

LinkedIn and social media for postgraduates

Whether you're managing how you appear online, networking, or job hunting, it's good to know how to get the most out of social media. This guide gives top tips for using LinkedIn for these three purposes, as well as general tips on social media management.

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is an online professional networking platform. Most users use the basic free package which gives you:

- A public profile page, with strong search engine optimisation
- The ability to connect with other users
- A more detailed profile page your connections can see
- The ability to send messages (InMail) to connections
- The ability to give or receive 'recommendations' from connections, which relate to experiences on your profile
- A search facility to browse vacancies, profiles or organisations
- An alumni search tool to see what fellow graduates have gone on to do
- The ability to post updates or articles (like a blog post)

How do I know if LinkedIn is worth using?

Building a network of contacts, researching the labour market and managing your online presence are likely to be fruitful activities, regardless of your field.

However, LinkedIn is not the only way that you could do these things.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What kind of contacts would be beneficial to connect with? Are they on LinkedIn? (Do a search.)

- What kind of roles/vacancies are most relevant to what I want to next or in the future? Are those jobs on LinkedIn?
- What kind of online presence do I need? Will a LinkedIn profile help with that?

For example, if you're hoping to work in PR for non-profits, you'll likely find many useful contacts on LinkedIn, relevant roles and vacancies and a profile which allows you to represent previous marketing work using the 'rich media' feature when documenting your past experience.

If you're keen to work as a visual creative, you might find only some relevant contacts on LinkedIn, few relevant roles and vacancies, and find that the text-centric nature of the profile more limiting than a portfolio website and Instagram account.

Academic alternatives to LinkedIn

Many academics use LinkedIn. It's great for maintaining a contact network across both academia and other industries. It also has some built in profile sections designed for academic purposes, including publications, honours and awards, test scores, courses and projects.

Other platforms for academic users include:

- [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/) - improved functionality for sharing papers
- [ResearchGate](https://www.researchgate.net/) – science-focused
- [ORCID](https://orcid.org/) - less about connection with others, but a great way to identify yourself plus a stable link to your page of connected papers and publications.

Managing your profile on LinkedIn

How you set up your LinkedIn profile can impact how high you appear in searches, and the first impression you make to those that find you. Here are our top tips. See full details on [setting up a profile on LinkedIn](#) (LinkedIn Help).

Add a profile picture

- Profiles that include a photo can get up to 21 times more views (according to LinkedIn, 2021).
- Your photo should communicate who you are in a professional sense: avoid images in which you do not look appropriate in your professional role, or the role to which you aspire. Don't use your graduation photo, but an image that helps them see who they might meet on day 1 of a new job.
- As the photo is used as a small thumbnail image, choose a clear single image of yourself against a neutral background for better visibility. Smiling in the photo can make you come across as more approachable or positive.

Craft a headline

- This is like a tag line that describes you under your name. It is visible before a reader has clicked to view the profile in full.
- As a default, this is the most recent position on your profile, however you can rewrite it.
- If your headline sums you up using relevant keywords and positive, factual language, an interested reader is more likely to click through.

Examples:

- *Experienced heritage professional, completing MA in Garden and Landscape History*
- *Masters graduate in Art History, keen to work in the art market*
- *PhD researcher in Old Norse, also teaching Old English translation*

Summarise yourself in About

- Use this section to give a brief summary of your profile, highlighting relevant strengths or selling points to make a strong impression.
- Make your goals clear (if they're not obvious from your profile) and include related keywords to improve search ranking.

Add your education and experience

- Include previous or current education (in the education section) and employment, work experience, part time jobs and voluntary work in

'experience'. Volunteering is also a separate section, but it has less functionality, so unless your volunteering is really not relevant, it's better to include it as 'experience'.

- For each item, detail achievements and the skills you used or developed, as you would on a CV.
- You can upload images or documents (ppt, pdf, doc, jpg, gif, png and similar) to showcase your work in relevant roles. Check that you have the right to upload work (for example, if it was for a previous employer)
- You can link to external documents, websites, files or videos – here you don't control the content, so you can add it as long as it's in the public domain.
- You can add further subsections to each piece of experience or education once they're created, including:
 - Recommendations (where you ask a previous supervisor, manager, teacher or senior colleague for a mini reference that sits on your profile)
 - Projects
 - Courses
 - Honors and Awards

Control your settings and visibility

Your profile is always visible to your connections, but you can control how you appear to other people, including those who aren't signed in to LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/public-profile/settings>

Here you can:

- Set your public profile, displaying only the sections you want to for non-LinkedIn users to find via a search engine.
- Set your custom URL to get a shorter, meaningful link to your profile you can use on your CV.

You can also control how you appear to people whose profile you view, to connections of connections and more using the Privacy and Settings features:

<https://www.linkedin.com/psettings/data-visibility>

It's recommended to review all settings as well as Visibility (above), including controlling frequency of email notifications (in Communications), job seeking preferences and wider usage of your data (in Data Privacy and Advertising Data). You can hibernate or fully delete your account at any time in Account Preferences.

Building your network on LinkedIn

Building your network will increase the usefulness of LinkedIn for labour market research, messaging and introductions (you can generally see who are your 'second degree' contacts and which one of your connections could introduce you).

Who could I connect with?

Start with people you know:

- Current and former classmates
- Current and former faculty contacts
- Family members and family friends
- Current and former colleagues

Build on this foundation by searching for potential contacts in the industries or sectors you are interested in working in. If you find someone doing the job you would like to do, drop them a [personalised invitation to connect](#). Let them know you like their profile and your current aim (for example, learning more about a potential career path).

You might want to browse alumni from your university – just put the university name into the search to see the 'school' page, and then click the alumni tab: there are six filters to refine results by location, discipline, industry, skills, employer and level of connection to your profile.

Groups (such as alumni groups or industry groups) are a good way to connect with like-minded people and gain insight into the industry you are interested in. You can also follow companies and influencers to stay on top of what's happening in relevant fields.

Once you have created a network, use it! Share relevant information that may be useful to others, and ask for advice and insights when you need.

Job hunting on LinkedIn

LinkedIn can be a source for both advertised and unadvertised jobs. For the former, search the jobs listings, using keywords and filters to refine your results. You can also set up job alerts and set preferences for frequency of email notifications.

In some fields, recruitment agents use LinkedIn to find and then approach potential candidates. This is more common in fields with a labour market shortage, or where specialist skills are required. To ensure you appear on a search list, maintain an up-to-date profile, including keywords that a recruiter might search for.

Unadvertised opportunities are a huge part of the labour market. Make sure relevant contacts know what you're hunting for so they can pass on word-of-mouth opportunities. If they work in the industry you're hoping to enter, get in touch for advice on ways to get in.

Top tips for general social media management

1. See what they see

If a potential employer or collaborator searches for someone like you on a social media platform, do they find your profile? How do other profiles compare?

If they search for your name using a search engine online, what do they see? Does it make the first impression that you want to create?

2. Craft your online presence

Create or amplify positive aspects of your online presence. For example, you could add your professional website to your social media bio, add keywords to your profile to aid searches, or just ensure that you share your professional or academic successes on your channels.

Remove or de-emphasise content that doesn't make the first impression you want. For example, you could increase the privacy settings on a social media account that you don't want viewed by potential professional contacts, remove or edit your name to de-personalise an account, or delete/reduce content that you don't want viewed. You can also [ask Google to remove links to content about you](#) that has been added without your consent, if the site owner will not remove it.

3. Communication is two-way, hence *social*

Don't just post, read others' posts to learn more about your field. Contribute to the conversation to build rapport and contacts. Comment, answer and ask questions (once you've spent time observing and learning the social norms in this context).

4. Remember why you're there!

Social media can be a fantastic tool for procrastination and distraction! Decide why you've got each social media account. There may be more than one reason. Then review whether your usage is meeting that purpose. If not, perhaps it's time to do things differently, or even try a different tool. If you're going to keep the channel but not use/check it, you could state that in your profile with instructions on how to contact you if needed.