

Why Use a Wiki?

What is it?

A wiki is a Web page or site that is easily edited in a Web browser without the need for special software, a feature that invites collaboration. The most well known public wiki is Wikipedia, an encyclopedia maintained by an army of amateur volunteers. Wikis can be accessed in freely-hosted environments like Google Sites, PBworks, or Wikispaces, hosted through a commercial hosting service or *wiki farm*, or accessed as an LMS tool.

What does it look like in practice?

Wikis generally appear to be typical websites, but with obvious editing tools. Some sites, like those using the MediaWiki software, are more utilitarian in appearance, but they all work the same. Wikis have clear navigation menus and tables of contents, history pages that permit viewing of previous edits to pages, comments or discussion areas on each page, and search capabilities. Wikis are built specifically for collaboration among users and for updating content easily, although you will find instances of wikis used as websites by single users because of the simple editing, not for the collaborative possibilities.

How does such a tool fit into my course?

- A wiki can be a great space for a class or group of students to gather, post, and discuss research, kind of like building a Wikipedia page on a subject. Collaborative writing and editing reinforces good writing and revising skills.
- A wiki can be a good space for a student presentation that allows both text and media content and invites comments from viewers.
- Wikis have been developed into full course sites as alternatives or supplements to institutional learning management systems (LMS). Here's a course taught at Tufts in 2009 in a PBworks wiki: [Digital Democracy in the 21st Century](#)
- Wikis can be used for professional or course portfolios, particularly because the simple editing facilitates updating content. Helen Barrett shows [how to create a portfolio in Wikispaces](#).

Further Reading:

EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) "7 Things You Should Know About Wikis":
<http://www.educause.edu/ELI/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAboutWikis/156807>

Friedberg, Jeremy. "Using Blogs and Wikis in Higher Education." <http://youtu.be/ZrfxKCb2OHQ>

Wikis in Plain English. <http://youtu.be/-dnL00TdmLY>