

Lesson 4 - Basic Text Formatting



Objectives

In this lesson we will:

- Introduce Wiki Syntax
- Learn how to Bold and Italicise text, and add Headings
- Learn how to add bullets and lists

Now that you have made your first edit to your User page we will look at some of the basic formatting features available to you on the wiki.

Two ways to format text

WikiEducator uses a kind of simple text markup to format particular elements of the page (e.g. bold, italics, headings, etc). This "language" is known as Wikitext (or Wiki-markup) and is designed for ease of editing.

Much of this simple formatting can be added to your content by using the Editing toolbar that appears while you are in editing mode, but you can also type the syntax in by hand. Not all of the formatting options that are available to you on the wiki are accessible through the Editing toolbar so you will need to learn how to enter some of this syntax by hand. This will be useful if you wish to delve into the more sophisticated formatting devices that may be dealt with in later tutorials.

Creating your own practice area

Don't skip this activity

The very first thing we need to do is to create a personal practice area for all your edits. We call this a sandbox, do please move onto the next section: Creating a sandbox (before proceeding with this tutorial).

Creating your own practice area

When learning new editing skills, or testing more complicated layout features it is useful to have your own practice area on the wiki. The following activity will show you how to create your own sandbox or practice area.



Activity

Creating a personal sandbox

- Write down the following text on a piece of paper exactly as it is displayed below, or copy the text by high lighting the text with your mouse using the "cut and paste" method:

`[[/My sandbox/]]`

- Go to your User page. (Remember that you must be logged in to do this. Click on your User name after the  image at the very top of any page.)
- Click the "edit" link on your user page to activate the edit mode and insert the text you have copied exactly as it appears above.
- Click on the **Save page** button at underneath the editing area.
- If you have done this correctly you will see link a link in red text: "My sandbox"
- Click on this link and enter some text, for example: "Content coming soon"
- Click on the **Save page** button.



Confusing signs? Image courtesy of Dano on Flickr

Don't worry if you find the Wiki text for creating the sandbox is a little confusing at this stage. We haven't covered the syntax for creating new pages, and this is a more complicated example. However, if you're interested, this wiki markup has resulted in a dedicated personal sandbox off your user page, rather than one single sandbox for all the users of WikiEducator.



Bold Italics and Headings

Overview

In this subsection we cover both approaches to formatting text. Try experimenting with both approaches. Many Newbies prefer using the "Toolbar" approach because you don't need to remember the wiki markup. However, experimenting with the Wiki Syntax method will help you understand how the wiki works. As you become more familiar with wiki editing you will develop your own preferences and shortcuts for regular tasks.

	Tip:
Once you have mastered the basics of highlighting text, a good way to learn new formatting features is to find a page with the layout feature you like, and to click on the "edit" tab and view the wiki syntax that was used for a particular text feature.	

Using the Editor Toolbar

You may have noticed when editing your User page in the previous sections activity that the editing area has a blue bar at the top that contains a series of graphic buttons like this:



This is the Editing toolbar and can be used to add simple formatting to your content.

	Tip:
To use the toolbar you will need to use your mouse to <i>highlight and select the text</i> upon which you wish to apply the formatting. To highlight and select a piece of text, click and hold with your left mouse button while moving your mouse across the text you wish to select. The highlighted text will turn into a different color; release the button when you have highlighted the selection of text which you would like to apply formatting.	

Once you have your text selected you can click on:

- the Bold button  to bold the selection;
- the Italics button  to italicize the selection;
- or the Headline button  to create a level 2 headline from your selected text.

Your formatting will not appear apparent while you are in the editing mode. To see your formatting applied you will need to click on the **Show preview** button or the **Save page** button.

	<h2>Activity</h2>
<p>In this activity we'll use the graphic toolbar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go to the sandbox you created under your User page. (See this Activity on the previous page.)• Click on the Edit tab.• Copy the following sentence or something similar: This word is bold and this word is italics.• Highlight the word you want to appear in bold and click on the Bold button .• Highlight the word you want to appear in italics and click on the Italics button .• Click on the save button.	

Using Wiki Syntax

If you have tried using the editing toolbar to apply formatting to some text you may have noticed that the act of clicking on a button actually *wraps* your text inside some common grammatical characters. These characters are used by the wiki software to indicate where formatting is to be applied. After you become familiar with what some of the basic formatting syntax is you may find it quicker and easier to just type this syntax yourself into the edit mode text area rather than highlighting, selecting and clicking on the buttons.

Overview

Description	You type	You get
Bold text	This is ""bold"" text	This is bold text
Italics	This is "italics"	This is <i>italics</i>
Indents	This is has no indent	This has no indent

	: This is one indent		This is one indent
	:: This is two indents		This is two indents
			Level 1
Headings	=Level 1=		Level 2
	==Level 2==		Level 3
	===Level 3===		

Each formatting feature is explained below.

Bold

The syntax for creating a bolded element consists of surrounding the text you wish to bold inside three single quotes (') like this:

`"this text is bold"`

which will appear in the preview or saved modes like this:

this text is bold

Italics

Italicising text requires surrounding text inside two quotes, like this:

`"this text is italicised"`

which will appear like this:

this text is italicised

	<h2>Activity</h2>
<p>Have a go at these simple editing techniques in your sandbox by entering the wiki markup. Go to the sandbox you created under your User page. (See this Activity on the previous page.) Click on the Edit tab. Enter a piece of text (maybe describe something you are passionate about or your favourite book.) Use the single quotes to make some of your text bold and some italicised.</p>	

Headings and Subheadings

Headings and subheadings are an easy way to improve the organization of an article. If you can see two or more distinct topics being discussed, you can break up the article by inserting a heading for each section.

Headings can be created by surrounding the text you would like to be a heading in equals signs (=) like this:

- `==Top level heading==` (*Your heading text is placed between 2 equals signs*)
- `===Subheading===` (*Your heading text is placed between 3 equals signs*)
- `====Another level down====` (*Your heading text is placed between 4 equals signs*)

If an article has at least four headings, a table of contents will automatically be generated.

	<h3>Activity</h3>
<p>Think of a hierarchical classification, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter, Section and Paragraph or• Semester, Week, and Lecture <p>Use the markup for headings (the 2 equals signs) to add formatting to these hierarchies in your sandbox.</p>	

	<h3>Tip:</h3>
<p>The table of contents navigation box you see at the top many wiki pages is inserted automatically by the Mediawiki software. If your page is longer than the viewing area on the screen, the software automatically uses the heading syntax to generate this table of contents. Note that the numbering is inserted automatically, so its preferable not to use numbering in your headings.</p>	

Indenting text

To help with the layout you may find reason to:

indent your text like this
and like this
and more like this.

The syntax we use for indents is to preface the text you want to indent with a colon (:). This is placed without a space in the first character position of a new line. Indenting text can be particularly useful when we get to the section on the Talk pages - one of the many collaborative features of the wiki software.

:indent your text like this
:: and like this
::: and more like this.

Bullets and Numbered

Contents

- 1 Bullets and Numbered Lists
- 1.1 Bulleted list
- 1.2 Numbered list
- 1.3 Mixing list types

Bullets and Numbered Lists

There are two types of lists that can easily be created in the wiki. The first is a bulleted list (sometimes called an unordered list), and the other is a numbered list. There is no button the Editor toolbar to create lists so you will need to create them by hand using this simple syntax.

Description	You type	You get
Bullet list	* one * two ** two point one * three	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one• two○ two point one• three

```
Numbered list      # one
                  # two
                  ## two point one
                  # three

                  1. one
                  2. two
                   1. two point one

                  3. three
```

In short, bulleted lists are created by using asterisks (*), while numbered lists are created using hashes (#). Notice that you can also embed or nest lists within other lists by adding more asterisks or hashes like this:

Bulleted list

- * lists are easy
- * start each line
- * with an asterisk
- ** or two
- ** to nest a list

- lists are easy
- start each line
- with an asterisk
 - or two
- to nest a list

Numbered list

You will use the following syntax for a numbered list:

```
# ordered lists are good
# and very easy to follow
## like this
## and this
```

1. ordered lists are good
2. and very easy to follow
 1. like this
3. and this

	<h2>Activity</h2>
<p>Make a To Do list in your sandbox and list some of the tasks you would like to attend to in the wiki or need to complete today. Experiment with "nested" bullets and number lists - that is sub-elements of your list.</p>	



Tip:

Some common mistakes which you can avoid include:

- Leaving a space before the asterisk (*) - the asterisk must be placed against the left margin.
- Leaving an open line between two items in a numbered list - in this case the numbers will not continue in sequence.

Mixing list types



Self Assessment

Is it possible to mix types of lists? For example nested bullets in a numbered list.

Yes it is possible to mix list types as in the example below.

1. The first item in the list
2. The second item in the list
 - The first nested bullet
3. The second nested bullet
4. The third item in the list

This is the syntax we used for the example above:

```
# The first item in the list
# The second item in the list
#* The first nested bullet
#* The second nested bullet
# The third item in the list
```

Summary and FAQs



Upside Down Typography, image by Bruno Girin on Flickr

Most basic formatting on the wiki can be done using the Editor toolbar that appears while you are in Editing mode but there may be times when you need to apply more sophisticated syntax and this will be done by applying wiki markup manually to the text you are creating.

Bolding and italicising are done by surrounding the text you wish to apply formatting to with 2 or 3 single quotes ('). Headings are created by surrounding text with equals signs (=). Lists are either bulleted (*) or numbered (#).

If your formatting does not appear to be working, there may be a simple mark-up error, for example:

- With headings, check to see that you have the same number of equal signs before and after the heading text.
- Similarly, with bold and italics you should check that the same number of single quotation marks (') are used before and after the text being formatted.

Soon you will become quite adept at spotting syntax errors. One advantage with a wiki is that every edit is recorded, so its relatively easy to fix any mistakes. Remember that the Help link in the navigation sidebar appears on every page and can be used to access all of the available help pages on the wiki including this Tutorial.

	<h2>Activity</h2>
<h3>Refining your user page</h3> <p>The purpose of this activity is the skills you learned in this tutorial to improve the structure, layout and content of your User page. Go to your User page (which you can access by clicking on your User name after the  image at the very top of the page) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• see how you can improve the structure and content of your user page by adding headings and subheadings• review your text to see whether you can improve the layout by adding emphasis (bold and italics)• Are there parts that may communicate more effectively by adding a bullet or numbered list?	

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

- List your questions here....
- When trying to reformat ordinary text (e.g. in the My Sandbox exercise) under my personal profile and wanting to change the text into italics, I couldn't do this all at once. Even though I highlighted the entire text and choose the "italic" feature, saving it and using the Toolbar under the Editing button, it would only reformat the first paragraph into italics. Consequently, I had to repeat the process three times for three paragraphs. Is this intended by the programme? (submitted by Patricia)

Patricia: it seems that you are correct and the program will only allow you to italicise one paragraph at a time. It's possible that it doesn't really like the line break in between the paragraphs. brent 04:49, 26 March 2007 (CEST)

- Is there not an html toggle button available in WikiEducator if you prefer to use that (Maggy)

Maggy, if you know HTML you can use a lot of traditional HTML tags within the Wiki environment. We use quite a lot of traditional HTML to create the templates you see on these pages. brent 04:49, 26 March 2007 (CEST)