



LinkedIn Hints and Tips

Your guide to building a profile
that gets noticed



Why LinkedIn Matters For Graduates and Students

LinkedIn is the most widely used professional networking platform in the world, and for students and graduates, it is one of the most powerful tools available in a job search. Employers use it to advertise vacancies, headhunt candidates, and research applicants before interview. A well-built profile can open doors that a CV alone cannot.

This guide covers everything you need to know: how to set up a strong profile, how to use LinkedIn actively to support your search, and the common mistakes that hold graduates back.

LinkedIn By the Numbers

Profiles with a photo receive 21 times more views. Profiles with five or more skills listed receive up to 17 times more messages from recruiters. A complete profile is eight times more likely to show up in search results. These are not small margins.



Building a Professional Profile

Your LinkedIn profile is the foundation of everything else. Before you start networking or applying for roles, get the basics right.

Your Profile Photo

Your photo is the first thing most people notice, and profiles without one are largely invisible to recruiters. You do not need a professional headshot, but you do need something that looks work-appropriate.

- Use a clear, recent photo where your face is easy to see
- Dress as you would for an interview
- Choose a plain or uncluttered background
- Look into the camera and keep the expression natural
- Avoid holiday photos, group shots, or anything cropped from a night out

Your Headline

By default, LinkedIn uses your job title or course as your headline. Change it. The headline appears in search results alongside your name, and it is your best chance to stand out before anyone clicks through to your profile.

A strong headline for a student or graduate might look like this:

Headline examples

Business Management Graduate | Nottingham Trent University | Seeking Graduate Marketing Roles
Finance Student | University of Leeds | Placement Year Experience at KPMG | Open to Opportunities
Graduate Software Developer | Python | Java | Looking for Junior Developer Roles in the East Midlands

Keep it factual, specific, and include what you are looking for. Use the pipe symbol (|) to separate points cleanly.

Your Biography (About section)

The About section is the most read part of your profile after your headline. Use it as a short professional introduction: who you are, what you have done, and what you are looking for next.

Aim for three to five short paragraphs. Write in the first person. Avoid copying your CV word for word. This is a chance to sound like a person, not a document.

- Open with your degree, institution, and subject specialism
- Mention relevant experience, placements, or projects
- Include the type of role or sector you are targeting
- End with a short call to action, such as inviting people to connect or reach out

Tip

Only the first two or three lines of your About section are visible before someone clicks 'See more'. Make sure those first lines are strong enough to earn the click.

Education

List your degree, institution, graduation year, and any relevant modules, projects, or awards. If you are still studying, include your expected graduation date and any predicted grade if it is strong.

Unlike on a CV, you do not need to tailor your education section to each application. Include everything relevant so that recruiters searching for your degree or institution can find you.

Experience

Include all work experience: placements, part-time jobs, voluntary roles, and positions of responsibility from university societies. Do not leave this section empty because you think the experience is not relevant enough.

For each role, include a brief description of what you did, what you learned, and any specific results or achievements. Be specific. 'Managed customer enquiries' tells a recruiter nothing. 'Handled an average of 30 customer enquiries per shift and reduced complaint escalations by 15%' is far more compelling.

Skills

Add between five and fifteen skills relevant to the roles you are targeting. LinkedIn allows connections to endorse your skills, which adds credibility over time. Prioritise hard skills like software, languages, and technical tools, as well as transferable skills that apply across sectors.



DO	AVOID
✓ Use a recent, professional-looking photo	✗ Using a casual, cropped, or outdated photo
✓ Write a specific, tailored headline	✗ Leaving the default job title as your headline
✓ Complete the About section in full	✗ Copying your CV text directly into About
✓ Complete the About section in full	✗ Leaving the experience section blank
✓ Add relevant skills and keep them up to date	✗ Adding generic skills with no relevance to your goals
✓ Customise your LinkedIn URL	✗ Leaving the default URL with random numbers
✓ Connect with tutors, peers, and previous employers	✗ Accepting connection requests indiscriminately

Using LinkedIn Actively

Creating a profile is the starting point, not the finish line. The graduates who get the most from LinkedIn are the ones who use it regularly, not just when they are urgently looking for a job.

Following Companies

Follow the LinkedIn pages of companies you are interested in. Their posts will appear in your feed, keeping you up to date with news, job postings, and the kind of content that helps you prepare for applications and interviews. Showing that you have followed a company's recent activity is a simple but effective way to demonstrate genuine interest.

LinkedIn Groups

Search for groups relevant to your sector or interests. Groups are a useful way to see discussions, job postings, and industry news in one place, and joining them shows recruiters that you have an active interest in your field beyond your course.

Recommendations

Recommendations from tutors, previous employers, or colleagues add real credibility to a profile. The most practical way to get them is to ask, directly and personally. Reference the specific work or project you would like them to comment on, and make the request easy to fulfil.

A good way to start is to write a recommendation for someone else first. People are more likely to reciprocate, and it also helps you think about how to frame your own strengths.

Staying Active

You do not need to post every day, but occasional activity helps your profile rank higher in LinkedIn's search results and keeps you visible to your network. Some practical ways to stay active without it feeling like a task:

- Share articles or content relevant to your sector, with a short comment explaining why you found it useful
- Comment on posts from companies or people you follow
- Post a short reflection after completing a placement, project, or industry event
- Connect with people you meet at careers fairs, networking events, or through university contacts

When To Be Active

You do not need to treat LinkedIn like a social media feed. A post every few weeks is enough to stay visible. The most important thing is that your profile is complete and up to date. Activity builds on top of that, it does not replace it.

Quality Over Quantity

It is tempting to accept every connection request to build up your number. Resist it. A LinkedIn network is most useful when it reflects people you have actually worked with, studied with, or met in a professional context. Connections who know your work can provide recommendations, introduce you to others, and give you relevant insight.

When sending a connection request, always add a brief personalised note. It does not need to be long. Something that reminds the person where you met or why you are reaching out is enough to make the request stand out.



LinkedIn and Your Job Search

LinkedIn is increasingly central to how graduate roles are filled. Understanding how recruiters use it gives you a significant advantage.

How Recruiters Search

Recruiters search LinkedIn using keywords: job titles, skills, qualifications, locations, and degree subjects. The more complete and specific your profile, the more likely you are to appear in those results. Your headline, About section, skills, and experience are all searchable, so it pays to use the same language that employers use in job descriptions.

If you are targeting roles in a specific area, make sure your location is set correctly. LinkedIn search results are heavily weighted by location.

Open to Work

LinkedIn has a feature called Open to Work that signals to recruiters that you are actively looking. You can choose to make this visible only to recruiters, which keeps it private from your current employer if relevant. For students and graduates who are openly searching, having this visible to all members can increase the volume of approaches you receive.

When setting it up, be specific about the roles, locations, and start dates you are interested in. This helps recruiters assess fit before contacting you.

Researching Companies Before Applications and Interviews

A company's LinkedIn page is one of the best places to prepare for applications and interviews. You can see recent news, new hires, projects the company has highlighted, and the kind of content they share. This is particularly useful for roles in marketing, communications, HR, and any function that touches the company's external presence.

Look at the profiles of people who already work there, particularly those in the team or function you are applying to. This can give you a clearer picture of the typical career path and the kind of background that tends to work well.

Adding Your LinkedIn URL to Your CV

Customise your LinkedIn URL so it is clean and professional, typically your name or name plus a keyword. Add the link to your CV beneath your contact details. Recruiters who want to find out more about you will use it, so make sure your profile is up to date before you start applying.



LinkedIn Profile Checklist

Use this checklist before you start applying for roles or reaching out to employers.

Profile Basics

- ☐ Professional, recent profile photo added
- ☐ Headline written specifically, not left as default
- ☐ About section completed in the first person
- ☐ URL customised to your name

Content

- ☐ Education section complete with relevant detail
- ☐ All experience listed, including part-time and voluntary work
- ☐ Skills section populated with relevant, searchable terms
- ☐ At least one recommendation requested or received

Activity and Search

- ☐ Open to Work set up with specific role and location preferences
- ☐ Target companies followed
- ☐ LinkedIn URL added to CV
- ☐ Profile reviewed for spelling and consistency with CV
- ☐ Connected with tutors, peers, and any previous employers

Need More Help With Your Job Search?

Step Recruitment works with students and graduates across the East Midlands.

www.step.org.uk

All training content is created using the professional knowledge, experience and expertise of Step Recruitment Ltd personnel and therefore remains the Intellectual Property of the organisation. AI tools may be used to support the development of training materials and resources and all content is subject to human oversight to ensure quality, accuracy and alignment with learning objectives.