

# Lesson 10 – Thinking about Structure



## Objectives

In this tutorial we will:

- Explain the parent - child relationship for creating structured content;
- introducing templates as a mechanism for navigation;
- and use categories to assist with structuring and finding educational content.

The wiki network might look something like this fictitious railway map of the Isle of Sodor. Different WikiEducator projects are like railway lines - while you can get to every stop on the island, not every stop is linked to every other one.



The structure of a wiki is best described as a network. Each page in a wiki is a node in the overall network, and can possibly link to, or be linked from, any other page in this network (or any other node in the greater network of the World Wide Web).

It may often be desirable though for educational content to appear more structured, and it will be useful to link pages to each other while maintaining a reference to their logical structures and relationships with other pages.

Fortunately the Mediawiki software we are using is very powerful and there are easy ways to link pages according to their logical and structural relationships with other pages. This kind of structuring may also be thought of as creating **Subpages**.

There are other ways in which you can provide visual or navigational clues to reflect the structure of your content. Creating **Navigational templates** and using **Categories** can also provide an overview of your contents' structure and help users to navigate through the network.

If you look at the title of this page you will notice that it is called: **Wikieducator tutorial/Thinking about Structure/Subpages**. *Thinking about Structure* is the title of this particular tutorial in the *Wikieducator Tutorial*, and *Subpages* is the name of the page within this tutorial that we are currently on. The page entitled *Subpages* can be thought of as a child of the *Thinking about Structure* page, which in turn is a *subpage* (or child) of the greater *Wikieducator tutorial* page/project.

Making a new link that begins with a / (slash) is the common way to start a subpage. The page to which this link points is considered "subordinate" to its host page, and is titled and linked as `[[Parentpage/Subpage]]`. It is possible to create a subpage of a subpage (or a sub-subpage). At the top of each subpage or sub-subpage, you can find a backlink (aka breadcrumb) to the higher levels of the page.

## ***Making Subpages***

If you wanted to create a subpage called *Tiger* from the parent page called *Big Cats* you could do so by:

1. Making sure you are on the parent page node, in this example *Big Cats*, then
2. create a new wiki page in the normal way by using the two square brackets but precede the new page name with a backslash ("/"). For example:

`[[/Tiger]]`

This will however display the link with the backslash ("/") like this: `/Tiger`, which may be a bit confusing to some readers.

There are two ways you can fix this:

1. Adding an extra slash: `[[/Tiger/]]` the end of your link (this "tells" the wiki software not to display the preceding slash) or
2. By creating a piped link for example: `[[/Tiger|Tiger]]` - this is useful when the page link contains a number of slash arguments, or you want to display a more descriptive title to the user . Both of these methods will result in a link like this:

Tiger

Which is actually a subpage of the current page.



## Activity

Create a new subpage from your User page. (You should already have a subpage called "Sandbox", which we created in a previous activity)

- navigate to your user page by clicking on your username at the top of this page;
- edit your user page and add a link for a useful subpage for your own context, for example:
  - publications like this: `[[/publications/]]` or `[[/publications/|List of publications]]`;
  - upcoming assignments, like this: `[[/Assignments/]]` or `[[/Assignments|Upcoming Assignments]]`
  - To do list, like this: `[[/To_do_list/|To do list]]`
- after saving your user page, the sub-page link you have just created should appear as a red-link, indicating a new page without content
- click on this link and add new content for your sub-page.
- click save.

Templates are used to duplicate the same content across more than one page. You can change a template in one place and it will immediately propagate to the pages that use it. Templates can be useful for creating navigational devices for structured content or WikiEducator projects.

Templates often look like text boxes with a different background color from that of normal text. The box at the top of this page is actually a template used to help you navigate through this tutorial. Templates are special pages in the wiki that are defined in by creating pages with "Template:" in front of the name.

For example, consider the template on this page `Template:WET1_structure` (follow the link to see the page where it can be edited). To insert the template's content into an a page you would type `{{WET1_structure}}` in the wiki page. Every page with that tag in it will display the navigation block that you can see at the top of this page.

## ***Creating Templates***

To create a template you need to create a page with `Template:` as the first part of the name. The usual way we have been creating new pages in the wiki up to now has been to create a link in some content to a page that doesn't exist yet, then follow that link to edit the new page ... but templates are a little different because we are not really creating a link to the template itself, just including it in the page.

The easiest way to create a new template is to manually enter the name of the template into the URL bar of our browser after the `http://www.wikieducator.org/` part, then either hit enter or the Go button. Like this:



Enter the name of the new template you wish to create in your browser like this: `http://www.wikieducator.org/Template:New template` then click on the *edit this page* link to create your template.

Your template is just like any other wiki page and can contain any wiki markup or HTML code. If you wanted, for example, to create a simple navigation template you could include something like this:

```
[[Home]] | [[Section 1]] | [[Section 2]] | [[Section 3]]
```

and call it: `Template:New_project_nav`

then, to include this template on your projects pages you would add this to the top of each page:

```
{{New_project_nav}}
```

and it would appear something like this:

```
Home | Section1 | Section 2 | Section 3
```

You could include this navigation template on each page of your project to enable users to easily navigate between sections, much like the navigation you've seen at the top of pages in this tutorial.

A Category is a kind of grouping of related pages. This page, for example, belongs to "Category: Wikieducator Tutorials". When a page belongs to one or more categories this information generally appears as a link at the bottom of the page. Clicking on this link will display all the pages on the wiki that are associated with that category.

## ***Putting a page in a category***

A page can be put in a category by adding a category tag to the page (by convention, at the end of the page), e.g.:

```
[[Category:"Category name"]]
```

This lists the page on the appropriate category page automatically and also provides a link at the bottom of the page to the category page. Pages can be included in more than one category by adding multiple category tags. To see a list of all the currently available categories in this wiki see the page, [Special:Categories](#) for a list of all the categories in this wiki.

## ***Creating a Category***

If you have checked the [Special:Categories](#) page and there is not an already existing category that might apply to content you are working on, you can create a new category by adding the syntax `[[Category:"Category name"]]` to your page. After saving your page you should follow the link that has been created for your new category and place some instructions on that page to let other users know how to use the new category. Follow the category link at the bottom of this page to see how a category page looks and what type of instructions to add to the page.

It is important to give some thought to the structure of your content before embarking on authoring in the wiki. While often linking from one page to another may be enough for small resources, for large quantities of content it may be beneficial to create some kind of heirarchical approach and use the subpages functionality discussed in this tutorial to provide structure or narrative. Using navigational templates can also help in assisting users to know where they are in relation to the content as a whole. As WikiEducator grows it may also be useful to supply categories to specific content to facilitate browsing of the different types of content that will become available.

## ***Frequently asked questions (FAQs)***

- Is there a more user-friendly way to add content (i.e., GUI?)

We'll elaborate on these questions in time - but for now a few quick answers. Yes there are wiki's that have a rich text gui - the disadvantage is that if we were to implement this - there is no going back and we shut ourselves off from all code advances in the Mediawiki software engine. I've heard that there is much progress with integrating a rich text editing solution and hopefully we will see this in the near future. Suggestion - move this question to first edit. Possible think about have one long page of FAQs in addition to the FAQs in context --Mackiwg 02:18, 15 February 2007 (CET)

- When I add a Question in FAQ, is it traceable back to me?

Yes - if you go to the history link tab above for this page - you will see the changes you made to this page and its tracable back to your User Page. In wiki's that don't require a log in like Wikipedia - this only traceable back to the IP address from where the edit was made. Wayne's thoughts: Not sure which tutorial we should link this question to. We might need to rephrase the question.

- Where do I go to email someone who knows more than I do? Where do I find this person?

Good question - for privacy reasons - email addresses are not provide by default. It's a free choice of the user to add their email. In the wiki world we communicate with other users by going to the talk page of the user concerned and leave a message there. Where do you find people to help you - We are in the processes of developing an improved Community Portal page on WikiEducator. This is where we would list people to contact. We also have an IRC channel - and we'll get details up on how to log into this chat facility where WikiEducator folk hang out. Wayne's comment - this question is best placed under the communication tutorial.

- Is all content provided here, totally and freely available?

Yes all content is freely available under the CC-BY-SA copyleft license. This question is best placed under the free content tutorial.