



Middlewiki

Documenting the Middle Kingdom's
History One Edit at a Time

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Who is this class for?

- Those who are wanting to contribute content to the Middlewiki, maybe just your own!
- Those wanting a way to contribute to documenting Midrealm history.
- Those wanting to provide information to people online persistently, but not wanting the hassle of running their own websites.

What this class is not

- An in-depth tutorial on how to edit Mediawiki wikis.
 - However, a few of the basics will be covered and pointers given to places you can learn more!
- The One True Way to keep history.
 - Wikis are a tool. More importantly, they're a collaborative tool. If you don't want people "touching your stuff", this is the wrong place.

Wikis

What is a wiki?

- A website where its users collaboratively edit content using a simplified markup language.
- The Hawaiian word meaning “quick”.
- There are many kinds of wiki software.
 - The well-known Wikipedia uses the MediaWiki software.
 - And the MiddleWiki also uses it.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

Why use wikis?

- Wikis were originally popular among software developers and others that needed *collaborative* ways to edit content.
- Content is the primary motivation to put stuff in a wiki. “Presentation” (the pretty stuff!) is considered secondary.
- Easy ways to do navigation and grouping lets content editors quickly build a web of content.
- The markup languages of wikis are “simplified”, however this isn’t always “simple”. (But don’t let that scare you...)

What is the Middlewiki?

- It's a wiki for content specific for the Middle Kingdom in the SCA and by its contributors.
- It was created roughly around 2005 by Daffydd Blaidd, who was Kingdom Webminister at the time.
 - It was originally envisioned as a newcomer resource.
 - Over time it has evolved into a history resource.
- Some of the current staff as of the writing of these slides are:
 - Sir Seamus MacBain
 - Mistress Milesent

http://middlewiki.midrealm.org/index.php/Main_Page



Why should we use wikis?

- In spite of being a Society formed of individuals with an interest in history, we're often quite bad at keeping histories ourselves.
 - Who did a thing? When was it?
 - Stories are told, but not often written down.
 - How do you find related things?

Content is King

A few example histories in period

- Many of us are used to thinking of history books as cohesive stories with a strong narrative tying them together.
- In period, more often than not, histories took the form of annals (from the latin word for year).
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annals>
- Consider the Gesta Danorum and the Anglo Saxon Chronicles.

Things used by historians

- But there are things we regularly use to reconstruct useful pieces of history that aren't full narratives.
 - Town ordinances were often used to deduce military requirements. E.g. the Hodetin Ordinance covering drivers, handgunners, crossbowmen, etc.
 - Tax rolls
 - Municipal charters
 - Merchant and military bills

Just the facts

- As we can see on the prior slide, good history often comes from simple details.
 - The larger narrative can always be constructed later!
- But since we're creating our own history, sometimes it's more expeditious to put down what we recall without worrying over-much about the veracity up front.
 - This means we have a challenge to our egos about putting down what we think we know, but must be willing to have it amended later on by someone else.
 - The collaborative nature of a wiki lets us do this.



Don't worry about being perfect

- We start our histories from simple details.
- We know they might be wrong, and when it doubt, note that!
- Know that in some cases there may not be One True Source of Truth. In such cases, default to capturing the personal narrative. “I remember it this way.”
- When editing content created by others, be kind and don't distort their narratives. Clarify it, or add further commentary.
- Worry about adding content. Making it pretty can come later, and perhaps with help from others.

Tying it together

- You know you've built good wiki content right when people lose themselves in walking the web of content you've built. This involves:
 - Adding in links from one article to another via linking.
 - Tying groups of things together with Categories.
 - Building summary articles that provide a narrative of several related items.
 - Advanced: Tying together broad themes of items with Navigation Boxes and Templates. (E.g. "Kings of the Middle Kingdom", "Queens of the Middle Kingdom").

Practicum

Requesting an account

- On the front page of the MiddleWiki, there's a link "How do I get Started?". The general process involves sending an email to midrealm.wiki@gmail.com.
- Once your account is created, you'll get a persona page. This is not only a great place to write an article about yourself and/or your persona, but gives you a good place to practice editing wiki content!

http://middlewiki.midrealm.org/index.php/How_Do_I_Get_Started%3F

Basic MediaWiki markup

- When you're creating or editing a MediaWiki page, the contents of that page are done using its formatting language.
- This language is "simplified" in the sense that you're not being asked to edit things in HTML (the language web pages are written in), but not quite "simple". It has rules. But most importantly, they're written down and easy to get to. See "Editing help" on every edit page.

<https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Help:Contents>

Basic MediaWiki markup (2)

- Several of the formatting options need a balanced set of the markup character.
- Headers are formatted with sets of '=' around them:
== Level 2 ==
=== Level 3 ===
- Italics, bold, etc. are levels of the apostrophe character:
"italic"
""bold""
""""bold and italic""""

Basic MediaWiki markup (3)

- Bullet lists use asterisks (stars)
 - * Start of a bullet line
 - * Second bullet
 - ** Second bullet's first sub-bullet
 - ** Second bullet's second sub-bullet
- Numbered lists are the same idea, but use #
- Horizontal rules are just sets of '-':

Basic MediaWiki markup (4)

- Tables are “easier” than in HTML, but just barely. They’re the single biggest thing to make you tear your hair out.
- Tables are also the one place you will want to play with “styling”.
- Ideally, avoid tables unless you really need them.
- The Combat Practices page is a good example of complicated tables:
<http://middlewiki.midrealm.org/index.php/CombatPractices>

Basic MediaWiki markup (5)

- Files and pictures are not as easy as they should be. The process is:
 - Upload a file to the wiki using the Upload File link in the toolbox pane.
 - Refer to that file using a `[[File:]]` link.

Basic MediaWiki markup (6)

- The editor does give you a way to do some of these things “faster”, but it just embeds the markup for you.



Editing pages

- When you are logged in, you get an “edit” tab on many pages. Some pages are restricted and you can’t edit them.
- You edit the content in the main text box.
- Heavily use the “Show preview” button to see what your changes look like!
- “Save page” will let you make the changes stick.
 - However, you’ll come to hate the Captchas.

Editing pages (2)

- Pages in the wiki are “versioned”. This means a few things:
 - If you mess up, you can get back the old version! (This is called “reverting”.)
 - But it also means that everyone gets to see what you’ve done.
- Always remember that while history itself may not be kind that as a contributor to the wiki *you* should be kind.
- The “History” tab will let you see the changes, and even do comparisons.
 - If you put something in the “Summary” field when you save a page, it shows up here!

Creating pages

- Creating a page is mostly a simple matter of trying to go to something that doesn't exist! Two examples:
 - In the search box, you have a "Search" and a "Go" button. If you try to "Go" to a new page by a given name, and it doesn't exist, you can create it.
 - If you create a link to a page and it doesn't exist, when you click on that link (in red), you can create it.
- After that, it's the same as editing things.

Linking stuff together

- Links are simple but when you get fancy can be fussy. You don't have to get fancy if you don't want to, others can edit that later.
- To create a link to an internal page, you just surround the page's name with `[[]]`. For example: `[[Combat Practices]]`
- Sometimes you want to link to a page, but want it to display something different than its name for some reason. You can do this by adding a "pipe" symbol.
 - E.g.: `[[Combat Practices|armored practice schedule]]`

Linking stuff together (2)

- Linking to things on external sites is similar.
 - E.g.: [https://mediawiki.org MediaWiki Home Page]
- Don't worry about remembering the syntax. It's online:
 - <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Help:Links>

Grouping things

- A lot of the useful thing about a wiki is finding sets of things without having to explicitly linking every single thing to every other thing. This is done using “Categories”.
- A category doesn’t have to exist for you to use it. If you refer to it, it gets created automatically.
- Just add the following markup to your page:
 - `[[Category:«The Category»]]`. E.g. `[[Category:Activities]]`
- Want to find all of the existing categories? In the navigation pane, choose “Special pages”, and select Categories in that:
 - <http://middlewiki.midrealm.org/index.php/Special:Categories>

Community and support

- The MiddleWiki FaceBook page is a good place to ask general questions:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/284927235026963>