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HOW TO GUIDES

Employability Skills Guides

Present yourself on LinkedIn



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PRESENT YOURSELF ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn isn't just a hosting service for your online CV – it's a tool that you can use to build your personal brand and grow your professional network.

More and more students are using LinkedIn, an online network for professionals, to boost their job hunt and build their network. So, if you don't already have a LinkedIn profile then you are missing out.



Why should students and graduates use LinkedIn

LinkedIn isn't just a hosting service for your online CV – it's a tool that you can use to build your personal brand and grow your professional network. This network can be a strong source of advice and guidance, both in your job hunt and throughout your career. Increasing your profile and being active on LinkedIn will also show recruiters that you have a genuine interest in their sector.

You can also find a job through LinkedIn. Similar to other jobs boards, employers advertise their job vacancies on LinkedIn. Many recruiters for employers may also headhunt candidates using LinkedIn; that is, they will contact you directly and invite you to apply.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that LinkedIn is only for people interested in corporate careers or jobs where you might wear a suit every day. Networking is helpful for most sectors and industries. 'I think one of the biggest misconceptions is "it's not useful for my subject",' explains Joanne from Careers & Employability. 'You don't need loads of experience to have a profile and, more and more, LinkedIn is being used by nurses and people in creative industries.'

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There are many different sections to fill out when putting together, or improving, a LinkedIn profile.

One key thing to remember is that it is worth completing as many sections, and including as much information, as possible. The completeness of your profile is taken into account in LinkedIn searches: profiles that are more complete are given priority in recruiters' searches.

Your LinkedIn profile should not be tailored to a specific role at a specific employer – this is in contrast to writing CVs for job applications, where you should always tailor your CV to a specific role.

The more information a recruiter has about you, the more opportunities your profile could be relevant for. 'What we're doing on LinkedIn is often searching for people who fit the specification of what we're looking for, whether that's degree, experience, location or a combination,' explains one recruiter 'You've got to remember that recruiters have limited time, so they will be looking for the candidate that best matches the profile of what they're looking for.'

This section may seem pretty self-explanatory but don't miss out on this opportunity to explain who you are. Think of it a bit like a shorter version of your bio on Twitter, Instagram or other social networks. In a line, explain your current role or where and what you are studying, what you're interested in and what you're hoping to find. Keep it simple; imagine you're explaining this to a younger sibling or relative.

You can also change your LinkedIn URL (the bit that comes after 'linkedin.com/in/...'). This may not seem like a crucial consideration, but having a more search-friendly or snappy online identity can be part of your personal brand. Just make sure it's suitable for work.

Recruiters will use your location to narrow down their results when they're searching for graduates to fill roles.

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Profile and background photo: make a good first impression

Your profile and cover photo will likely be the first thing that people notice when they click on your profile, so it's worth spending time making sure they give the right first impression.

There's a fine balance to be struck with your profile photo: it should be professional-looking, but you don't want it to look too serious. Aim for approachable, relaxed and friendly. Avoid plain white backgrounds if you can (bit too much like a passport photo), and definitely avoid holiday snaps or photos from wild nights out. The recommended size for your profile photo is 400x400 pixels and it should be smaller than 8MB.

You may associate them more with Facebook or Twitter, but LinkedIn has cover/background photos too – and it's a chance for you to select an image that reflects your interests, passions and/or ambitions. This could be something that is sector-related, such as a photo of a project that you were involved in, a shot from your workplace or university or, even, a favourite quotation. It's recommended for your cover photo to be 1584x396 pixels and the maximum image size is 8MB.

About: Getting to know you

This is the box that will appear directly below your name and headline; it's where you can include supporting information and evidence that will strengthen your presence on the platform.

Imagine you're introducing yourself to a person at a party or networking event. Explain who you are, briefly mention what your current job or degree involves (such as your specialisation or the projects you are most proud of) and provide a bit about your background.

There's space for you to attach media (such as images, videos, presentations, links to blog posts and online portfolios) and showcase the work that you have been involved in. Don't be afraid to show off work that you're most proud of; this is the place to put it.

Here's where you list previous examples of your work experience. At the very least, you should include your job title, the name of the employer or organisation, the length of time you spent in each role and a brief description of your responsibilities. Remember: focus on what you have done personally (use 'I' rather than 'we'). Mentioning specific details of achievements is always impressive.

As well as explaining your responsibilities and skills, recruiters will also appreciate additional specific details about positions. 'Give recruiters as much useful information as possible. Don't waffle on about your day. Talk about your responsibilities, achievements and results. That'll be what makes you stand out from other candidates with similar degrees.'

Don't just include the jobs and work experience that are directly relevant to the sector and/or job you are interested in. Part-time roles, volunteering positions and positions of responsibility from extracurricular activities are all worth putting on your LinkedIn profile.

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Education: your academic background

The education section of your profile is broadly similar to how you'd structure the education section of your CV. You list the details of major qualifications in reverse chronological order.

We'd recommend including a good amount of detail about your degree – for example by including information about specific modules and about your dissertation (including scores). Headhunting recruiters will often search for potential candidates with specific degrees at specific institutions, so any information on top of this will help to differentiate yourself from other students and graduates.

Unlike on CVs, you're not necessarily expected to include details of qualifications from school (such as Leaving Certificate subjects and grades). However, as long as they don't reflect poorly on you, we'd recommend including this information.

Skills and accomplishments: pick out key points

Use this section to list your key skills, proficiencies and traits. Be wary, however, of simply listing every single skill you can think of. This won't look particularly impressive to people viewing your profile.

As a general guide, think of between five and ten key skills that you think are especially worth highlighting. These might include languages you can speak, skills particularly important to the sector you're interested in, and certifications you've achieved or are working towards. Don't be shy about including something if you are only a beginner or intermediate in this area. 'Even if you're not an expert in a skill (such as a coding language), it's worth putting on your profile, because that might still be what employers are looking for,' suggest recruiters. He continues, 'A while back we were headhunting for software developers for a client of ours. As they were putting all candidates through an intensive coding course all they wanted was for applicants to have a basic knowledge in any coding language, but candidates did not have to have a computer science-based degree. Essentially, let the recruiters decide whether you're proficient enough for the role.'

Your connections on LinkedIn can 'endorse' specific skills (think of it like a 'Like' on Facebook, but one that confirms that you have a specific skill). However, recruiters don't pay this much attention, so don't go out of your way to seek endorsements and don't worry too much if your skills remain unendorsed.

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Recommendations: let others sing your praises

Recruiters and professionals looking at your profile will take notice of this section. Here people you have worked with can write a few sentences advocating for you and your capabilities. This is seen as a concrete endorsement of you and your skills.

If you have connected with a colleague from a part-time job or other form of work experience, you can 'Request a recommendation' from them (it'll be under the 'More' option on their profile page). Just make sure it's appropriate for you to ask for a recommendation from this person (don't ask every single previous colleague and recommendations from your friends are unlikely to hold much water).

And, finally: checks and building your profile

First impressions count, so, much like with your CV or covering letters, getting another pair of eyes to look over your profile to check for any errors or to give a second opinion is recommended.

The LIT Careers & Employability Service will offer to check profiles and give advice on how you should be using LinkedIn. '

We always make sure, when we're advertising general appointments, that students know that they can use those for LinkedIn. We do a lot of reviewing of profiles,' Joanne explains. 'We also run workshops, which are quite interactive and are opportunities for students to really look at the platform and see the good things that are on there. At larger events, such as careers fairs or employer events, we've been having LinkedIn clinics. These involve two things: we have a couple of careers advisers with laptops who sit down with students to look through their profiles, and we have a photographer to take professional-looking headshots.'

Don't forget about your profile once all the sections have been completed: the best LinkedIn users will keep their profiles up to date with new experiences, accomplishments and skills. Think of your profile as a living, breathing CV. The more detailed and relevant your profile is, the more likely you are to be sought out by recruiters.

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GET HELP & SUPPORT

Contact the Careers & Employability Service



<https://lit.ie/careers-employability>



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