

Wikis are Web 2.0 Whiz Tools!

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Wikis are one of the most time honored Web 2.0 tools - great for adding interactive document and content building capabilities to your web site! A wiki is a special type of web site that allows users to create, organize, edit and shape content in a collaborative way.

A Wiki is.....

**A WIKI IS A COLLABORATIVE WEB SITE
WHERE USERS CAN CO-CREATE, ORGANIZE,
EDIT, AND SHAPE CONTENT TOGETHER.**

The word Wiki is actually Hawaiian which translates to "Super Fast" or "Quick" in English. Wikis first began to gain popularity around 2001, and continue to grow and evolve over time. There are literally hundreds of thousands of viable wikis available on the internet, owned by businesses, educational institutions, groups, organizations, and individuals. The general premise of a wiki is probably best exemplified through the best known wiki of them all: [Wikipedia](#) - an ever evolving online Encyclopedia available in multiple languages.

How do they Work?

The special wiki software used to create these nifty web tools facilitates access to the web page from the actual browser without having to enter the "back end" of the site to enter, edit, and organize content. Pages for the wiki are stored in the resident database assigned to the wiki tool, allowing users to edit pages by clicking on links and buttons. This concept has been replicated in many of the subsequent Web 2.0 tools available - such as social networking tools. The owner of the site can grant access to any or all visitors, and allow them to add to the content. If a critical mass of users developed, it is theoretically possible to create a wiki together that indeed does grow "super fast".



The greatest aspect of a wiki is that it can house any type of media file, be it simple text, graphics, videos, diagrams, documents - everything you can think of to share with your visitors and hopefully, the community of regular collaborators who help you shape this amazing tool into something memorable. Depending on your content focus, your wiki could become one of "the" hottest web based resources on your topic.

Developing a Critical Mass

There are various ways to attract visitors to your wiki and to invite their input. One site that is very useful in helping you to achieve this, is [WikiPatterns](#). This site offers an amazing amount of theory and practical advice in how to create, manage, and nurture a thriving wiki environment. It distinguishes between people and adoption patterns, as well as their counterparts: people and adoption anti-patterns, and presents dozens of detailed examples of each category. Excellent people patterns include such concepts as the 90-9-1 theory which explains participation percentages; the importance of passionate champions to leads the process of wiki development; and WikiZenMaster - the person who makes the wiki visually appealing. Examples of positive Adoption Patterns include the development of an Agile LifeCycle, where the wiki is fashioned to be flexible, open to change, and able to support continually evolving content; and Flying Under the Radar (or the WikiNinja) where a wiki is started for an organization using a subtle, 'under the wire' sort of approach, rather than launching it openly as a blazon corporate venture. I recommend that every wiki owner visit the Wiki Patterns site - it is a goldmine of information for your wiki's success!

Where to Begin?

There are various ways to take advantage of the wiki craze. The simplest choice is to sign up for a basic free or more customized (often a fee is involved) wiki from a third part provider.

Websites that provide (often free) wiki space and setup include:

- [Wet Paint](#)
- [PBWiki](#)
- [WikiSpaces](#)
- [WikiDot](#)
- [Zoho Wiki](#)

The second easiest way is possible if you own your own web space, especially if you have Fantastico applications available through your site's backend control panel. If you do, you likely already have the option to install various wiki software without the headache of setting up the databases and other components. Look for choices like [TikiWiki](#) or [PhpWiki](#). If you don't have Fantastico, you can still download the software from the [TikiWiki](#) main site, and install it yourself. In fact, TikiWiki is a unique software that can also serve as a blog, forum, image gallery, map server, link directory, article repository and more..well worth checking out. [TWiki](#) is another open source software you can download and install on your server to provide a wiki like management system to your site.

Look before you Leap!

A good way to understand how to begin your wiki is to check out other site's wikis! You can easily do that by using the special Google enabled Wiki Search engine, [Wiki.com](#). Another great tool, the site [Wiki Matrix](#) offers a great way to compare the various Wiki sites and software programs. This site offers a very versatile and customizable search system that provides interesting comparisons. Wikipedia offers another useful directory, called [Wikidweb](#) where you can also explore a variety of wikis, organized according to theme.

You can also view some useful videos available on Youtube that provide a nice overview on how wikis work. One particularly useful one is [Wikis in Plain English](#). Wikis are indeed very viable, easy to install and operate software tools that can boost your site's interactivity bringing lots of exposure and attention to your site and content. Why not tap into the potential of these time honored Web 2.0 tools?