

Linked in

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS ON CREATING THE PERFECT LINKEDIN PROFILE



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As a resume writer, interview preparation specialist and career coach, I work with many college students and recent graduates. Unfortunately, I have found that many are not using LinkedIn correctly or to its fullest potential. If someone looks at your LinkedIn profile and can't determine what your major is or when you are graduating or what employment you have had or what employment you are looking for, you are missing out on a great networking and potential employment opportunity. Your LinkedIn profile should provide a potential contact or potential employer with information that will make them want to connect with you and learn more about you.

This article provides information and recommendations on every section of a LinkedIn profile and what you should include (or exclude) in each section to create the perfect LinkedIn profile.

Note that some of the sections below will automatically appear in your LinkedIn profile. If a section below does not already appear on your profile, click on the "Add profile section" at the top of your profile. This is a list of all of the profile sections and any sub-sections.

INTRO	ABOUT	FEATURED	BACKGROUND	SKILLS	ACCOMPLISHMENTS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	SUPPORTED LANGUAGES
		Posts	Work Experience		Publications	Request a recommendation	Add profile in another language
		Articles	Education		Patents		
		Links	Licenses & certifications		Courses		
		Media	Volunteer experience		Projects		
					Honors & awards		
					Test Scores		
					Languages		
					Organizations		

INTRO SECTION

- Full first name and full last name (no initials, no nicknames)
- Always include a professional looking photo
- Don't forget to add a background photo. This is what appears behind your professional photo on your LinkedIn page. It is defaulted to the LinkedIn default (currently three different variations of the color blue). By adding a background photo that relates to the type of job you are looking for, you will catch a recruiter's attention and research shows that a compelling background photo can cause the reader/recruiter/employer to unconsciously decide to read more about you. Do not pick a picture or created a background that is too busy as it can distract the reader and cause them to decide not to read further.

◇ Some examples:

Engineering student



◇ Computer Science student



◇ Nursing Student



- **Headline (Major, college, Expected graduation date mm/yyyy, and include info if you are looking for co-op, internship or post-graduation employment)**
 - ◇ Use of simple or career related emojis to separate your information (instead of using commas) can make your Heading stand out. Don't go overboard and don't use any emojis that could be considered inappropriate or offensive.
 - ◆ Computer Science Major 🎓ABC University 📅 Expected Graduation May 2022 🌐 Seeking a Co-op Position for Spring 2021
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- Be sure to include your personal email and cell phone number in your LinkedIn Contact Information so that potential employers or potential clients can easily contact you.
- You should always include your LinkedIn profile URL on your resume, so personalize your LinkedIn profile URL with your full name (i.e. John-doe).
 - ◇ Custom URL can have 5-30 letters or numbers but keep it simple and short so that it fits easily on your resume. The only special character you can use is a dash “-”
 - ◇ To update your LinkedIn public profile URL, click on the “Edit public profile & URL” section on the upper right side of your LinkedIn profile page.
- If you are currently looking for work, whether it be for a co-op, internship or full-time, make sure you Edit your job preferences:
 - ◇ Job titles you are looking for (included as many as are appropriate, i.e. Software Engineer, Computer Programmer, Systems Programmer, Web Developer, Full-stack Developer, Front End Developer, Back End Developer)
 - ◇ Job locations where you would consider working. You can include specific cities or states or countries. Be sure to click the button to indicate that you are open to remote work.
 - ◇ Indicate if you are actively looking by clicking on “Immediately. I am actively applying” or if you are not actively looking by clicking on “Flexible. I’m casually browsing”
 - ◇ Indicate the type of job you are looking for such as full-time, contract, part-time, internship, temporary. If you are looking for a co-op or internship position, be sure to select all of the job types.
 - ◇ Choose who can see that you are Open To Work. If you only want this information shared with recruiters, select “Recruiters Only”. This is the option to select if you are currently employed and are not actively looking. If you want this information shared with anyone on LinkedIn, select “All LinkedIn members”. If you select “All LinkedIn members”, the “Open To Work” photo frame will appear around your profile picture to let everyone know that you are actively looking for employment. This is the option to select if you are looking for co-op, internship or full-time employment.

ABOUT SECTION

- Unfortunately, the current LinkedIn profile only shows the first 3 lines of your “About” section, before a reader has to click ‘See more’ to see the full version so you want to make sure that the most important information about you is included in the first 3 lines.
- Maximum 2,000 characters.
- For students, it should always begin with something like “I am currently a 2nd year student in a five-year program at ABC University pursuing a Bachelors Degree in Computer Science.” If you are looking for a co-op or internship or post-graduation full-time employment, your next line should indicate that with something like “I am searching for a Co-op position in Computer Science, Software Engineering or Computer Security for Spring/Summer 2021.” You can then include a summary of your experience, key accomplishments, key skills (hard and soft skills).

FEATURED SECTION

- Add a Featured Section to include posts that you have made that shows your subject-matter expertise. articles you have written, links to your personal web sites/GitHub sites/portfolio sites, etc.

BACKGROUND SECTION

- Include your **work experience**. Each work experience should include the job title, company name, dates of employment and details of the employment and employment type (i.e. full-time, contract, etc.). Start with your most recent work experience and work back.
 - ◇ Start with an overview -Use 2 or 3 sentences to give the reader an overview of what your job entails, including some facts and figures. So if for example you are a manager, who do you manage, what do you manage, budget?
 - ◇ Use action words - Nowhere in your job description should it say "responsible for..." or "duties included". Say what it is you do, using action words such as managed, led, grew, reduced, saved etc.
 - ◇ Use keywords -Research the keywords that you should include for each job. If in doubt, take a look at your actual job description and the essential and desirable skills required for the job you are doing and review the profiles of your colleagues and peers.
 - ◆ For jobs that are not directly related to the type of position that you are looking for (i.e. Restaunt Server, currently looking for a Software Engineer) be sure to include job responsibilities and achievements that would be important for the position that you would be applying to such as attention to detail, working as a team, supervisory or managerial responsibilities, customer satisfaction, etc.
 - ◇ Keep it clear and concise - Don't use four words when one will do.
 - ◇ Use the correct tenses - This means use the present tense for your current job and past tense for previous jobs. This may seem like common sense, but it doesn't always happen.
 - ◇ Don't overdo the bullets - To make a job description more readable:
 - ◆ Have an overview of the job
 - ◆ Leave a space then add a section header such as “Achievements” followed by the bulleted information
 - ◆ Break down your achievements in that role so that they are grouped in no more than 3-5 achievements. If you have more than that, create different section headers
 - ◇ Frontload your achievements - Instead of saying “Promoted to my current position where I excelled in sales, increasing them by 12% in the first year.”, try “Increased sales by 12% in the first year following my promotion”
 - ◇ Check for spelling and grammar - One thing that always lets people down is poor spelling.
 - ◇ Don't forget to link other sections to your job - Some sections like courses, projects and organizations can be linked to the relevant job. They can highlight professional development as well as achievements.

- In the **education** section include your current education (school, type of degree, major, start year, expected graduation year, grade (i.e. 2nd year in a five-year program), and any academic awards (i.e. Dean’s List). Do not include participation in any activities and societies in this section. Those should be included under the Accomplishments section.
 - If you have any **license or certifications**, those can be added in this section.
 - You can also add **Volunteer experience** in the Background section. Volunteer work should only be added if it relates to the type of job you are looking for, or you don’t have much employment history, or the volunteer work shows that you took a leadership role.
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SKILLS SECTION

- You can add up to 50 skills in the Skills Section but you should limit the skills you list to those that are directly related to the type of position that you would be applying to. For example, a skill of “email marketing” is not relevant for a software engineer, but a skill of “front-end development” is extremely important.
 - ◇ When you list to many skills, your connections can spread their endorsements over a wide range of options, resulting in fewer endorsements for each skill, which hurts your overall discoverability.
 - ◇ You have no control over who endorses you for what, and with too many endorsements for lesser skills, your profile could end up optimized for the wrong job.
 - If you are not sure what skills to include, simply look for the skills most commonly featured in job postings for jobs that you would be applying to.
 - Only the top 3 skills are shown without clicking on “Show more” , so make sure that have marked the 3 most important skills related to the jobs you would be applying to are pinned as your Top Skills.
 - Take advantage of the LinkedIn skill quizzes to showcase your expertise.
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ACCOMPLISHMENTS SECTION

- If you have written any articles that have been published, you can include those under **Publications**.
- If you have an invention, product or idea that you have a patent on, you can include it under **Patents**.
- If you are currently a student, include any **courses** that you are taking or have taken that specifically relate to the jobs you would be applying to. If you are a third, fourth or fifth year student, do not include basic level courses. Include those advanced courses that show you are exposed to those higher-level subjects.
- If you have worked on any **projects** that could showcase your skills and experience as they related to the jobs that you would be applying to, be sure to include them in this section. Be sure to include the URL link to the project and a detailed description of the project and your role in the project.
 - ◇ The Project Name field has a strong ranking in LinkedIn’s search algorithm, so you want to use a Project Name that includes a description that notes skills or job titles where possible. 255 characters. (i.e. “**Pixel art generator** that takes an image as input and samples the image to produce pixel art as output using CSS.”)
 - ◇ If this is an ongoing project, click on “I am currently working on this project”, enter the start date (Month and Year) and leave the End date blank.
 - ◇ Almost as important as the Project Name field is the Project Description field. This description entry can be used to provide more keyword-specific information on the effort. Keep in mind that a short description (relevant to your brand) will provide more keyword density (the ratio of keywords to all the words in your Profile) and therefore increase your findability.
- If you received a scholarship, award or honor from your time in college, then absolutely include this in the **Honors & awards** section of your profile as well. This tells recruiters and employers more about your work at college or university and how much of an asset you’d be to their organization. If you are on the Dean’s List, you can add that in this section.

- If you are proficient in more than one language, you can add those in the **Languages** section.
 - If you are part of any organization (either at school or outside of school), you can include that in the **Organizations** section. Be sure to include the position that you help (i.e. President, Web Master, Member, etc.) and include a description of what you do as part of this organization.
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SECTION

- Recommendations are very important as they show a potential employer what others think of you and your skills. Recruiters and hiring managers read recommendation. So do potential clients.
 - ◇ You can **Request a recommendation** from an employer, a teacher, a co-worker, a vendor, a fellow student or someone that you worked on a project with by clicking on “Ask for a recommendation”. The person you are requesting a recommendation from must also be a LinkedIn member.
 - ◆ Do not use the LinkedIn pre-filled message (i.e. Hi Mark. Could you write me a recommendation?). You always want to include a personalized message.
 - ◆ Before sending a Recommendation request on LinkedIn, many people feel that you should send the person a personal email asking whether they would be willing to give you a recommendation. Whether to send a personal email first or just send the recommendation request is a decision that you will have to make.
 - ◆ If you are requesting a recommendation from someone that you do not interact with on an ongoing basis, such as a former teacher, be sure to include a statement to remind the person who you are (i.e. Dear Professor Smith, I thoroughly enjoyed your Analysis of Algorithms course and have found that I have been able to use much of what I learned in your class on my most recent co-op.)
 - ◆ Begin each request with a pleasantry, such as “I hope things are well with you.” If you know something about the persona family or job or something specific to them, be sure to include that in your pleasantry (i.e. I hope things are going well for you. How was your ski trip to Vermont?).
 - ◆ Include the reason for your request (i.e. I am working on improving my LinkedIn profile. The next step is to get some recommendations. I was hoping you would consider writing me a recommendation.)
 - ◆ To have a much higher chance of getting a recommendation, make it as easy as possible for the person you are asking. You can do this by providing them with a sample recommendation they can either use or modify as they choose. You can include wording like:
 - ⇒ “I know you are very busy and I was hoping that you would take a few minutes to write a recommendation of me for LinkedIn. Please feel free to write whatever you like. If it helps, I have added a few talking points below:
 - * (Offer a few points about your knowledge of your industry)
 - * (Share a bit about your experience in your industry)
 - * (Give a point or two on your skills related to the positions that you would be applying)
 - * (Discuss briefly about your experience with that person/teacher, etc.)”
 - ◆ Make sure that every recommendation request that you send is personalized to the person that you are making the request of. Never use the same recommendation request for multiple requests, otherwise you may receive several identical recommendations.

- ◇ You can give a recommendation by going to the person’s LinkedIn page and scrolling down to their Recommendations section. If they do not have a Recommendation section, go to the “More” button at the top of their profile. Click on the “More” button and then click on “Recommend” in the drop-down.
 - ◆ Writing a recommendation for someone, either solicited or unsolicited can have many benefits for you, including the goodwill and gratitude of the recipient of your recommendation.
 - ◆ If you are asked to write a resume, make sure that you believe in the quality of their work or services before you agree to write the recommendation.
 - ◆ Know that when you write a recommendation for someone, it will appear on both the profile of the receiver as well as the author.
 - ⇒ Writing a recommendation just to be nice can back-fire if that person does not really process the skills or qualities that you indicated in the recommendation. Remember that every recommendation you write is a reflection of your “brand”.
 - ⇒ Be sure that the recommendations that you do write reflect your “brand” (i.e. integrity, professionalism. etc.)
 - ◆ If you write an unsolicited recommendation, be sure to send an email to the person to let them know that you submitted a recommendation on their LinkedIn profile.
 - Whether you send it unsolicited or after your email offer is accepted, the recipient will have the opportunity to accept your recommendation or request a change before it shows on their page.

SUPPORTED LANGUAGES SECTION

- LinkedIn allows you to create your profile in another language(s).

- ◇ The languages that are supported are:

English	German	Portuguese
Arabic	Indonesian	Romanian
Chinese (Simplified)	Italian	Russian
Chinese (Traditional)	Japanese	Spanish
Czech	Korean	Swedish
Danish	Malay	Tagalog
Dutch	Norwegian	Thai
French	Polish	Turkish

- Some key things to know before creating secondary language profiles:
 - ◇ Any updates made to your primary profile must also be made to your secondary language profiles.
 - ◇ You can create and manage a secondary language profile from the LinkedIn desktop experience. LinkedIn currently doesn’t support the ability to manage a secondary language profile from a mobile device.
 - ◇ Translations aren't done for you. You'll need to add or translate your own personal content by editing your secondary language profile.
 - ◇ Any updates made to your primary profile must also be made to your secondary language profiles.

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