Wattpad: a parent's guide

Wattpad has become the leading story-sharing platform since its launch in 2006. Users are required to be aged 13 or over and the tool is generally aimed at young people. For anyone passionate about writing stories, Wattpad can be a fun way to get your ideas and your writing noticed - but as always, there are some risks to keep in mind.

How does Wattpad work?

Wattpad is a global platform that allows users to upload and read stories on the website and the mobile app for free. With over 80 million monthly users, Wattpad has become one of the biggest creative hubs for aspiring writers in the world.

What should I know before my child signs up?

Standard Wattpad accounts are for 13-to-17-year-olds. It is also possible to have a mature content account, which requires users to be over 17. A story is rated mature if it contains:

- Explicit sex scenes
- Self-harm themes or scenes
- Graphic depictions of violence; including but not limited to: sexual, verbal, emotional and physical abuse

There's no age-verification at sign-up. There's simply an email confirmation; alternatively, children may join using their Facebook or Google accounts.

Wattpad has a list of content guidelines, which you can read here.

What privacy settings are available?

Wattpad has very limited privacy settings. There's no option to turn off your inbox or make your account private. There is some optional information, which doesn't have to be included in your profile:

- Your real name
- Your location
- A description of yourself
- A profile picture

These options can be found by clicking 'settings' in the drop-down menu after clicking on your username in the top right-hand corner of Wattpad's website.

What are the best ways to help children be safer?

Ensuring that you stay informed and up-to-date with Wattpad's features will help you be more aware of the risks your child may be exposed to, and help guide them towards safer use.

Here are a few practical considerations to keep in mind:

- **Personal information:** Make sure you talk to your child about not publishing any private details on their profile such as their full name and location. Tell them to never reveal personal information in their stories or to someone contacting them via private message.

- **Blocking and reporting users:** You can mute and report users if they are acting inappropriately or violating guidelines. To do this from the website, click on the user's profile and then click the three dots on the right-hand side of the page next to the message function. From there, you will have the option to mute a user (meaning they won't be able to follow you), send your messages, post on your profile, or comment on your stories. Alternatively, you can report them to Wattpad for violating community rules. In the app, click on the three dots on the top right-hand side of the screen and select either mute or report from the drop-down menu.

- **Reporting stories:** You can also report a story for violating the content guidelines. To do this from the website, click on the book in question, then on the right-hand side of the page, click 'report this story'. From the app, click on the book and then click the flag icon in the top right-hand corner.