

# Making the Most of LinkedIn

## Create Your Profile

### About

#### What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is “the world's largest professional network with nearly 740 million members in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide.” The platform's mission is to “connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.”

LinkedIn can be used for multiple different purposes, including applying for jobs, conducting career research (job descriptions and titles, career paths, organizations and people), and networking.

#### The goal of this handout

To make the most of LinkedIn, it is crucial to have an up-to-date profile that outlines your professional goals, experiences, accomplishments, and skills in a concise and well-thought-out manner. This guide is intended to help you with creating a LinkedIn profile that works for your advantage.

### Profile Settings

#### Customize your LinkedIn URL

The default URL of your LinkedIn profile is usually lengthy. In addition to your name, it includes additional numbers, letters and dashes. If you want to display your LinkedIn URL in your resume, business card, or other documents it will look more professional and cleaner if you customize it. The goal is to keep your URL short and simple. We would recommend your URL to include just your first and last name. In case that combination is not available, you can try modifying it slightly by, for example, adding your middle name initial or an educational designation such as “phd”, or professional designation such as “researcher” after your name. See complete instructions [here](#).

## Language, Location, and Industry

To ensure your LinkedIn profile is reaching the audience you want, make sure to pay attention to your location, language, and industry settings. We recommend you use LinkedIn in English, unless you are exclusively targeting a local job market in a non-English speaking country.

When it comes to location, most people write down their current location without thinking much about it. However, if you are looking for a job in a country or region different from where you are based at the moment, we would recommend you change your location to the one you are targeting. That being said, it is important to keep in mind that when you actually do apply for jobs, you should be transparent about your current location and visa status.

To increase your chances of appearing in recruiters search results, indicate your industry in your profile. Unfortunately, LinkedIn allows you to only pick one. Deciding which one can be hard, especially for students and recent graduates who are still exploring different options. If you are interested in multiple industries, include the one that you are most interested in in the industry section of your profile, and then mention your other areas of interest in your summary.

## What Others Can See When You've Viewed Their Profile

There may be times, especially when you are using LinkedIn for research, when you prefer to view people's profiles anonymously. To do so, go to "Privacy and Settings" and choose "Profile viewing options". You can choose between a completely private and a semi-private mode. When viewing profiles in private mode, no information about you will be available to the user whose profile you visited. In the semi-private mode, depending on your other profile settings, profile characteristics such as job title, company, school, and industry will be shown to the person whose profile you viewed (e.g. "PhD student at CEU has viewed your profile" or "Someone at CEU has viewed your profile"). Keep in mind that when you are viewing profiles anonymously, you also forfeit the ability to see who's viewed your profile. It's a good idea to use this function selectively.

When you are ready to start reaching out to people whose profiles you have found on LinkedIn, it's often a good idea to maintain full profile visibility by selecting the option "Your name and headline." In this way, people will see that you have been

looking at their profile and will not be surprised when you reach out—in fact, they may even spend some time viewing your profile when they see that you’ve been having a look at theirs. See complete instructions [here](#).

## Profile Content

### Headline

The professional “headline” appears directly below your name on your profile and is one of the first things people will see when they view your profile. Your headline also “follows you around” the platform; it is visible to others whenever you post or share an update or an article, are featured under “People You May Know”, etc. Due to its visibility, it is one of the most important items on your profile. The default headline on LinkedIn is your most current job title or student status. However, it is often a good idea to manually modify your headline to better serve your purposes.

Think about your audience; what are some keywords that hiring managers and recruiters in your field of interest would be likely to use when they are looking for qualified candidates on LinkedIn? Read job descriptions you are interested in and identify what are the key skills and experiences that are frequently sought after. It is a good idea to avoid using too many (overused) adjectives such as “passionate”, “hardworking”, or “motivated”. You might have also seen people write “*Currently open to new opportunities*” or “*Looking for new position in...*” in their headline. While common, it’s not the best strategy; employers don’t hire people simply because they are available but are looking for candidates with the right skills and experiences, so focus on those.

Below are a few examples of headlines for students and recent graduates:

- MA student with a 3-month internship experience as a political risk analyst
- Recent nationalism studies graduate with a focus on religious discrimination and refugee integration
- Freelance Writer | Graduate Student in Comparative History
- Higher Education Policy Specialist | Science Writer | PhD Researcher

### Photo

Following the headline, your photo is arguably the second most important thing on your profile. As the first image of you that an employer, alum, or other potential contact will see, your photo needs to project a professional image. Invest some time

in selecting the right photo for your LinkedIn profile. It should be a close-up of your head, neck, and a bit of your shoulders, and you should be dressed in professional attire. Details like background and facial expression are also important. A plain background is best. Don't use a photo from a social event, one with scenery in the background, or one that requires you to crop someone out of the photo.

## Summary

This is an incredibly useful section of your LinkedIn profile, but one that is often overlooked. Think of the summary as a brief bio—an interesting and compelling description of you which summarizes your professional interests, experience, skills and knowledge and ultimately articulates your value proposition to potential employers. Research job descriptions and other people's profiles to identify relevant keywords. Your summary is also a place where you can add a little personality to your profile. Consider including some information about your hobbies and causes you care about. In addition to what you can do, your summary should also give the reader a sense of who you are as a person. However, keep the main focus on your professional skills and experiences.

When writing your summary, be concise and avoid vague, generic, or cheesy language. Instead, be specific, authentic, and underscore your unique selling points. Remember that you have up to 2000 characters for this portion of the profile.

## Experience

While there is more space to describe your experience on your LinkedIn profile compared to your CV/Resume, it is good to keep your entries concise and to the point. Whether you opt for brief paragraphs or bullet points, don't just draft a laundry list of your responsibilities and tasks in each role, but focus on your achievements, skills, and your contributions to the work of the organization. Instead of stating that you possess a certain skill or competency, show examples that illustrate them. When describing the scale and impact of your work, quantify when possible.

While it is totally fine to use your CV/Resume bullets in your experience section, it is also a good idea to think how your experience section on LinkedIn can complement and strengthen the points you make on your CV/Resume. Consider adding links, images, videos, and files that provide further support for what you have written, and make your profile look more visually appealing. However, be selective! Carefully consider the added value of each additional element you decide to include.

LinkedIn has a separate category for volunteer experiences and causes, however, if you don't have a lot of formal work experience, it is a good idea to feature your volunteer engagements under the experience section. We would also recommend you include your internships under this section.

## **Education**

Similarly, as with your CV/Resume, we would generally recommend you to only include university degrees on your LinkedIn profile. However, if you graduated from a well-known high school with an active alumni network, such as a United World College or a well-known prep school, you might want to include it in your profile.

In addition to the name of the institution you attended you can list your extracurricular activities (clubs, teams, societies, committees) in the "Activities and Societies" box. While not mandatory, you might want to consider including your GPA, especially if you know that employers in your field of interest would generally expect to see it (e.g., private sector finance and management consulting companies). Keep in mind that if you decide to include your GPA, you should include it for all degrees listed. In the "Description" box you can include further details such as an exchange semester or a concentration/ specialization.

If you have attended a summer school that is directly relevant to your field of interest, you might want to include it under education. If you do, clearly indicate that the program was short-term. You also want to make sure that it does not appear as your primary institution at the top of your profile. If you attended a summer school that is not particularly relevant for the positions you are targeting, you can simply leave it out of your profile, or add it under "Certifications".

## **Volunteer Experience and Causes, Certifications, Publications, Courses, Projects**

In addition to your experience and education sections, there are several other sections you might want to consider including in your profile. Showcase your volunteer experience, include your publications, list the most relevant courses you have taken, or mention any additional certificates you have received. Include projects that you have worked on, either on your own time or as part of your studies to showcase how you have applied your skills and knowledge in a real-life setting. When adding additional sections to your profile, keep in mind that the point is not to include everything you have ever done and accomplished, but to provide tailored and well-thought-out content for your target audience.

## Honors and Awards

As with all the other sections on your profile, when listing honors and awards on LinkedIn, you want to keep in mind your audience and how relevant your honors and awards are in relation to your career aspirations. To add credibility, include a brief description of the award and the reason you received it.

## Skills and Endorsements

This section helps contribute to the strength of your profile and increases the likelihood you'll be discovered for opportunities related to the skills you possess. You can add a maximum of 50 skills. To find skills you would like to include in your profile, read job and internship descriptions for roles you could envision yourself targeting and take a look at LinkedIn profiles of people who are doing jobs you are interested in. On the [CEU Career Knowledge Hub](#) you can also find a few exercises designed to help you identify your skills.