THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

to

Wattpad
for Authors

Everything you need to know, step-by-step

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Ultimate Guide to Wattpad for Authors.

Here you'll find everything you need to know, from signing up to the website to publishing your novel. There are even some inside tricks and tips to save you time and make your Wattpad use as effective as possible.

Through this simple step-by-step guide, we'll share how you can attract, satisfy and engage with an audience while making sure you get the most out of Wattpad's many useful, and sometimes hidden, features.

But before all of that we have to answer one question...

WHY WATTPAD?

Wattpad is a potential heaven for readers and writers alike. Sometimes described as 'the Youtube of writing', it's a platform for both serialized fiction and direct interaction between authors and their readers. Writers share their work for free, whether it's finished or in a draft stage, and readers follow them to see how the story progresses. Wattpad is a great platform for both budding and experienced writers. Need some feedback from interested but unbiased readers? Wattpad has that. Want to share your finished work with an active and appreciative audience? Wattpad has that too.

Wattpad may not be as big as some other social media sites, but with 45 million users as of 2016, it's hardly small-time. What's more, every user is a dedicated reader looking for new content; it's difficult to imagine anywhere else that provides such an engaged audience from the first time you log on. With technology constantly changing the habits of both publication and reading, Wattpad is on the cutting edge of where authors and readers are looking next. It's a site where people who love reading and are curious about new authors gather, and that's exactly the readership every author wants.

It's time to go get them.

HOW READERS USE WATTPAD

Readers can use the 'Discover' dropdown menu to search existing content in the genres they enjoy. They can also use the tool bar or 'browse' function to search for particular keywords, for example 'romance' or 'thriller'. Once they find a work they can begin reading it. Users can comment on and 'vote' for stories. A vote, given by clicking a star icon in the top right of the screen when reading, makes a story more popular and thus more visible to other readers searching for content. If a reader likes the first chapter of a book they can click 'Add', putting the book in their 'library', or 'share' which allows them to share the book on various social media sites.

Wattpad is designed to accommodate serial fiction. When a user adds a book to their library it means they'll automatically have access to new chapters as they're released, rather than having to seek them out. If they like the work enough they might choose to 'follow' the author. This will flag up any new work by the author, as well as giving the author the ability to send group messages to all their followers. While authors always want readers, gaining followers is the real prize. These users will be aware of new content whether it's the author's first or thirty-first book. Success on Wattpad depends on collecting and satisfying followers with regular, high quality content. Satisfied followers share the stories they enjoy through discussions, sharing and voting, so pleasing one fan wins authors their next two.

How readers see a newly discovered text.

OPENING YOUR WATTPAD ACCOUNT

All you'll need to get started is an email address. While most email providers are acceptable, consider using a Gmail address if you have it. The social networking site, Google+, has features which make users' work more visible in Google searches (covered later in this guide) and so it may be beneficial to tie these accounts together through Gmail. This isn't a necessity, so don't worry if you're not on Google+; there are other ways to take advantage of these features even if you join the site at a later date.

To begin, go to **www.wattpad.com** and enter your email address, password and a username where indicated, then click 'Sign up'. You can also sign up using Facebook. This may make advertising your work on Facebook easier in the long run, but again this is something which can be set up at a later date.

When choosing a username, try to stay professional. You'll always be able to change your username, but it's best to start off on the right foot.

Congratulations! You now have your very own Wattpad account.

The next step

As soon as you're signed in a message bar will pop-up at the top of the screen asking you to verify your email address. Simply click 'Verify your email' and then check your inbox. There should be an email waiting, with a link you can click to finish the verification process. This feature is intended to increase your security and make contact easier. You can't customize your account until you've verified your email, and it only takes about a minute so get it out of the way before doing anything else.

If there's no email, then hover the mouse over your username on the upper right of the screen. A dropdown menu will appear from which you can select 'MY PROFILE'. You can use this page to check or change your username, password and email address.

MAKING YOUR ACCOUNT LOOK PROFESSIONAL

Select 'MY PROFILE' using the method described above. This is your profile page, where readers and fellow authors can come to learn more about you. As you'll see, it starts off pretty shabby, but that's easily fixed by clicking the small 'Edit' box just under your information.

Additional information

Here you can add your actual name (or a pseudonym, if you prefer), date of birth, location, and connect with other social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Lulu and Smashwords. There's also the option to link your Wattpad profile to your own website. Add as much or as little as you like, but know that this kind of information makes you seem like a trustworthy writer. Like any medium, Wattpad has its share of newcomers who grow bored or get busy elsewhere. Taking a few seconds to input these details will help to reassure readers that you're here to stay and it's safe to get invested in your work.

Connecting to other social networks is a must if you can. It allows your Wattpad readers to engage with you on many different platforms. Having fans on Wattpad is great, but giving them easy connection to your other professional social media sites will help them see you as an author in your own right. Wattpad is a great way to gather a readership, but connecting your account to other sites allows you to take them with you to other places (specifically places where they might pay for your work).
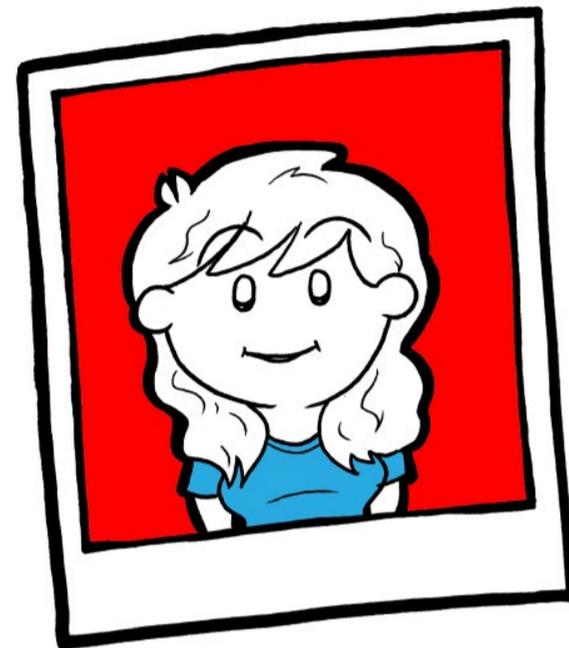
Pictures

There are two picture options on your profile page: profile picture and background picture. Wattpad will have already given you a generic profile picture, but you should personalise it before engaging in any interaction on the site. Profile pictures appear at 3.2x3.2cm on your profile page, and as small as 1x1cm elsewhere (for example, by

MAKING YOUR ACCOUNT LOOK PROFESSIONAL

any comments you make on the site).
They'll accompany everything you do on the site, creatively and socially, so choose something that suits your work. At such a small size you should choose some-thing simple, with a distinctive or recognizable look.

Imagine a reader scanning a screen of text and 1x1cm images. Once they're familiar with your profile picture they need to be able to pick it out in a moment to ensure they don't miss any of your comments or content. Profile pictures may be pictures of you or an image you feel represents you well, but they should be unique. It may seem like overkill to get professional headshots for this, but if you're an author hoping to build a readership using social media, having a professional photo is a good idea as it forms part of your brand. Remember when choosing your picture that you're representing the part of you that's a professional author, not just showing off your interests.

Because readers use profile pictures to quickly identify authors it's best not to change them very often or at all. But if you are planning to change your profile picture, it may be helpful to establish a theme when first choosing it. This may be a color scheme, bright colors or greyscale, or a subject such as old jewellery or a particular animal. Sticking to a theme helps keep your profile picture recognizable to fans even when it changes.

Profile pictures must be .jpg or .gif files, with a recommended 6.5x6.5cm measurement for ideal downscaling. You can upload a new one from your own files by clicking 'Change' under the existing picture and then clicking 'Choose File'.

MAKING YOUR ACCOUNT LOOK PROFESSIONAL

Your background picture offers far more choice. This will only appear on your profile page, and is basically digital wallpaper to make this space your own. While these images should still pertain to you as a writer, or the themes and subjects of your work, there's less need to create an overarching theme when choosing them; anyone who can see your wallpaper already recognizes who you are.

Background images are uploaded from your own files, and appear as a tiled background on your profile page (replicated over and over, side by side, to fill the space.) Be very careful to choose an image which doesn't become an eyesore when tiled. Even the calmest single images can be irritating when presented in this format, so make sure to check the aesthetics of your background after uploading it.

Background pictures must be .jpg or .gif files, with a maximum size of 1MB.

About Me

This box, underneath your social media details, gives you the ability to write a maximum of 2,000 words introducing yourself to other Wattpad users.

What's needed here is a short, professional biography with the following features:

- A first paragraph which works as a mini-biography on its own. Imagine someone is writing an article about you: they should be able to use this as their first paragraph without changing a thing.
- Your work. What do you write in terms of tone, genre and subjects? What have you written, both on Wattpad and off it?
- Any awards you've received.
- Education, professional history and home life as it pertains to your writing.
- Writers you enjoy. Optional, but it makes you more relatable to readers and may win you some friends.

MAKING YOUR ACCOUNT LOOK PROFESSIONAL

You can present this as a short narrative, like an article on yourself, or under different headings if you'd prefer. Either way, remember to talk about yourself in the third person ('Alice writes horror') and always be professional.
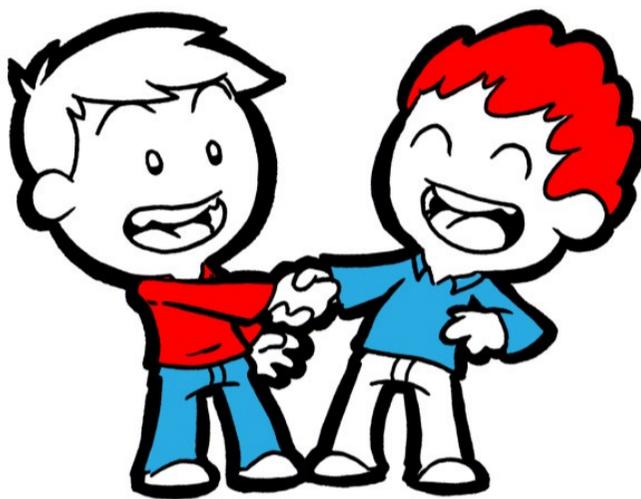
This space is for talking about yourself as a professional author, so make it a rule to only mention things that can be related back to your work. How did your education shape your writing, how has your work history led you here? By looking you up on a reading platform your audience is implicitly asking 'so who are you as an author?' If your reply is 'well I have five cats and I enjoy swimming' then you're not answering the question. This excerpt from crime writer Ian Rankin's website is a good example:

> Ian Rankin graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1982, and then spent three years writing novels when he was supposed to be working towards a PhD in Scottish Literature.

Not only does Rankin manage to present his already relevant education in a way that relates to his work, but he characterises his writing (and thus his authorial persona) as roguish.

This is where you sell your work by advertising the person who creates it.
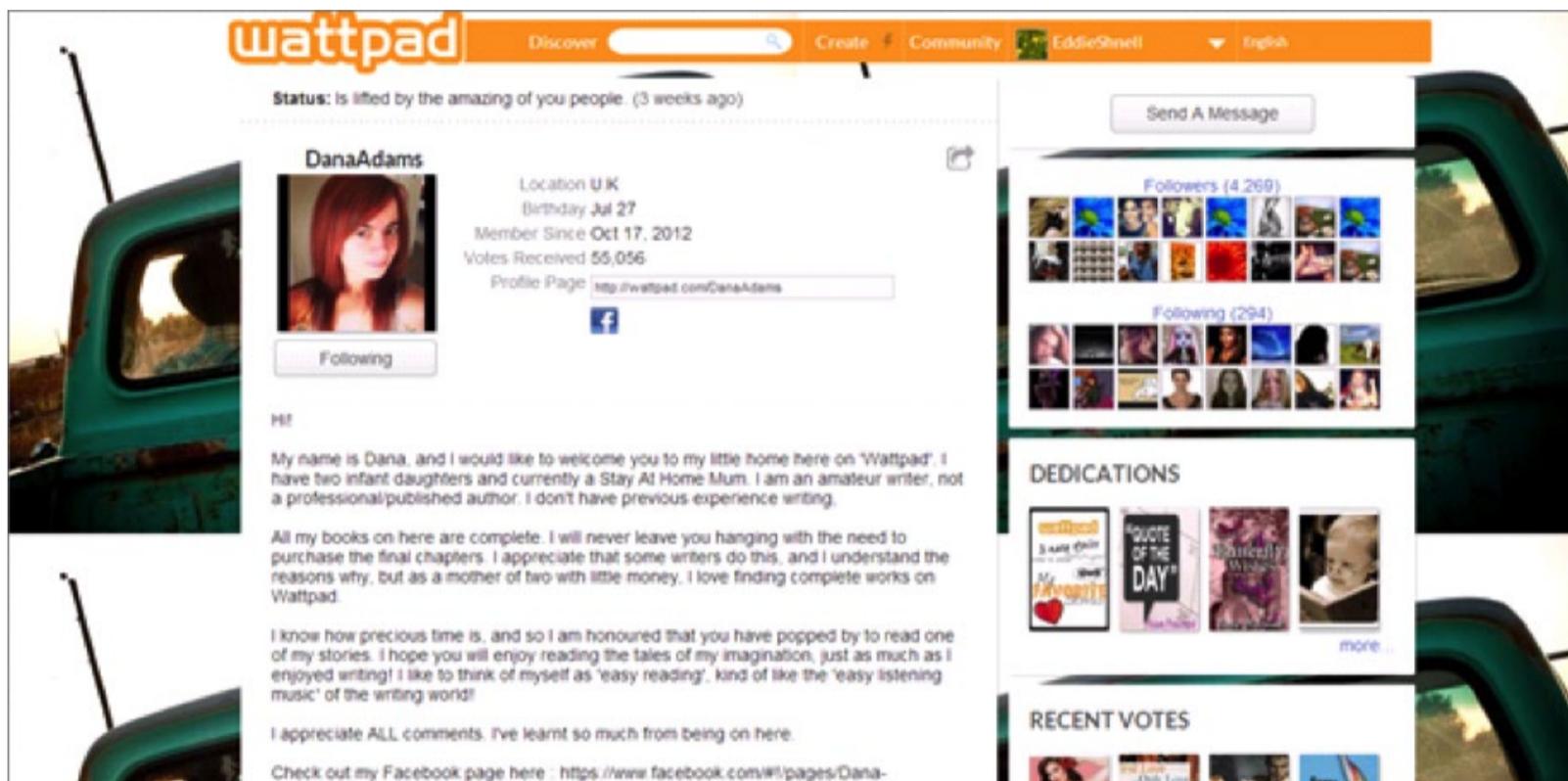
Author Dana Adams' profile is simple but welcoming. Her 'About me' section is just long enough to show she's interested in engaging with her readers, but short enough that even the casual reader won't ignore it.
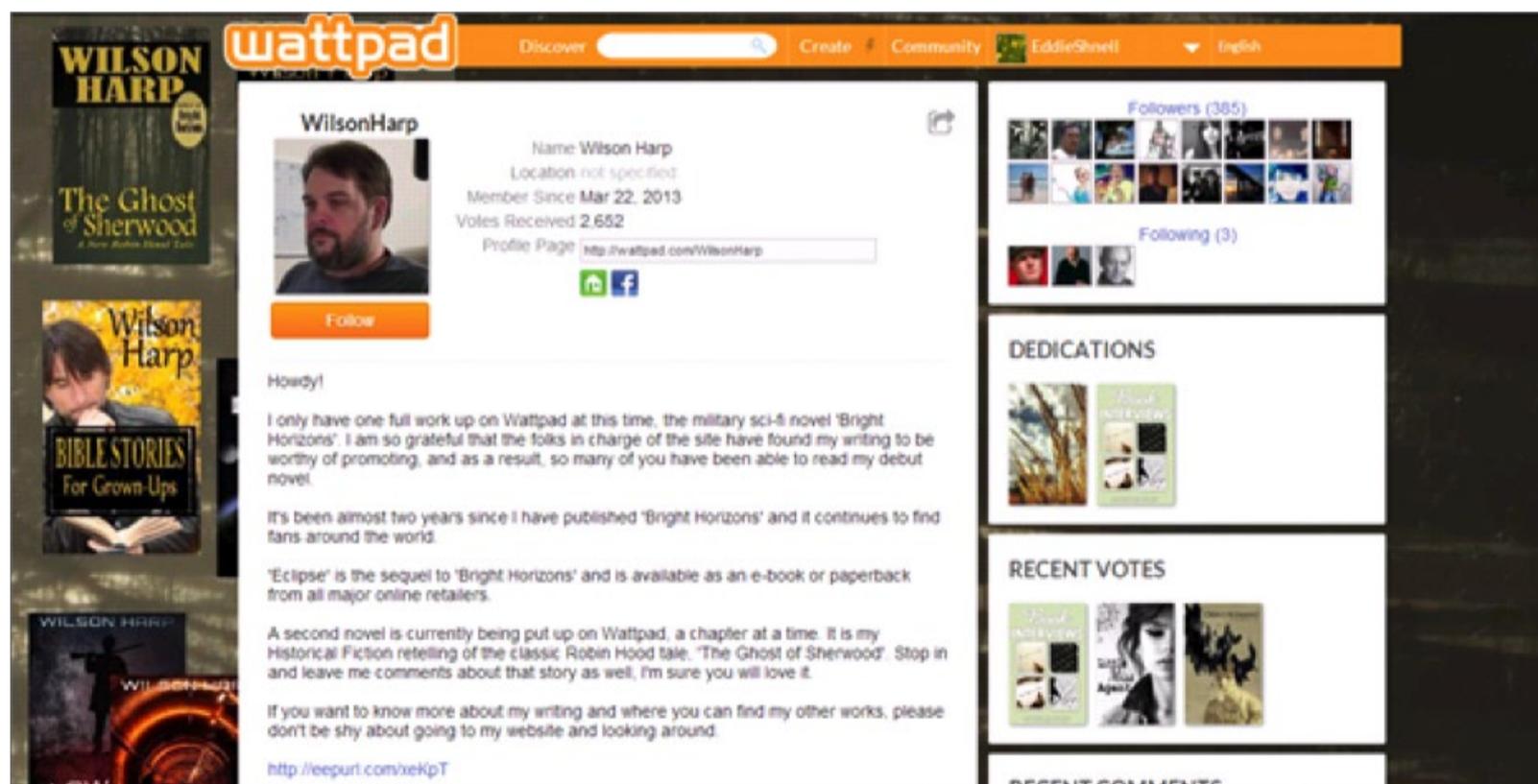

Author Wilson Harp has chosen to use his background as advertising space.
This is a custom picture file made specifically to suit the available space on the site.

HOW TO POST

If you haven't published on Wattpad before then just click the 'Create' button to the upper right of the screen and you're off. On the other hand, if you have pre-existing work this will take you to a list of it, where you can click 'New Story' in the top right of the screen. This will open the writing space. There's a bar for your title and a box underneath for your story. You can either type your story straight into the box or save it elsewhere as a .txt file (2MB maximum) then click 'Upload a File' to have it automatically transfer to the page.

Formatting is at a minimum, but there's a spellchecker and a constant word count above the writing box, and the ability to make words bold or italic. You can also click the 'Toggle Full Screen Mode' button to have your writing space take up the whole webpage.
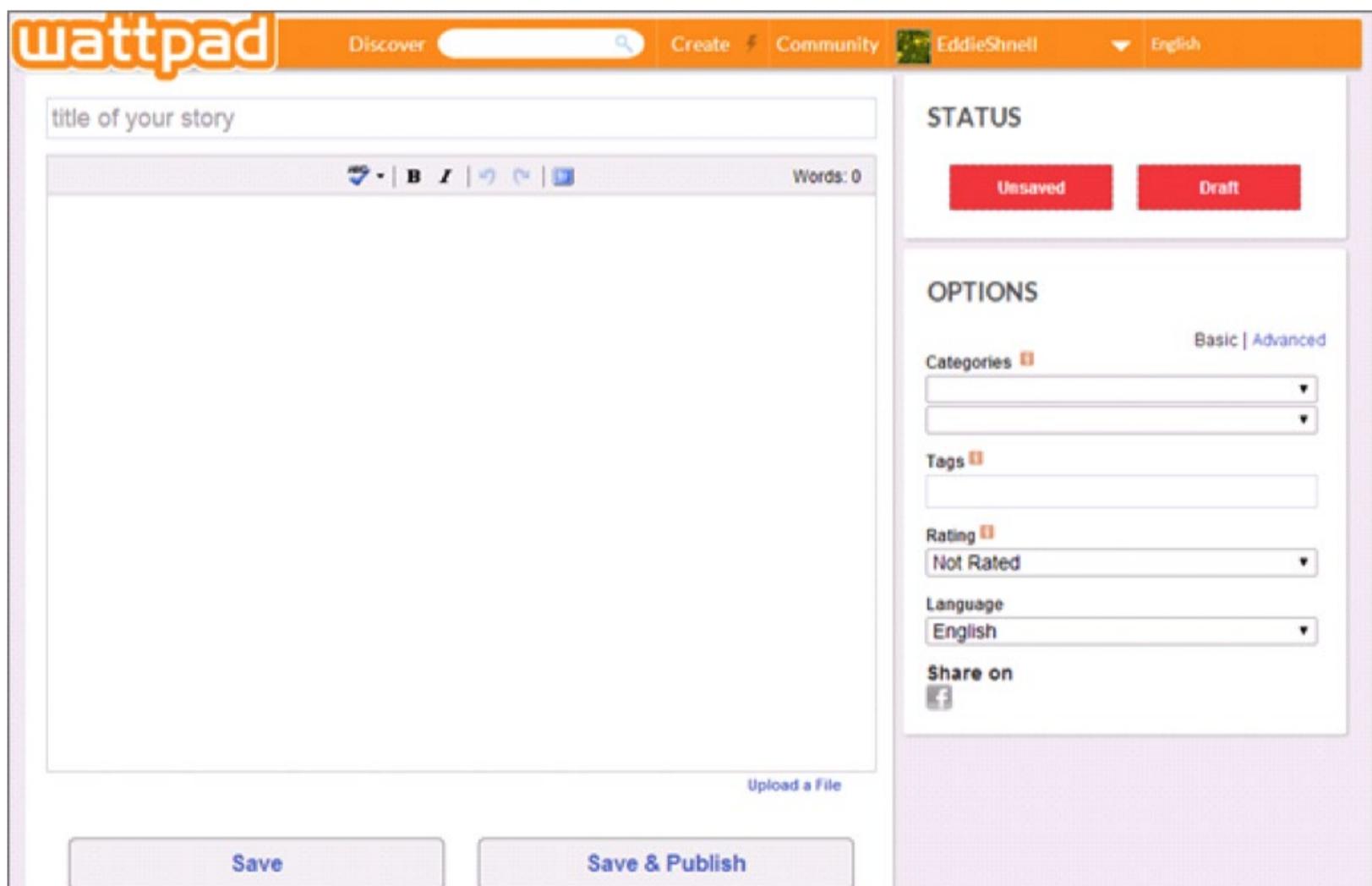
The writing space, displaying 'basic' options.

HOW TO POST

Wattpad is made for serialized fiction. While there's no apparent maximum wordcount, Wattpad readers expect one chapter at a time. Resist bucking the trend as it makes your work less approachable, stops the accumulated interest that comes with serialization, and may cause problems where the site isn't set-up for full works in one sitting.

Once your chapter is finished there are a lot of choices to make. At the top of the 'OPTIONS' box, to the right of the writing box, are two settings: 'Basic' & 'Advanced'. The options offered under advanced don't include the basic options, so you'll need to use both.

Basic options

First you have to choose a category. This dictates where your work will appear on the site, and is essential to being discovered. You can choose one or two categories to give readers an idea of your genre.

Next you can choose 'Tags'. These inform your reader what to expect from your work and also act as search terms. Choosing tags can be difficult, but the more research you put in, the more popular you'll be. Readers search for Wattpad content by looking through categories or entering search terms into the 'Discover' bar at the top of the page. Your tags need to be the words people enter into that bar, so that when they search, your book is at the top of the list.

Look at other work which is similar to yours and has done well. What tags does it use? Don't confine your research to Wattpad; Amazon and the iBookstore both use search terms to help books stand out. It's not a case of describing your book - that's a side effect - it's a case of using the same words readers will choose when searching. Next you can choose a rating for your work, if one is necessary, and then the language in which it's written. There's also the option to share on Facebook. You can use that as soon as you post a chapter, but it can be done at any time so it may be best to wait.

Advanced options

Visibility allows you to control who sees your work. 'Public' means your story is visible to everyone, while 'Private' means only people who choose to follow you can see it. This is useful if you're producing both completed works and drafts. You can make it so the public only sees the finished product, while your more dedicated followers have access to and input into your developing work.

Next you can select the copyright under which your work will be published. This might seem scary, but it's actually quite simple. 'All Rights Reserved' is the default, and offers you the maximum legal protection as an author, but there are lots of options. These are:

- **All Rights Reserved** – You keep all your rights as an author. No-one can legally copy your work, create derivative works, or use your work commercially.
- **Public Domain** – With this setting you give up all your rights as an author. Anyone can copy your work or characters, create derivative works or sell copies. Characters such as Sherlock Holmes and most fairy tales are public domain.
- **Attribution (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can copy, change or distribute your work, as well as using it commercially and creating derivative works, as long as they credit you for the original.
- **Attribution. Non-commercial (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can copy, change, distribute or create derivative works but only if they credit you and don't use the finished product commercially.
- **Attribution. Non-commercial. No derivatives (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can copy or distribute your work but only if they credit you, don't use the finished product commercially and don't make any changes.
- **Attribution. Non-commercial. Share alike (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can copy, change, distribute, sell, or create derivative works but only if they credit you for the original, their finished product is not used for

commercial purposes, and only if their finished product is shared under the same licence as your original.

- **Attribution. Share alike (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can copy, change or distribute your work, as well as using it commercially and creating derivative works, but only if they credit you for the original, and only if their finished product is shared under the same licence as your original.
- **Attribution. No Derivatives (Creative Commons)** – Anyone can distribute your work or use it commercially, but only if they credit you for the original and don't make any changes.

For more in-depth descriptions of what each license means, especially regarding the often debated term 'non-commercial', visit creativecommons.org/licenses/.

Security and theft is a common concern for many authors posting their work on Wattpad so make sure you choose your licence carefully. It may be helpful for you to know that as soon as you publish your work on Wattpad, it is automatically copyrighted to you. That being said, it is always advisable to add a simple copyright notice at the bottom of each uploaded chapter to avoid any doubt.

Of course, adding a copyright notice won't stop people from stealing your work or ideas if they want to (theft rarely happens), but what it does mean is that you have the right to take legal action against the person who has stolen your work/idea if need be.

Wattpad take copyright issues very seriously and encourage users to email: report@wattpad.com as soon as users know their work/ideas have been stolen so that they can investigate the issue.

After you've chosen a licence you can add external links. These can be to websites, YouTube videos, image urls or even your completed book. This allows you to accompany your work with videos, pictures or links. These will appear to the right of your work under the 'MEDIA' heading, so they're treated as accompanying information rather than as part of the piece. They're best used for extra content; if you're writing about a real world event you might want to include some related news footage from YouTube.

Saving your work

There are two types of saving, both displayed as buttons at the bottom of the page. 'Save' will save your work to the site, but won't show it to anyone else. You can return to work on it at any time, or just keep the finished copy ready until you think it's time to make it public. 'Save and Publish' saves your work and makes it visible to your selected audience. It will appear in the relevant genre category for all users of the site, and be searchable using its title and tags.

While you can always edit your work later, try to leave it alone after publication. Making major changes after publication makes you seem amateurish, and makes readers feel like they can't trust your work. Obviously correcting for the sake of small errors is usually alright.

Making your work look professional

Once your work is published click 'MY WORKS' from the dropdown menu under your name, in the top right of the screen. This will show you your published work and allow you to edit it, or release a new part. You can also click 'New Story' to begin a totally new work.

To the far left is an image of your book cover, which at default is a blurry version of your profile picture with the book's title and your name on top. Click 'edit' underneath to change this. You can either upload a cover design from your own files by clicking 'Upload', or use Wattpad's own cover creation programme by clicking 'Create'.
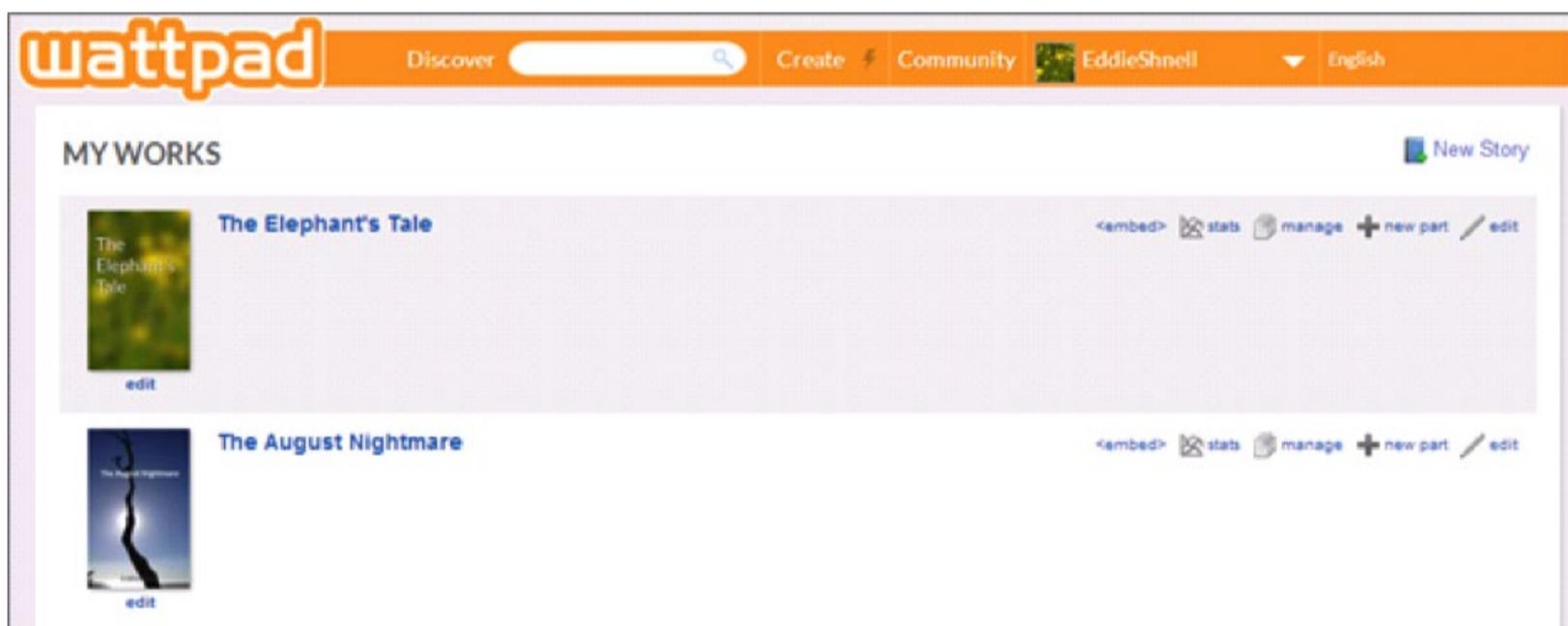
Buttons to edit your work are on the right, with the 'edit' option for the cover on the left.

This programme is relatively limited. It offers a few different backgrounds, as well as a wide variety of image filters. You can choose the font, colour and size of your title as well as whether or not to include your name.

If you want to appear professional and have your work stand out you should either create your own cover and upload it, or hire a third party to make you a

professional-looking cover. Wattpad's covers look good, but there are a lot of users producing a lot of content and you should take every opportunity to make yours unique.

The chief job of your cover is to advertise the tone and genre of your work. Look at similar works and identify the visual shorthand used to tell readers 'this is a horror/romance/funny story'. Clichés might seem beneath you, but there's no denying that the second a reader sees a full moon they know they're dealing with a horror story.

You can also add descriptions to each project, a short blurb the reader can inspect to see if they want to read more. To do so go to 'MY WORKS' and click the 'manage' option next to your project. Write four to seven sentences as a description, sharing just enough of the story to pull readers in. Try to leave them intrigued, and communicate the tone of your story just as much as the narrative itself.

Publishing in chapters

If you've already published your first chapter and you want to write the second, click 'new part' on the row of options by the title. This will connect the works so that links appear at the beginning and end of each chapter, connecting them sequentially. You can use the 'manage' option to establish the order your chapters follow.

Once your story is finished you can also use 'manage' to label a work as 'Completed'. This lets readers know there won't be any more chapters, but more importantly having a few completed works in your oeuvre lets potential readers know that they can depend on you to finish a project.

WHAT TO POST

As previously mentioned, Wattpad is designed for serialized fiction, so your work should be broken up into chapters. The average Wattpad user spends 30 minutes on the site at a time, so aim to provide a ten to fifteen minute reading experience per chapter. You can publish works of any length but as shorter works require less commitment they're likely to be more popular (though longer works give readers longer to get hooked and engage with you as an author, so don't worry if your area is long fiction).

Overall there is one factor more than any other which will determine the success of serial publication:

Consistency

If you're asking readers to keep looking for your work then you need to guarantee that it's there for them to find every time. Some writers never finish projects, and it may only take one delayed chapter for readers to decide you can't be trusted. Publishing once a week is sensible as it allows you enough time to write a new chapter but not long enough for readers to lose interest. After your first few chapters, once readers have added you to their library, you could move to a biweekly publishing schedule but make sure to tell your readers what's going on.

You shouldn't post work to Wattpad unless you have at least a complete first draft. Writing chapters the week before you post them may be exhilarating but it only has to go wrong once to cause major problems. Improving as you go is one thing, but writing as you go shows a disregard for your readers and risks creating a bad reputation.

Genre

While few writers will change genres to improve their popularity it's worth knowing what gets read. Teen Fiction, Fantasy and Science Fiction are the most popular genres on the site. Big pop culture moments send people out for quick fixes of subjects they love; the current trend for gothic creatures means there is enough fiction to justify separate 'Vampire' and 'Werewolf' genre headings.

At the end of the day, you should write what you love, but if there's an opportunity to link your work to a subject that gets a lot of attention it may be worth taking it. This can also be useful when deciding on a story's tags.

Introduce chapters

Writing a short introduction to a work or a chapter is often useful, as it allows you to communicate with readers who may not engage in other aspects of the site. You could clarify your intended publication schedule, or provide an in-text link to a finished work or your own website. If you choose to use this function then keep it brief. Remember that readers come to Wattpad expecting to be entertained, so only mention the essential and try to be interesting as you do so.

When to post

Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings are the most popular times for reader activity, so try to release your new chapters so they appear just as this readership arrives. Once you start getting comments on your work make sure to check when they were made. If a significant portion of your readership is engaging with your work at a particular time then it might be worth adjusting your publication schedule to suit them.

BUILDING YOUR READERSHIP

You can attract readers by posting good, consistent content and advertising as much as possible using social media. Make sure your story tags are the best they can be, and that you use both genre choices so your story appears to the widest possible audience.

It may take a while to attract an audience, but if your work is good and you're consistently finishing projects you'll find them. Of course your maximum audience depends on your content, so adjust your expectations according to the popularity of your genre.

Comments

There are over 5 million comments posted on Wattpad a month, providing feedback and discussion of authors' work. When readers comment on your work they're not just enjoying your content, they're engaging with you as a writer. Cementing this kind of relationship is what makes readers come back for your second, third and fourth books, or consider parting with their money for your work elsewhere.

BUILDING YOUR READERSHIP

Some commenters will be insightful and fun, others will be inane or even irritating, but make sure to reply to every comment you get. Reward readers for engaging with you as a writer and they'll keep doing it, and involve others as they go.

Wattpad users add information to their profiles which you can check out to personalize answers. It's these kinds of little steps that turn one-time readers into lifelong fans.

On the flipside, make sure to never be negative or aggressive with commenters. As an author you're perceived as having the upper hand, so using your platform to berate or belittle readers will only make you look like a bully and put others off commenting. Look for something positive to say, such as thanking the reader for taking the time to check out your work, or simply ignore them if they're being purposefully antagonistic. You don't need to say anything you don't mean, don't apologize or agree with your critics, but make sure to remain civil. More people are watching this kind of discussion than are taking part in it, so write your responses for the watching audience rather than the critic. Let them see the type of person who doesn't like the book versus the kind of person that wrote it, and pick which side they want to be on.

Be a reader

Read some of what Wattpad has to offer. Not only will this give you an idea of what works on the site, but if you read and comment frequently you can take advantage of the social aspects. Praise the authors you like and they'll be tempted to check out your own work. If other readers get an idea of the kind of thing you enjoy then they'll better understand what you write. Follow users and they'll often follow you back, becoming more aware of your work.

You can use the 'Clubs' page from the 'Community' dropdown menu at the top of the page to meet other users and engage in various useful discussions and activities.

Broadcast

At the bottom of your profile page is a message board. This allows you to hold conversations with people who visit your page. Checking the 'Broadcast to Followers' box under the writing box means that the message you type will be sent to everyone who follows you as a private message. This is a great way to let followers know when you have a new project coming up, or any other news you need to share (such as a publication schedule).

Handy as it may be, remember that most users follow multiple authors, so overusing the broadcast feature may clog up their inbox and encourage them to unfollow you to escape the pestering.

Featured books

Featured stories appear in a specific and popular category, so getting your work on the list can help bring in a lot of new readers. There are two ways to get featured, but both depend on your work being completed and on you being an active Wattpad user.

1. **Let them find you** – The Wattpad team are constantly looking for great books that haven't found the spotlight yet. Complete a project, stay active on the site, and let them discover your work.
2. **Ask** – If you think your work is ready you can email the team at stories@ wattpad.com to enquire about being featured. This may be a surer method than waiting for discovery, but if you ask once and you're not ready, you're less likely to be considered in future. Remember it isn't just about the quality of your work, it's about what you bring to the site. Have a history of reading, commenting on and rating other users' work before you send an enquiry email.

You can also enter your work into competitions through the 'Community' dropdown menu, by clicking 'Awards'.

The Wattys

The Wattys is Wattpad's annual competition and is based on author submissions and user votes. More specifically, authors can submit their completed work (it has to be completed) to be voted on. To increase your chances, you can ask your readers and your fans to vote for you.

There are three submission categories:

- **Original fiction** – as the name suggests, this category includes original stories in any genre.
- **Popfic** – this category includes stories that have real life celebrities, musicians, etc. as characters.
- **Fanfic** – this category includes stories set in existing fictional worlds and which include existing fictional characters and settings.

Over 100,000 users vote every year and winners will receive added exposure on Wattpad through their showcase slots, including mobile discovery, their blog and their reading lists. There are some cash prizes available too.

ADDITIONAL ADVICE

Fan funding

Fan funding was an experiment Wattpad tried in 2013, allowing writers to accept money from their readers that they could put towards publishing and selling their work. While Wattpad have since finished their fan funding experiment, it's a feature that could return in one form or another. Keep your eyes out for similar developments, as a lucky few have had big success with this kind of fan backing.

Stats

Every book has a 'stats' option in the 'MY WORKS' section. Clicking this will bring up a graphic representation of the reads, votes and comments the piece has gathered so you have a good idea of what is being well-received and what isn't.

Google+

Any content shared by Google+ users gets an automatic high placement on relevant Google searches. Sharing your chapters on Google+ will help more readers find your work.

Other social media

Many authors complain about not being able to find an audience despite doing little to reach out on social media. Creating a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and other social networking sites allows you to craft a multi-platform social media presence. Jargon aside, that means that more people can find you in more places, and instantly click between your pages to get to know you as an author. Having work on Wattpad is a fantastic start, but where are you advertising it? Once someone's read your brilliant work make it easy for them to 'like' you on Facebook, instantly advertising you to their friends.

Experiment

Wattpad users are always on the lookout for short, high quality content. You may be comfortable in one genre but why not try experimenting a little? Remember the more genres your work appears under the more people will see you. Taking the time to write an eleven or twelve page story in a particularly popular genre is worth the curiosity it will generate.

OVER TO YOU

Congratulations, you now have everything you need to get the most from your Wattpad experience.

Standoutbooks is dedicated to giving authors the latest and best social media advice, so make sure to visit us for the latest on managing your professional social media. You can find us on Google+, Facebook, Twitter and our website.

Recommended resources and tools for writers (click for more details):

James Patterson Writing Masterclass

Scrivener Writing Software

ProWritingAid - Writing Improvement & Editing Software