

A quick guide to

# LinkedIn & Online Networking



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Any questions?

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**myCareer**

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional online network, with more than one billion members in 200 countries and regions worldwide. It is available in 36 languages.

This guide will help you if you are considering whether LinkedIn is for you or you want to make the most of its features. The guide also looks at networking, both online and face to face, and offers advice and tips on developing your personal brand.

Six people are hired every minute  
on LinkedIn

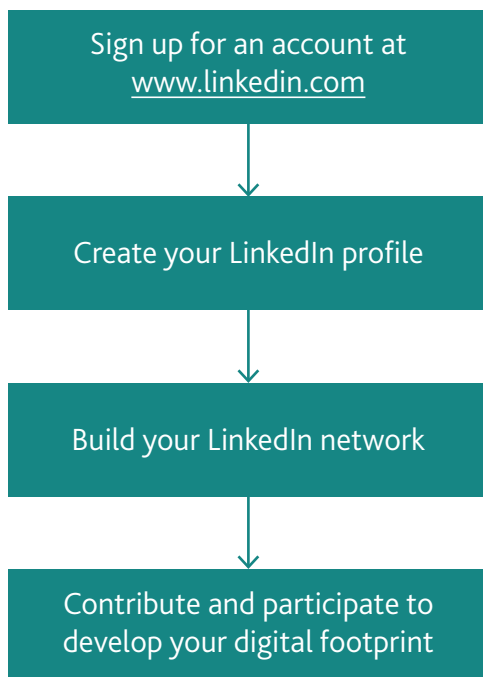
92% of recruiters use social media  
to search for job candidates, with  
LinkedIn being the most popular  
platform

95 job applications submitted  
every second

# What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a platform for anyone who is looking to advance their career, including students, graduates and job seekers. It is not just for business professionals – you can find people working in a range of professions including psychology, sport, arts, humanities, education, allied health, science and nursing & midwifery.

## How to get started on LinkedIn



### The four main benefits of LinkedIn membership

- Market yourself to employers
- Job-hunting
- Network with professionals in your industry
- Research professions, organisations, and people

## LinkedIn functions and features

Members can tap into a network of professionals, companies and groups within their industry.

You can use LinkedIn to find a job or internship, connect and strengthen professional relationships, stay informed about industry news and trends, apply for jobs and undertake research before job interviews.

You can search for University of Worcester graduates to see what careers they have gone into and then contact any working in your chosen profession. You can also search for your preferred employer to find out how their staff got there and any advice they would like to share.

A complete LinkedIn profile can help you connect with opportunities by showcasing your unique professional story through experience, skills and education.

You can also use LinkedIn to organise events, join groups, write articles, post photos and videos, and much more.

# Create your profile

Having a LinkedIn profile is your way of letting the world know who you are professionally and what you stand for. It is a key source of information that recruiters will use to research you so it is important to ensure that your profile is complete and kept up to date.

## Step 1: Add a profile photo

Your profile is 14 times more likely to be viewed if it has a photo. It is important to add a picture that represents you the way you want to be perceived.

It doesn't have to be a professional headshot, but it does need to be high quality, recent and show your face. The photo should make you look approachable, relaxed, and professional (so don't include friends/partners/pets!)

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## Step 2: Add a background photo

This is an opportunity to choose an image that either relates to your chosen profession or reflects your interests and passions.

For example, if you want to be a teacher, you might choose a photo of you at the front of the class during your placement. Alternatively, you might choose a photo of your university or workplace, or a pertinent quote.

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## Step 3: Add a headline

Whilst your photos are the first thing people will see, your headline is the first thing they will read. This is your opportunity to describe who you are in one sentence. For example: "Digital Media undergraduate with a passion for motion graphics."

## Step 4: Add a summary to the 'About' section

This is your opportunity to explain who you are, what you are currently doing and any experience or projects you are particularly proud of. If you are in your final year, you could include your dissertation topic to highlight your research skills and interests.

For example; "Final year Biomedical Science student at University of Worcester with a particular interest in haematology looking for a Medical Laboratory Assistant role after I complete my studies this summer."

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## Step 5: Add experience

This is where you can provide details about your work experience, paid (full time and part time), voluntary and placements. You may also wish to include positions of responsibility from extracurricular activities, such as being a Course Rep or a member of a society.

It is important to provide a brief context about each role and then highlight your key responsibilities, achievements, and results.

Do try to avoid the temptation to just copy and paste your job description across, as that does not tell an employer anything meaningful about you or your contribution to the role.

## Step 6: Add education

Start with your most recent qualification then work your way backwards. You can include details such as your dissertation title, specific modules, and grades you want to highlight. If there is a project or award you are proud of, you can include these, along with any links or photographs to make them stand out.

You are not required to include all your previous qualifications gained prior to university, but if you are proud of them or they are relevant to your chosen profession, it is advisable to include them.

## Step 7: Add skills

You can add up to 100 skills on your profile. However, try to focus on up to fifteen that define who you are and what you are good at. Try to include ones that are particularly important to the profession that you are interested in. If you are not sure which skills employers are looking for, have a look at recent vacancies and job profiles on graduate careers sites such as Prospects or targetjobs.

## Step 8: Add additional profile sections

If relevant, you can also complete sections such as licences and certifications, volunteer experience, publications, projects, awards, languages and causes that you support.

## Step 9: Have your profile checked

As with any CV or job application, first impressions are important, so ask a trusted friend or family member to check your profile for any errors.

If you would like a careers adviser to review your profile and give you feedback on how you are marketing yourself to employers, visit **myCareer** to book a careers appointment.

## LinkedIn profile checklist

Now review your profile against the following prompts to ensure your profile is looking its best:



**Photo:** smart, professional and clear headshot of only you.



**Headline:** one line to sum up your status (e.g. Final year Business undergraduate looking for a graduate marketing role).



**Summary:** concise outline of relevant skills/experience and the role/career you are seeking.



**Education:** included all education, including any current studies. Relevant modules/projects highlighted, and relevant photos, videos and hyperlinks.



**Experience:** included all relevant work (paid and unpaid). Brief outline of role, focussing on achievements in each, and again with relevant photos, videos and hyperlinks.



**Skills:** highlighted only those relevant to roles you are interested in.



**Organisations:** listed clubs/societies you are members of, and described your role.



**Honours/Awards:** let recruiters know about any special recognition (in and out of university).



**All above sections:** checked and re-checked for formatting, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

# Build your network

The network you build on LinkedIn can help you gain useful information and advice about your chosen profession, and increase your exposure to potential employers.

Connect with people you already know: colleagues, managers, classmates, lecturers, friends & family, acquaintances, etc.

When you send a connection request, ensure that you visit the person's profile page first, as this then allows you to 'add a note'. You can then tailor your connection message to let them know why you are getting in touch. (See the professional etiquette section for an example connection request.)

Search for people in similar roles to the one you are interested in, then send them a tailored connection request.

Join groups related to your role to enable you to ask for advice, share resources and offer help to like-minded members.

Search for organisations who are experts within the field and/or you would like to work for, and follow them to see the latest news and vacancies.

Join relevant groups to connect with people who have similar interests. Research the challenges and opportunities within your profession and ask for advice.

Use the alumni search to find graduates from your course and university to see what roles they are working in and who they are working for. Connect with any who have similar interests to hear their career journey and share tips and ideas.

Follow influencers within your profession to see the current trends being discussed.

Participate in discussions by commenting, liking and sharing to provide your perspective on posts and articles.

Post content on a regular basis to share your thoughts and ideas, and keep visible in other people's feeds.

## Professional etiquette when contacting employers

As mentioned previously, it is important to personalise your connection request message to improve your chances of it being accepted. You have up to 300 characters to say:

- Why you are getting in touch
- Something compelling about them/their organisation to catch their attention
- Brief overview of who you are & any relevant skills or experience
- What you would like to happen next

Here's a sample LinkedIn connection request:

"Hi Laura,  
I was inspired by your talk to my Digital Media course and would love to hear more about your journey into graphic design and advice you would offer yourself if you were starting your career now. Here is my portfolio if you would like to find out more about my work: [www.myportfolio.com](http://www.myportfolio.com)  
Best wishes,  
Julie"

## Find a job on LinkedIn

In addition to using LinkedIn to research organisations and network for job opportunities, you can also search for advertised opportunities on the platform. The jobs tab uses algorithms to recommend vacancies based on keywords in your job role and your job search history.

You can search for a job based on title, skills or company. You can then use the filters to narrow your search down:

- date posted
- experience level
- full or part time, voluntary or internship
- on-site, remote or hybrid
- location
- salary

Once you see a job you like you can save it or apply for it directly from LinkedIn or by following the link to a third-party website.

Turn on job alerts to receive weekly emails and/or notifications regarding roles that are within the parameters you searched for.

As with any job site, scammers sometimes create false identities or impersonate legitimate organisations to try to steal your identity or money. Step away if you see a job opportunity that looks too good to be true, asks for payment or account details, has spelling or grammatical errors, or if you cannot locate the contact details for the organisation or job poster. For further advice, have a look at: [www.jobsaware.co.uk](http://www.jobsaware.co.uk)

## AI and LinkedIn

Using AI to write posts or update your profile can save time, ensure consistency in tone and style, as well as optimise content to improve engagement. However, AI can lack the accuracy, personal touch and nuanced understanding of individual experiences. Relying too heavily on it can result in generic or overly formulaic content, diminishing your authenticity.

## LinkedIn top tips

Maximise the opportunities offered by LinkedIn by doing the following:



Keep your profile up to date.



Turn your activity feed off when creating your profile, otherwise your network receives notifications about every single change you make.



Use your newsfeed to find articles and resources relating to your profession.



Show an interest in others, ask questions, comment, congratulate connections on work anniversaries, etc.



Show recruiters 'you are open to work' if you are actively job seeking.

... and here are some things to avoid:



Don't write in the third person – you wouldn't in everyday conversation



Don't send generic connection requests – tailor it every time



Don't make demands of someone as soon as they accept your request.



Don't post anything that could be considered unprofessional



Don't only talk about yourself - it's not all about you!

# Networking beyond LinkedIn

Networking is about making connections, building relationships and talking to people to exchange information and ideas. You probably do it all the time without thinking about it. For example, when one of your friends introduces you to one of their friends, you are gradually growing your network.

## Why networking is important

It has been said that approximately 70% of jobs are never advertised which is often referred to as the hidden job market.

Many recruiters hire through networking to find people who are recommended. This helps them to avoid the time and cost involved in placing adverts and running a lengthy recruitment process.

An advantage of networking for you is that you get access to jobs and work experience that never get advertised, so there is less competition. You can also find out the recruitment process that an employer uses by talking to people who have already been through it.

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## It's not all about jobs!

We know networking can help you hear about job vacancies and other opportunities, as well as let people know that you are looking for work. However, networking with recruiters and employees can also help you to:

- Find out more about an organisation's culture and values to help you see if you would fit in there

- Learn more about what a job role really involves day to day
- Find out what it is like to work for a particular organisation
- Find out more about other graduates' career journeys
- Share advice and ideas with like-minded people
- Collaborate with other graduates on projects
- Build a list of useful contacts

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## How to build your network

Set your objectives – what do you hope to gain by talking to more people?

Plan what you will say and/or ask when you contact people.

Consider who you already know & who they might know who might be able to help you or put you in touch with someone else.

Find networking groups for your profession or personal interests (e.g. societies) to get access to a wider group of people.

Attend formal networking events to talk to employers (e.g. careers fairs and conferences).



Use social media and online communities to expand your pool of contacts.

Consider joining clubs and undertaking work experience and volunteering to meet new people.

If you are job-hunting, connect with recruitment consultants.

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## What to say

Networking can feel uncomfortable at the start, particularly if you are more introverted. Start the conversation by asking the person about themselves, which will demonstrate that you are interested in them and takes the pressure off you while you settle.

This will help you to build a two-way relationship and avoids the temptation to ask for something too soon (e.g. work experience), which can be very off-putting to new contacts.

Here are some questions you could start conversations with:

- How did you get into this job?
- What attracted you to this work?
- Could you describe a typical week in this role?
- What are the best/hardest parts of your role?
- Are there developments/challenges I should be aware of?
- Which skills/experience helped you most?
- What tips or advice would you give someone like me starting out in this profession?
- What makes a candidate stand out in job applications for this role?
- Do you have any suggestions where I could look for work experience?
- Can you recommend sources of further info?

## Networking top tips!

It's not all about you – show an interest in others.

Be polite and professional in both online and face to face conversations.

Build up a relationship first & think about what you can offer before you ask for something.

Develop lasting and meaningful relationships - record your contacts & follow them up. Check in with your priority contacts every few months to see how they are & if they need any help from you.

Plan & practise your elevator pitch out loud before a networking event.

Check your privacy settings to control what others can see about you online.

Remove any online content that you would rather employers don't see.

Check what information others have shared about you/tagged you into and ask them if they will remove anything you don't want to remain online.

Consider having more than one online profile to make it easier to manage a personal and professional presence.

If you are attending online events, ensure that you have checked your technology, you are free from distractions, and your background is tidy.

Don't neglect your network once you have gained the help you wanted - nobody likes the feeling of being used.

## Online networking

Advancing technologies have opened up more opportunities to network digitally. You can find groups or communities on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and the people you meet may then be part of larger communities, giving you access to more people and potential job opportunities. Follow organisations you would like to work for and keep an eye out for any online networking events they advertise.

Here are some suggestions on where to network online:



### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn remains the largest professional networking site. However there may also be other professional platforms used by the profession you are seeking to enter (e.g., Behance and DeviantArt both showcase creative work.)



### **TikTok**

While not as formal as LinkedIn, TikTok can be a useful platform to connect with industry professionals, share your experiences, and learn from others. Some employers actively use TikTok for recruitment too.



### **Facebook**

Users share photographs and post comments and content that can be publicly accessible or shared only within groups on Facebook. You can follow organisations' business pages, join groups and see events and jobs advertised.



### **X (formerly known as Twitter)**

An online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages, aka microblogging. Many organisations have an X account that you can follow to keep up to date with their achievements, trends and vacancies.



### **Instagram**

A photo and video sharing platform with the emphasis on mobile use. You can keep up to date with trends and connect with people you might not normally encounter.



### **YouTube**

YouTube is an online video sharing and social media platform. Subscribe to employers' channels to view their content. Many organisations will post videos of current staff talking about their role and what it's like to work there.



### **Video conferencing**

Video conferencing became the norm during the pandemic, and you can now find online networking events and webinars on platforms such as Eventbrite, Slack and Yammer.

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## Three themes for successful online networking

**Research:** identify what it is you are most interested in

**Planning:** what are your goals, who/what do you want to find out more about & where, how and when will you do this?

**Proactivity:** don't wait for things to happen - initiate conversations and engage in discussions and debates.

## Face to face networking

Careers fairs and employer talks, events and workshops can provide opportunities to network with recruiters and other professionals, including recent graduates. Careers and recruitment fairs can be a good way to practise common interview questions.

Here is some advice to help you make the most of the opportunity:

- If you are attending an organised event, research who will be there beforehand and plan who you would like to talk to, along with questions you would like to ask (e.g. their recruitment process, what they enjoy about working there, what skills and qualities they are looking for, etc.).
- Arrive early to have a look around and avoid the rush – typically, careers fairs are busiest over the lunchtime period.
- Make a strong first impression with good eye contact, a smile and a firm handshake (if the environment is appropriate), and dress smartly.
- Have your elevator pitch clear in your mind before you approach a stand, but don't launch straight into it - ask them a question about themselves/their organisation first (see next section).
- Be prepared for how you would respond to questions such as 'What do you know about us?' and 'Why are you interested in our organisation or profession?'
- Don't spend too long talking to recruiters – give other students and graduates the chance to talk to them too! Ask them if it is appropriate for you to connect with them afterwards on LinkedIn.
- Update your CV and take along some printed copies to leave with employers.
- Keep an open mind – even if it seems that there are no options relevant to you, the opportunity to practice talking about yourself to recruiters will be an invaluable confidence booster.
- Make a brief note of something memorable about each person you meet to help you remember them later.
- After the event, follow up with a short email or tailored LinkedIn connection request, mentioning something you talked about to prompt their memory.

# Elevator pitch

You need to be ready for when the conversation turns to you. Prepare your 'elevator pitch', which is a concise way of explaining your career story to a stranger in the time it takes for a typical ride in a lift – 1 minute.

## Action

Take some time to draft your elevator pitch ready for your next networking opportunity

Topic	Pitch
<b>Why are you interested in them</b> What you like about the organisation, this could include; their reputation, values, specialism, customers, achievements, awards, developments <b>10 seconds</b>	
<b>Who you are</b> Your course, year of study and university <b>10 seconds</b>	
<b>Your key selling points &amp; what you could do for them</b> 3 pieces of key information e.g. relevant modules, projects, work experience, volunteering, skills, strengths, achievements <b>30 seconds</b>	
<b>What you would like to happen next</b> Suggest an informal meeting, give them a business card, ask if you can connect on LinkedIn, details of any work experience opportunities <b>10 seconds</b>	

# Developing your brand

Personal branding is the process of considering how you appear to others, particularly in a work context, and then marketing yourself as a brand. Your brand is your reputation – how other people would describe what makes you stand out. Employers can form an impression about you quickly, so it is important to get it right, particularly online.

## Examine your brand

Reflect on what you think you are known for and what makes you stand out. You might consider yourself highly ambitious, conscientious, supportive to others, or creative and independent.

The image below highlights the main components of your brand.

Your brand		
Attributes	Appearance	Behaviour
Education	Experience	Goals
Passion	Skills	Values

For links to help you explore these aspects, see our Quick Guide to Career Planning.

Consider the words a range of people (e.g. family, friends, colleagues and managers) might use to describe you, and ask them for feedback about the above areas. If what they say doesn't match how you would like to be perceived, then you might wish to identify what could change in your behaviour!

What could a potential employer find out about you if they did an online search? There are many tools to help you monitor your online reputation, such as Google alerts and [www.onlineidcalculator.com](http://www.onlineidcalculator.com).

## Why is personal branding important for students and graduates?

1. Makes you stand out to employers
2. Shows what you are passionate about
3. Establishes your expertise
4. Makes you memorable
5. Keeps your social media/online profile employer-friendly
6. Opens up opportunities

## Develop and maintain your personal brand

Build a professional online presence by creating accounts on sites such as LinkedIn, and use social and professional media to market your brand. Participate in relevant groups/forums and create/share appropriate content.

Take opportunities to build your reputation by networking face to face with employers when they come on to campus. Research the company/role/profession beforehand, anticipate their needs, then tell them your strengths and how you could add value.

Take opportunities to develop your brand by gaining new experiences such as work experience, volunteering or paid employment.

### Action

Think about the following points to develop and maintain your personal brand:

- Consider or ask people you trust how you're currently perceived.
- How do you want to be perceived – what do you want to be known for?
- Identify the right audience for your brand (employers or people who can give you contacts and recommend you in some way).
- Plan how you will communicate so that you are clear & consistent.
- Start networking and build a positive reputation in all areas of your life, not just online!

# The main points

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Plan what you hope to gain from networking and how you will achieve your goal.

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Create a LinkedIn profile and keep it up to date so employers can find you. For LinkedIn tips and advice, go to:  
[www.linkedin.com/learning/learning-linkedin-for-students](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/learning-linkedin-for-students)

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3

Proactively seek out opportunities to network with employers and employees to research within your chosen profession/organisation.

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Make every contact count - make a good impression with whoever you meet, ask questions to show an interest in them and always thank them for their time.

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5

Book an appointment with a careers adviser via **myCareer** if you would like feedback on your LinkedIn profile.

If you have a question that isn't covered by this booklet or would like to talk through your ideas with a member of the Careers & Employability team, send us a message or book a careers appointment on **myCareer**.



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