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Hiding WordPress usernames: author pages, the REST API and login messages

WordPress & CMS

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The short answer: WordPress shows, without meaning to, **the usernames** of those who write on the site: on author pages, in the REST API and even in the login error message. A username is not a password, but it is half of what a bot needs to guess its way in. Hiding these clues is easy and costs nothing.

What the site needs

What	What to do
Author pages	Opening your-domain.com/?author=1 leads to the author’s page, whose address contains the username. Repeat with 2, 3, 4...
REST API	The address /wp-json/wp/v2/users lists authors with posts, including each one’s internal name.
Site map	WordPress’s own site map can include a list of users.
Login message	When the name does not exist, the notice says so; when the password is wrong, it says something else. That confirms to the bot that it got the name right.
The visible name	Each user’s “display name” should differ from the username they log in with.

Getting started

1

Change each user’s display name under Users > Profile: use the real name or a nickname, not the login name.

2

If the administrator logs in as “admin” or with the company name, create another user with a less obvious name and take the powers away from the old one: **Changing a username**.

3

Switch off author pages if the site has a single author, in the options of an SEO or security plugin.

4

Restrict the REST API user list to people who are logged in (the options of many security plugins include this). Test afterwards: the address should no longer list anyone.

5

Use identical error messages at login (also a common plugin option), and reinforce the entrance: **Protecting the WordPress login**.

This reduces the clues; it is not the defence. Someone who really wants to find a username can, by other means. The real defence is a strong password, two-step verification and the attempt limit. Hiding the name just takes easy work away from bots. **A captcha on the login**.

If the site lets people register, the username problem grows: **Letting visitors register**. Another old door: **XML-RPC**.

Want help hardening your WordPress login? Open a ticket with the address.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[Protecting the WordPress login: three steps in order of effect](#)

[Putting a captcha on the WordPress login](#)

[Changing a WordPress username](#)

[Letting visitors register on your WordPress site: roles, bots and the risks](#)

[XML-RPC in WordPress: what it is and whether to switch it off](#)



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