**What is a wiki and what are its uses/benefits in composition?**

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A wiki (literally a “quick website”) is a web technology that allows users to create and edit web pages collaboratively, as well as integrate and share media, and with minimal technological expertise. With wiki, composition can be “composition par excellence.” To consider this huge claim, compare wiki-based composing with composing based on printed papers, email attachments, or Blackboard assignment in considering the following benefits in using in the composition classroom.

* **It’s process friendly**: Process drafts are automatically archived every time a wiki page is saved. Students don’t have to save and attach drafts while submitting assignments; they can’t lose earlier drafts or say “[the dog ate my disk](http://my.ece.ucsb.edu/bobsclass/134/Handouts/The%20Dog%20ate%20my%20disk.pdf).” Writing doesn’t show up on due dates, then disappear. The process of drafting is laid bare—accessible, shared, and easily documented.
* **Enhances collaborative writing**: Groups of students can compose/develop the same document in the form of a web page, instead of having to email drafts or work face-to-face. There’s no chance for duplication, no wait time as with email, and no confusion due to wrong drafts. Even access to “view only” pages helps students see what other writers are composing and how they compose.
* **Promotes networked learning:** Wikis allow students to hyperlink sources, subscribe to feeds, and set up email alerts when their work is updated. Wikis also allow group discussion. Some wikis allow you to activate/install forum tools, but students can discuss an issue by adding questions and responses through normal editing of a page as well.
* **Accelerates negotiation**: The process of drafting becomes the process of negotiation: students (must) make decisions of structure, design, content, etc as they compose. The possibility to negotiate by continually updating a work makes responsibility and negotiation layered and therefore faster.
* **Increases sense of ownership/responsibility**: Students feel a stronger sense of ownership of their work (esp. with group wiki). You can make zero intervention if you like. You can make groups or group members work competitively. You can more easily see who contributed how much.
* **Makes peer and teacher assessment convenient**: You can type comments in the “comments” area at the bottom of any page or entry. So can students, on any other students’ page where you give access. Note that assessment must be done only in wikis that are individual.
* **Has flexible security features**: In Blackboard, you can set up a wiki as private (each student will have their own wiki that is shared with the teacher), as group wiki (create separate wikis for each group or select existing groups to share access), or as class wiki (everyone in class can contribute and make changes to any page). You can do all these with wikis out on the internet as well.
* **Wiki is a mode of publication:** Unlike papers that are turned in to teachers, or at most seen by peer reviewers, wiki pages are published for public consumption, however small the size of the community.
* **Accommodates visual & multimedia elements:** Wikis allow students to use visual elements, to structure their writing, and to integrate multimedia.
* **Minimal expertise is required:** Just hit the “edit” button, type/revise text, then hit “save.” That’s it. As a teacher, you additionally need to know how to set up individual, group, and class wikis.

**Comparison aside**: Wiki is a new technology that not only helps you better achieve conventional goals of teaching writing; it also has new capabilities, as indicated by some of the points above.

**Assignment 1: Group Project (Collaboration is key)**

As “employees” of a travel agency, groups of 4 students collaboratively draft and develop a **proposal** describing how they are creating a travel package (targeted at UofL Spring breakers for next year). Each group also collaboratively plans and develops materials for a **class presentation** in the form of a marketing pitch among potential customers, their classmates. A group wiki is created for every group where they draft/develop the proposal and post their presentation materials. To systematically collaborate for developing those two parts of the group project, they create and get credit for the following process materials as separate pages:

a. Task Schedule, b. Team Charter, c. Individual portions of the proposal draft,

d. Group Proposal (created by combining then polishing individual parts), and

e. Presentation Materials (slide and other items).

**Assignment 2: Individual Assignment (when process matters)**

For any regular writing assignment, set up a wiki for individual students. Wiki is best as a collaboration tool, but you can also use its function of automatically archiving drafts/versions of a page to help the student during the writing process—and for assessment purposes.

**QUICKY WIKI MANUAL**

**Set up wiki:** On Blackboard control panel, click on “configure wiki tool” and make wiki and its desired features available. This makes the wiki available within the entire course site.

**Create wiki:** In any content area folder, click on “edit view” on top right, then from “select” menu on the right, select “wiki” and hit “go.” Specify functionalities as follows.

**Whole class wiki:** On the “user settings” section of the “create wiki” page, select “all course members.” Everyone will be able to add, edit, and delete pages. Also check “view” and “edit” comments so students can write and revise comments for one another.

**Group wiki:** On the user settings, select “groups and members” and then select individual students (or existing groups) on the left column and click on the transfer button. Repeat for each group.

**Individual wiki:** On the user settings, select and transfer all members to the right column, but in the “non-member settings” in the next section, do not check on “allow non-members to view wiki”—unless you want students to be able to view but not edit one another’s pages. You can also allow students to be able to comment as well as view content.

**A cool tip**: See and assess all wikis in one place by going to control panel>>Assess wiki and you can see % of work done by individual students!

Learn more about wiki: Susan Loudermilk Garza and Tommy Hern “Using Wikis as Collaborative Writing Tools: Something Wiki This Way Comes--Or Not!” http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/10.1/binder2.html?http://falcon.tamucc.edu/wiki/WikiArticle/Home

Blackboard help: https://blackboard.louisville.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\_id=\_188\_1