

Wikigender University

-Writing and editing tips-

Five principles to write effectively

1. **Write for the reader.** Identify your audience (who will be reading these articles) and then put yourself in the reader's place. The Wikigender audience is diverse, ranging from gender experts to those with little to no knowledge of a topic. With this in mind, the articles should provide a fully-referenced overview of a topic, highlighting the main themes, without going into too much detail. Instead, provide links to sources and other Wikigender articles at the end of the article for readers who would like to know more. Place links to additional information in the "External links sections".
2. **Less is more.** Shorter words, shorter sentences, shorter paragraphs, and shorter sections. As a rule of thumb sentences should be short (20 words or fewer whenever possible); paragraphs should be 5-7 lines long and must always be shorter than a page. Omit unnecessary words.
Do not forget: Make things as simple as possible, not simpler! (Albert Einstein)
3. **Create a clear and logical structure and hierarchy of arguments and information.** The table of contents is a very important navigation tool for readers. It should be understandable at first glance and tell the main story of your text.
4. **The paragraph is the core element of a text; the topic sentence is the core element of a paragraph.** The storyline must flow from one topic sentence to the next. Ideally, a reader should be able to understand the text from just the topic sentences, and only read completely those paragraphs from which he or she wants more information. This requires significant effort to do well, but it will greatly organize your ideas and strengthen your document's overall structure.
5. **Give credit where credit is due.** Wikigender articles should be fully-referenced in the text using parenthetical citation with full citations provided at the end of the article. Avoid copy and pasting large sections from other written sources. This is plagiarism and is illegal. Your article should be synthesis of existing information drawing from reliable sources (academic journals, international organisations, governments, etc.). If you would like to quote a source directly, use quotation marks and include the reference at the end of the sentence. Quotes should not be longer than 20 words.

Roadmap to writing a Wikigender article

A. Establishing an Outline

1. Figure out the main question: To clarify the logical structure of your document, figure out the main question the reader would ask after reading the title of your article. Once you have that question, everything else falls into place relatively easily.
2. Answer the main questions directly in your first paragraph.
3. Figure out the following questions: Figure out both the secondary questions the reader would ask after reading your main message, and in what order they would ask those questions.
4. Answer the secondary questions directly: Answer these secondary questions directly and in the same order the reader would have asked them. This will give you the main messages of each major section of your document, and in the correct order.

Example: The Gender Wage Gap

Main question: What is the Gender wage gap?

Begin with an established definition from international organisations, governments or academic research papers. There is no need to come up with your own definition.

Secondary questions:

- What is the actual gender wage gap around the world?
 - Provide a brief overview of key statistics without going into too much analysis.
- What can explain the gender wage gap?
 - Give the key arguments from academic and internationally recognised sources (i.e. UN and other international organisations, academic journals, etc)
- What can be done to redress the gender wage gap?
 - Provide examples of best practices or internationally recognised standards.
Remember, this is not a personal opinion piece but an academic exercise.

B. Organising your paragraphs

Always start with the topic sentence. Topic sentences belong at the beginning of the paragraph and should contain a single idea. Since your readers usually want to understand the point immediately, summarize your paragraph's main point first. This gives the reader who chooses to skim a document rapidly at least a sense of the important ideas in each paragraph.

C. Writing Clearly

The English language needs simple sentences, action verbs and discipline. It demands efficiency. It rejects the use of the passive and long-nested structures of other tongues. English thrives on words that speak, ideally action verbs.

1. Avoid the passive voice: In the passive voice, the person doing the action comes after the verb. This can be confusing to the reader and hides the main action of the sentence.

Passive voice	Active voice
Child marriage, defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as marriage before the age of 18.	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) define child marriage as marriage before the age of 18.
Rural women's participation in paid employment is hampered by a significant domestic burden.	Domestic work hampers rural women's participation in paid employment.
Determining factors for women's employment are age, class, location and level of education.	Age, class, location and level of education influence women's employment.

2. Avoid hidden verbs: Hidden verbs are disguised as nouns and make sentences longer than they need to be.

Conduct an analysis	Analyse
Provide support	Support

3. Only present one idea per sentence: Long sentences can confuse the reader. Instead, see if you can break the sentence into two sentences.

The reluctance to educate girls for families is compounded by the opportunity costs which continue to get higher for poor households who depend considerably on the labour of their children in order to supplement household income and help to take care of the sick, especially in this era of HIV/AIDS.	Families' reluctance to educate daughters is connected to the opportunity cost of educating girls. Poor households depend on their children working to supplement household income and take care of the sick, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS.
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4. Read what you write out loud. Reword where you stumble. Clarify what is unclear. Look for and fix common mistakes:

- a. Misspellings
- b. Punctuation
- c. Capitalisation
- d. Omitted words
- e. Subject-verb agreement