students of the Arts or Humanities are required to take some science courses, and vice-versa. Normally, students are free to choose their particular electives from among a wide range of courses offered by their university, as long as the students possess the prerequisite knowledge to understand the subject matter being taught. An English major, for example, might also study one or two years of chemistry, biology or physics as well as mathematics and a foreign language.

Elective courses are also offered in the third and fourth years of university, though the choice is more restrictive and will depend upon the particular major the student has chosen. For example, at the [University of British Columbia](#), students intending to specialize in [Sanskrit](#) as part of a major in Asian language and culture will usually have to complete several Sanskrit and [Hindustani](#) or [Punjabi](#) courses during the first two years of university, as well as additional courses in [Indic languages](#) in the third and fourth years of study. In addition to these required courses, however, students would choose among several third- and fourth-year elective courses on topics not directly related to India, such as the history and culture of [China](#), [Japan](#) or [Indonesia](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

The value of this Wikipedia page to researchers of education is that the article is short enough to so as not to viewed as being torpid. Time is extremely valuable in the field of education, and those working in education place a great amount of value in it.

It is also well-organized using a Table of Contents (omitted here for space). Organizing principles are especially useful in education. We agree with Pamyu-Pamyu (2008) who states in no uncertain terms that without organizing features in education, we would indeed have chaos.

Finally, please note the many links to other websites related to education. Wikipedia pages are fraught with links to a variety of other pages. This is invaluable to researchers in education. As Mattari (1999; 2003) has concluded linking html pages is a proven and reliable resource.

HTML links offer those in education research a reliable and proven resource. With the web, there is no need to keep turning pages as is found in the textbooks of yore. Clicking links can take the researcher instantly from one place to another—often faster than one could turn a page in a book (dependent of course on a variety of factors associated with each and every computer). Those in education can *jump for joy* that this technology exists (Mattari, 2003, p. 6 emphasis mine).

The next Wikipedia page focuses on another aspect of education and follows here.

## Academic term

- A **semester** system divides the academic year into two terms, which are usually 14–20 weeks each.
- A **trimester** system divides the academic year into three terms which can be as short as eight weeks or as long as 16 weeks each.
- A **quarter** or **quadmester** system divides the academic year into four terms, up to 12 weeks each, and generally counts the summer as one of the terms.

In most countries, the academic year begins in late summer or early autumn and ends during the following spring or summer. In [Northern Hemisphere](#) countries, this means that the academic year lasts from August, September or October to May, June or July. In [Southern Hemisphere](#) countries, the academic year aligns with the calendar year, lasting from February or March to November or December. The summer may or may not be part of the term system.

Terminology [\[edit\]](#)

A 'semester' (from the Latin meaning "six-monthly") has come to mean either of two academic terms, generally excluding the summer or January terms, if any, and so can be 14 to 20 weeks long. The word 'semester' is sometimes used as a synonym for a 'term', as in a 'summer semester'.

A 'trimester' (from the Latin meaning "three-monthly") divides the academic year into three periods, separated by breaks. In some jurisdictions, [\[specify\]](#) "trimester" is used in its original meaning to indicate a quarter system (since three months is exactly a quarter of a year), or a variation of it.

A 'quarter' or 'quadmester' system treats the summer term on an equal footing with the other terms. It divides the academic year into four quarters, each of which is usually 12 weeks long. Three of the four quarters - Fall, Winter and Spring, operating from September through June or August through May, are thus equivalent to two 18-week semesters. Thus, when American academic universities convert academic credits between the semester/trimester and quarter systems, 36 quarter hours convert to 24 semester hours (2/3 conversion factor) while 36 semester hours convert to 54 quarter hours (3/2 conversion factor).

## Australia [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Australia](#)

In most of Australia, the primary and secondary school year typically lasts from late January or early February to mid-December, and is split into four terms:

- Term 1 starts in late January or early February and ends in late March or early April (often in close proximity to [Easter](#)).
- Term 2 starts in mid-to-late April and ends in late June or early July.
- Term 3 starts in mid-July and ends mid-to-late September.
- Term 4 starts in early-to-mid October and ends mid-December.

Terms 4 and 1 (rolled over) and 2&3 are respectively usually deemed 'summer' and 'winter' for purposes of sports participation and uniform standards. Australian states and territories vary their approach to Easter when determining the dates for the holiday at the end of Term 1.<sup>[1]</sup>

The exact dates vary from year to year, as well as between states, and for [public](#) and [private school](#). In [Tasmania](#) until and including 2012, the school year is split into three terms, the first one being the longest and including an extended Easter holiday. However, in 2013 Tasmania will introduce a four-term year, to conform to the rest of the country.<sup>[2]</sup> The terms are separated by a holiday lasting two weeks with the Christmas/Summer holidays between the end of a school year and the start of another lasting six weeks.<sup>[3]</sup>

Most Australian [universities](#) have two semesters a year, but [Bond University](#) has three. Many universities offer an optional short summer semester. One recent innovation in Australian higher education has been the establishment of the fully distance–online Open Universities Australia (formerly Open Learning Australia) that offers continuous study opportunities of individual units of study (what are called courses in North America) that can lead to full degree qualifications.

Open Universities Australia operates four 13-week study periods each year. Since students study only part-time and off campus these study periods mesh reasonably easily with existing university offerings based on semesters. In some cases, a "semester" is referred to as a "Study Period", for example by Centre link.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Austria [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Austria](#)

The Austrian school year for primary and secondary schools is split into two terms, the first one starts on the first Monday in September in the states of [Vienna](#), [Lower Austria](#) and [Burgenland](#) and on the second Monday of September

in [Upper Austria](#), [Salzburg](#), [Styria](#), [Carinthia](#), [Tyrol](#) and [Vorarlberg](#). Most schools have holidays between the national holiday on October 26 and All Souls Day on November 2, but those are unofficial holidays not observed by all schools in Austria. Christmas holidays start on December 24 and end on the first weekday after January 6. The first term ends in Vienna and Lower Austria on the first Friday of February, in Burgenland, Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg on the second Friday of February and in Upper Austria and Styria on the third Friday of February.

There is a one-week break between the two terms. In the second term there are the [Easter](#) holidays, the Mayday Holiday on May 1 and the [long weekends](#) of [Pentecost](#), [Ascension](#) and [Corpus Christi](#). The school year ends in Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland on the last Friday of June, in Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg on the first Friday in July.

## Barbados [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Barbados](#)

The Barbadian school year is fashioned after the British system, and as such, it follows a scheduling with three terms per school year.

The first term begins in the second week of September and continues for 15 weeks, ending in mid-December, excluding one week for mid-term break in mid-October. The second term begins in the first week of January and continues for 12 weeks, ending at the end of March. The third term begins mid-April and continues for 11 weeks until the end of June. The long school holiday period is 9 to 10 weeks from the end of June until the first week of September.

## Brazil [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Brazil](#)

In Brazil, due to the Law of Directives and Bases of Brazilian Education, the academic year must have 200 days, both at schools and at universities. The school year usually begins during the first week of February. There is a 2-week long winter break in July. The Brazilian school year ends the first week of December, summer in Brazil. In the northernmost tropical areas of Brazil, the school year starts the first week of September and ends the last week of June, following the practice of countries further north.

In Brazilian universities academic terms are defined as periods or semesters (*período*, *semestre*). The majority of [academic degrees](#) courses are 8 semesters (four years) long or 10 semesters (three years) long.

## Bangladesh

See also: [Education in Bangladesh](#)

In [Bangladesh](#), the kindergarten, elementary and schools follow the semester system. Most of the universities follow the semester system although for some particular subjects such as Law they follow a yearly system. Business schools of all public and private universities follow a semester or trimester system.

Some of the universities using a two-semester system (using "Term 1" and "Term 2" designations) include: [Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology](#), [Bangladesh Agricultural University](#), [Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology](#), [Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology](#), [International Islamic University Chittagong](#), [Khulna University](#), [Khulna University of Engineering and Technology](#), [Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology](#), and [Shahjalal University of Science and Technology](#). [Jagannath University](#)

Some of the universities following a trimester system (using "Spring", "Summer" and "Fall" designations) include: [American International University - Bangladesh](#), [BRAC University](#), [East West University](#), [North South University](#), [Presidency University](#), [University of Development Alternative \(UODA\)](#) and [United International University](#).

## Belgium [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Belgium](#)

In Belgium, kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools begin on September 1 and end on June 30. Schools also take breaks/holidays:

- **Autumn break:** One week at the start of November
- **Christmas break** Two weeks around [Christmas](#) and [New Year](#)
- **Carnival break** One week in February.
- **Easter break** Two weeks around [Easter](#).
- **Summer break** is always the break from the 1st of July until the 31st of August
- **Ascension break** Thursday and Friday in early May to mid June

- **Labor Day** May 1
- **Whitsun** Monday in mid May to late June
- **Armistice Day** November 11

Universities and colleges in Belgium use the semester system, dividing the academic year in two equal parts of fourteen weeks of courses. Universities start the first semester in the third week of September, and no 'autumn break'. Colleges start one week earlier, in the second week of September, giving them right to the 'autumn break' of one week. After 14 weeks of courses the 'Christmas break' starts (around December 20), which is used to study for the 3–4 weeks of examinations in January.

After these examinations the universities have one week of vacation, the so-called 'semestrial vacation', while the colleges start the classes of the second semester at the end of January, immediately after the examinations, which week they reclaim with the 'spring break' at the end of February, which the universities do not have. The universities start the second semester in the beginning of February.

Both universities and colleges have the 'Easter break', which again is used to study for the examinations in June. After Easter, the classes start again until the end of May, followed by four weeks of examinations in June, after which three months of vacation is given. The students who failed in passing some of the courses in their curriculum in January and June, the so-called 'first session', have to do the examinations again in the second session at the end of August.

### Cambodia [\[edit\]](#)

In Cambodia the school year kindergarten sectors in public schools consists of 10 months with a two-month vacation, while in primary and secondary sectors, it is divided into two semesters and each semester is divided into 2 quarters. The first Monday of October is the start of the academic term. After the 1st semester, a small vacation when the school is halted and at the end of the Second Semester, a 2-month vacation until the start of the new year. In universities, it is divided into 4 years.

### Canada [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Canada](#)

In Canada the school year for elementary and high school consists of 178 to 200 days, depending on jurisdiction, but several days may be deducted from this total for professional development and administrative duties, resulting in approximately 187 teaching days per year for most jurisdictions. Elementary students receive approximately 950 hours of instruction and secondary students receive approximately 1000 hours per year.

Generally in English Canada, [high schools](#) run on a two-semester arrangement, also known as fall and spring semester, the first semester starting from the day after [Labour Day](#) in September to mid-January and the second running from early February until the Thursday before the last Friday in June. The semesters are often divided into two terms each. Some schools in Canada run on a trimester system, the first running from September to January, the second from January to March or April, and the third from March or April until June. The trimester is more common in elementary and middle schools (Kindergarten - Grade 8) than in high schools (Grade 9 - Grade 12). Most of those characteristics differ in [Québec](#), where education is, with the exception of a few school boards, given in French.

Most [universities](#) and [colleges](#) usually run from early September until the end of April or early May. Often, this winter session is split into two terms running September to December and January to April. Various forms of summer studies may be offered May to August. Some, such as [University of Waterloo](#) and [Simon Fraser University](#), run a full tri-semester system, providing full courses during summer. There are a few school boards in Canada experimenting with year-round schooling.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

### Chile [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Chile](#)

In elementary school, high school, as well as in universities, Chilean education is divided into two semesters. The first one starts late February or early March and lasts until late June and the second starts in early August and finishes in mid-December; also, some universities offer a summer period from early January to mid-February but just for exceptional courses. These semesters have breaks for public festivities, such as Easter (approx. one week in April), independence commemoration (one or two weeks in September) and some public holidays like labour day, amongst others.

## China and Taiwan [\[edit\]](#)

This section requires [expansion](#). (March 2012)

See also: [Education in the People's Republic of China](#)

In [People's Republic of China](#) and Taiwan, all schools including elementary, middle and high schools, colleges and universities have two semesters, the first from September to January, and the other from February or March, depending on the date of [Chinese New Year](#) of that year, to July.

From January to February or March is the Winter break or Chinese New Year break. From July to end of August is normally the Summer break.

In Northern China, the winter break is longer and the summer break is shorter Vice versa for Southern China.

There are some casual holiday breaks:

- New year holiday: from 1 Jan. to 3 Jan.
- Lunar New year holiday: In Jan. or Feb. It lasts for one week.
- Tomb sweeping day: Set according to Lunar Calendar. Usually start of April.
- Labor's day: 4 April to 6 April
- Dragon Boat Festival: Set according to Lunar Calendar. Usually about May and June.
- Mid-autumn Festival: Set according to Lunar Calendar. Usually about middle of September.
- National day: From 1t October to 7 October

## Costa Rica [\[edit\]](#)

In Costa Rica the school year runs for ten months. It starts on the first week of February and ends on the last week of November. There is a mid-term vacation of approximately 2 weeks in July, and most schools also observe "Easter Week" in March or April.

## Czech Republic [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in the Czech Republic](#)

In the elementary and high schools in the [Czech Republic](#), the school year usually runs from September 1 to June 30 of the following year.

It is divided into two semesters with breaks on public holidays such as St. Vaclav (September 28), Independence day (October 28, two days break), Velvet Revolution (November 17), Christmas (7–10 days break), Spring break (1 week break), Easter (three days break on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Monday) and finally Labour day (May 1) and Liberation day (May 8). After the end of school year on June 30, the Summer holidays follow till September 1 when a new school year starts. Sole exception to this is the final year at high schools, which ends with Graduation of students at the end of May.

## Denmark [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Denmark](#)

In schools in [Denmark](#), the school year runs from August to June. In universities, the academic year runs from around September 1 to June 30, and is often divided into an autumn semester (with January set aside for exams) and a spring semester (with June set aside for exams). Since 2004, some Danish universities and faculties divide the academic year into four quarters, each of which may consist of eight weeks and an exam week, and being separated from the next quarter by a one-week break.

## Estonia [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Estonia](#)

In [Estonia](#), elementary and high schools begin on 1 September and end in the beginning of June. The school year is divided into quarters that last about two to three months. Summer is usually counted as a term break, although the beginning of June is still part of the fourth quarter. Universities start on the first Monday of September and usually end in the middle of May or in the beginning of June; though in reality, exam periods may continue until the end of June (e.g. University of Tartu).<sup>[7]</sup>

**Ethiopia** [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Ethiopia](#)

In [Ethiopia](#), almost all elementary, secondary, and college classes are conducted on a two-semester timetable. The first semester of the year is from September to late January or mid February. The second semester usually begins some two weeks after the end of the first and ends in late May or mid June.

**Finland** [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Finland](#)

In the elementary and secondary schools and college, the academic year is divided in semesters. The autumn semester begins in mid August and is suspended a few days before Christmas. The classes continue after the Epiphany with the spring semester which finishes at the beginning of June.

**France** [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in France](#)

In primary and secondary schools, the school year begins the first Monday of September, unless September 1 is on Sunday. The school year is divided into trimesters. The first from September to January, the second from January to April, and the third is from April to June. There are the Autumn Holidays beginning on the week of All Saint's Day. They last about a week-and-a-half from midday Saturday before All Saint's Day to the Second Wednesday of holidays. The Christmas Holidays are from the Saturday before Christmas to the first Monday after the New Year, unless New Year's Day falls on a Sunday. The second term begins and the Winter Holidays are two weeks in February depending on region. Easter Holidays are two weeks in April depending on region. The third term begins then, and ends in early July. There is only a half week of school in July.

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, pupils have a full day of teaching from around 8:00 a.m. until around 4:00 p.m. On Wednesday mornings, some pupils may have supplementary classes. French pupils used to attend school on Saturdays, but the so-called "four-days week" has been implemented since September 2008, reducing the teaching year from 936 to 864 hours (above the European average of 800 hours, but below the UK minimum of 950 hours for state schools).<sup>[8]</sup> Additional holidays include Veterans Day on November 11, May 8, Ascension Day, May Day on May 1, and Easter Monday.

**Germany** [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Education in Germany](#)

**Schools**[\[edit\]](#)

The school year in Germany begins between late July and early September, and ends from mid-June to July, with a summer break of similar length to that in the UK (only 6 weeks) but much shorter than in some other countries (with up to 3 months). The summer vacation starts in a different week by state (there are 16 federal states (including [Berlin](#), [Hamburg](#) and [Bremen](#))). The school year includes four or three shorter breaks or holidays:

- **Christmas Break:** Two weeks around [Christmas](#) and [New Year](#)
- **Carnival Break:** One week or two weeks (only in a few states) of February or the beginning of March.
- **Easter Break:** Two weeks of March / April
- **Whitsun Break:** About one week around Whitsun

• **Summer Break:** Six weeks, may start as early as mid June (then school starts again in late July in this state) or as late as in the end of July (then school starts again only in early September in that state). On the [halligs](#) (North Sea islands that are only islands for part of each day, when there is flood) the summer vacations are three weeks.

- **Autumn Break:** One week or two weeks in October/November<sup>[9]</sup>

Due to Germany's federal structure, all breaks may differ depending on the [state](#). The exact dates for the beginning and the end of school breaks are kept different state by state and changed every year. This is meant to keep holiday traffic as low as possible.

The school year is divided into two parts (September to February & February to July). There is not necessarily any break between those two parts, but pupils get a semi-year school report (it only displays their current level and is not relevant for promotion).



## Universities [\[edit\]](#)

German universities run two semesters with the start and end dates depending on the university. The *Wintersemester* (WiSe), during which most students start university, often goes from the 1st of October till the 31st of March, with lectures starting around the 15th of October and lasting 14 weeks. There is usually a two-week break around Christmas and New Year (which is not counted in the 14 weeks). The *Sommer semester* (SoSe) consequently usually goes from the 1st of April till the 30th of September with lectures starting some time after Easter and lasting 12 weeks. The two lecture-free periods of 12 to 14 weeks between the semesters are for taking exams, doing internships, lab courses and employment.

The [University of Mannheim](#) changed their schedule to conform with US standards in Fall of 2006. The semesters there are now from August 1 to January 31 (*Herbst-/Wintersemester*) and from February 1 to July 31 (*Frühjahrs-/Sommersemester*).

## Universities for Applied Sciences[\[edit\]](#)

"Fachhochschulen" start both semesters one month earlier than other universities.

## Vocational-cooperative universities[\[edit\]](#)

"Berufsakademien" have four quarters, January to March and so on. In alternating quarters the students attend the university and intern at the employer (the latter being the "Praxisphase"). The number of lessons per week is significantly higher than at normal universities (equivalent to a full-time job) and the exams cannot be during the "free time" of the year, as that time is spent in the company. Vacation is given according to labor laws, i.e. half of 20–30 days (because only half of the year is worked). What researchers in education can learn from this website is that education has been truly internationalized. This Wikipedia page points to the full gamut of education possibilities worldwide. Nothing could be more important than identifying education centers where fellow researchers can be contacted and collaborative research can be conducted as a result. Wikipedia pages such as this have opened wide the doors for expansion of education research. Without Wikipedia pages such as this, opportunities would be limited to a much greater extent. In addition, this website can be viewed as being of great value to students as well as researchers in education.

In addition, this Wikipedia page presents an organized front once again. It is easy for researchers in all fields of education to follow and employ. Clearly organizing principles are a key element to effective Wikipedia pages and by incorporating advanced organizers, these websites are easily understood and managed (see especially Mattari, 2003)

## After-school activity

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

An **after-school activity** is any organized program which invites youth to participate outside of the traditional school day. Some programs are run by a [primary](#) or [secondary school](#) and some by externally funded non-profit or commercial organizations. These after-school youth programs can occur inside a school building or elsewhere in the community, for instance at a [community center](#), [library](#), [park](#), etc. These activities are a cornerstone of [concerted cultivation](#), giving children experience with leadership and dealing with adults.<sup>[1]</sup> Such children are believed by proponents to be more successful in later life, while others consider too many activities to indicate [overparenting](#).[\[citation needed\]](#)

## Typical activities[\[edit\]](#)

There is a myriad of organized after-school activities for children and youth. They can focus on a variety of activities or issues. In some cases, they do not focus on any of the following:

- [Sports](#), including [soccer](#), [baseball](#), [scooter racing](#), [hockey](#), [swimming](#)
- [Performing arts](#), including [dance](#), [drama](#), [ballet](#), [choir](#), and [band](#)
- [Creative arts](#), including [painting](#), [drawing](#), [crafts](#)
- [Academic enrichment](#), including [Cramming schools](#) for literacy, mathematics, etc.
- [Outdoor education](#), including [Scouting](#), [Girl Guides](#), [Boys' Brigade](#), [Campfire](#), [4-H](#), [cadets](#)
- [Financial literacy](#), including [Jump\\$tart](#), [Junior Achievement](#), and others.
- [Extracurricular activities](#) in schools, including [DECA](#), [FBLA](#), language clubs, etc.

Some programs compile several activities into one environment, including [community centers](#) and [Boys and Girls Club of America](#).

## Filling time [\[edit\]](#)

Many of these activities take place in the afternoons of school days, thereby helping parents with [childcare](#) before they finish work. They can also occur in the evening and [weekends](#).

The motivation for participating in an after-school activity is often that working parents wish their children to be supervised.<sup>[1]</sup> Proponents often believe that if unsupervised, children may fall into criminal or undesirable activity such as [drug-taking](#) or teenage-sex.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

In the United States, after school programs are increasing in number and popularity due to rising support from states and the federal government. Interest in utilizing after school programs for delinquent prevention increased dramatically after research found that juvenile arrest rates peak between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days.<sup>[4]</sup> By keeping students involved in school related activities it lessens the chance for them to get involved in crimes, use drugs, tobacco or alcohol.<sup>[5]</sup> After school programs give students role models and a safe place to learn and play. Some parents may place children in after school programs so that their children are provided with opportunities for enrichment or academic improvement. Other parents are predominantly concerned with ensuring that their children are in an affordable, safe, supervised environment after school <sup>[6]</sup>

## Independence [\[edit\]](#)

Advocates of [slow parenting](#) believe that children should be allowed to develop their own ideas.<sup>[7]</sup> Getting bored is a step towards having an idea for something else to do. Having no adult organizers allows the children to find their own structure.

In her book *The Price of Privilege*,<sup>[8]</sup> psychologist [Madeline Levine](#) found that children of wealthy families were more likely to suffer psychological dysfunctions such as anxiety and depression. By spending so much time in organized after-school activities, and missing out on time or emotional closeness with their families, they fail to develop self management which is a powerful precursor to both psychological inner strength and academic achievement.

Not all children fit ideally within any single mould. While there may be some that benefit from being supervised and pushed towards [didactic](#) goals, others will end up achieving more on their own, or with minimal supervision according to the Chinese philosophy of [wu wei](#).

## Management[\[edit\]](#)

Some after-school activities are provided free of charge at the point of delivery, while the majority are for-profit businesses which charge for membership. They are sometimes government-funded, especially where it is believed that the parents may not be providing a good home environment, and so professional care may be better.

## Local regions[\[edit\]](#)

After-school activities are organized differently around the world.

### United Kingdom[\[edit\]](#)

After-school activities in [Britain](#) are typically organised commercially and paid for by parents. Many children attend several a week, and occasionally even more than one per day. Similar activities also occur at weekends.

There is typically less focus on the managed "enrichment" than in the USA, beyond the basic choice of activity; for example [football](#)(soccer) is physically active and develops teamwork.

### United States[\[edit\]](#)

A number of states have organizations that work to give local after-school providers resources and training. For instance, the [Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance](#) and the [California Afterschool Network](#) provide resources on the state level. On the national level, the [Afterschool Alliance](#) serves as a national advocate for after-school activities.<sup>[9]</sup>

In [California](#), after-school programming at the secondary level is funded primarily with [21st Century High School ASSETS \(After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens\)](#) program grants. These grants stipulate programs must include academic, enrichment, and health and nutrition components.

The after-school programs at California's elementary schools are predominately funded with [ASES \(After-School Education and Safety\) Program](#) grants mandated when voters statewide approved California's [Proposition 49 \(2002\)](#). These grants provide for much of what the ASSETS grants provide at the secondary level, though there is an added

family literacy component.

Throughout Southern California, non-profit providers work in partnership with school districts to provide after-school programs for k-12 students. Typically school districts apply for the grants to fund the local after-school programs. Then districts either elect to manage those program internally or outsource management to a [Community-based organization](#) (CBO), [Non-governmental organization](#) (NGO) or other local non-profit provider. [Beyond the Bell](#) is a district run and managed after-school program offered to students in the [Los Angeles Unified School District](#) (LAUSD). [THINK Together, Inc.](#), California's largest non-profit provider, contracts with approximately 20 Southern California school district partners to run and manage academically oriented after-school programs at approximately 200 school sites located across Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

After school programs are very common today in the United States. The 40 largest national youth organizations today have a total membership of about 40 million youths. These programs have shown results of better test scores, improved homework completion, higher grades, and even the psychosocial development of the student.<sup>[5]</sup> There are many different after school programs that are implemented in the United States. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America focus mainly on positive youth development. Their staff provides information, guidance, and emotional support regarding a wide range of issues that youths face in often high-risk neighborhoods.<sup>[6]</sup> Beans and Rice Organization is a community economic development organization that builds assets and develops capacities in low and moderate income families through economic and educational programs. Beans and Rice offers afterschool programs in Pulaski, VA and Radford, Va. Volunteers for Beans and Rice serve as mentors, tutors, and teachers. All volunteers receive training and close supervision from both Beans and Rice staff and experienced volunteers. Elementary students who participate in the Beans and Rice after school programs are given snack, tutoring, active play opportunities, and positive role models.<sup>[10]</sup> Working for Beans and Rice is required by all students taking Math 312 at Radford University.

## India [\[edit\]](#)

A number of players have started providing after-school support services, but the number is still very small considering India's large population and the importance of education to the Indian Middle Class and others. More players should be entering the market to provide quality support, which the normal schools with larger class sizes and traditional teaching techniques don't provide. From the existing set of after-school study providers the ones most sought after are the ones with individualized learning modules that complement the K-12 school syllabus. [Way2Success Learning Systems](#), is the first for-profit provider in India of academically oriented individualized after-school programs that complement the school syllabus. They operate in the New Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad areas.

The key to this Wikipedia page is that it offers variety. Diverse options are often presented by Wikipedia pages. From the site above, we can see not only what constitutes the activities mentioned, we can also see where such activities have been popularized and what is the driving impetus behind the design and implementation of such pages. It is not by chance that the great educator D. Ryan Kowpaddi once said, "Variety is one of the great spices in our lives and especially in education research. There is no greater spice than variety in education. If it were an idol, we should pay it homage" (cited in Mattari, 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study looked at the value of Wikipedia for those who are involved in research in education. By investigating three randomly chosen Wikipedia websites related to education matters, we determined that Wikipedia websites can be seen as invaluable resources to those in education.

After a thorough investigation of these websites, some very poignant and relevant conclusions can be drawn as to their benefits. First and foremost, Wikipedia pages have a tendency to be highly organized texts. This is useful on so many levels. It helps those involved in education research to gather helpful information in an organized manner. It also aids in gathering information quickly and painlessly. Second, these Wikipedia websites have links to other related Wikipedia sites. The value of this cannot be underestimated. Rather than looking through and endless parade of books or engaging in frustratingly long and drawn out web searches for information, the linked pages on the Wikipedia websites we checked were helpful and nearly instantaneous. Last, but certainly not least is the variety of information one can obtain from one Wikipedia site. Oftentimes, the Wikipedia sites provide answers to questions that would eventually come to the fore regardless, so such questions provide those involved in education research the kinds of solutions they are looking for. Certainly, this should not be overlooked.

In a thorough investigation such as this, there are still some limitations. First, although this study consumed a great deal of time and required great effort to complete, it only looked at Wikipedia pages in their present state. It would be of great help to look at how Wikipedia pages evolve through time. A longitudinal study of the evolution of Wikipedia pages

related to education would certainly bring new and welcome conclusions to the table. In addition, here we only looked at Wikipedia pages constructed of English texts. Texts constructed in other languages may bring some cultural differences to the table. French, Chinese, Swahili, Tagalog or even Tamboran would likely reveal some differences in how education is presented through Wikipedia. Studies such as these are needed and thus are warranted.

Finally, we'd like to say that we really enjoyed poring over these Wikipedia texts. We think that these findings will enhance research for future generations. Wikipedia pages help people from so many walks of life but they are especially useful to those involved in education research.

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