

How to Get LinkedIn: The Basics

What is LinkedIn and why do you need to be “LinkedIn?”

LinkedIn is a social media tool that, if used correctly, helps you establish a professional online presence, personal brand, advance your career, and build your professional network. You can use LinkedIn to research employers, find and apply for internships and jobs, and connect with professionals including other OWU alumni. Alumni are especially valuable connections because they are “warmer” contacts, and you already have something in common! Alums love to offer advice and help those from their alma mater.

The Nuts and Bolts of Building Your LinkedIn Profile

- **Professional Headshot** – You never get a second chance to make a first impression!
A *bad* picture is worse than *no* picture. If you do not have a professional photo, we in Career Connection can take one for you. The photo focuses on you from the chest up. Dress should be professional (based on your industry of interest). This means that while a suit and tie are not always necessary, pictures at parties, the beach, on a ski vacation, in tank tops, sundresses, or sweatshirts are not appropriate and will only detract from your message. When in doubt, err on the side of “business casual.” Pictures that look as though you have cropped everyone out are also inappropriate.
- **Write Your Intro and Create a Great Headline** – Your headline is the first thing that people see, and it is how people can “find” you when using the search feature. Spend a good amount of time setting this up. To get to the Intro Section, click the little pencil icon next to your profile.
 - **First and Last Name** – you are not required to use your legal first name. You can use the name that people call you, as long as it appears consistently in all of your documents.
 - **Headlines** – these taglines should be concise and compelling. State your abilities and intensions so that a recruiter wants to read more. You have 120 characters, use them wisely/effectively to make a great first impression. Two approaches to writing a great headline: State your goals and passions OR consider what you do and emphasize the results.

EXAMPLES:

“Creating positive living environments that foster personal growth as an Ohio Wesleyan University Resident Advisor”

“Aspiring finance professional with a passion for helping people make smart money choices.”

This approach is more effective than simply saying “Resident Advisor at Ohio Wesleyan,” or “Front Desk Worker.” They do not invite an employer’s curiosity.

- **Summary** – Students dislike and fear this section because it is intimidating to write about yourself. Telling your story robustly is key to differentiating yourself. Do not skip this section or rely on the LinkedIn generated summary (which sounds like a computer wrote it). If you can write an essay or lab report, you can write this summary! To start writing a summary for your profile, click “Add profile selection”, select the “About” tab, and then click the “+” icon next to “Summary”.
 - **Write in first person (I, me, my)** – Just the way you would speak in an interview
 - **Length and spacing** – You have 2000 characters, but you do not need to use all of them to write a strong summary. Three (3) short paragraphs with white space in-between is perfect. The white space makes it easy to read.
 - **Incorporate key words from the internship or job description** – Using key words increases the chance that recruiters will notice you. Algorithms pick out key words in your summary and skills sections in response to recruiter searches.

- **What else to include** – Go beyond your experience and talk about challenges you want to tackle, professional interests, and your experiences (academic, internship, and non-academic).
- **Spellcheck your work** – Have another set of eyes review. Consider using *grammarly* to check for correct grammar, which spellcheck does not catch (ex: they're, their, there).

EXAMPLE: (194 words)

“I am currently enrolled as a Junior at Ohio Wesleyan University with dual majors in Computer Science and Math and a minor in Black World Studies. I am seeking an internship that will allow me to use my strengths and skills to tackle challenges in the web development or AI spaces.”

“Being an international student, I have repeatedly been exposed to new cultures and worked collaboratively with diverse groups of people. Innately curious and someone who loves learning, I enjoy the challenges of solving problems and fixing errors. Last summer as an Intern with Chase Bank, I worked on the website development team and used my strong analytical and problem solving skills and proficiency using Java script to contribute to the redevelopment of a more customer friendly mobile app. The app launched this past fall and received rave customer reviews.”

“At OWU, I have contributed to my campus community as saxophonist in our newly reinvigorated marching band, a member of the Math/Computer Science Student Board, and a tour guide in the Admissions Office. In my spare time, I enjoy cycling and hiking.”

- **Experience and Skills** – Remember that recruiters know that you are a college student. Please do not write a LinkedIn profile that makes it sound like you have been working in business for ten years. Here are some things you can include in the Experience Section:
 - Internships, both paid and unpaid.
 - Full time or part-time jobs that may be unrelated to your major but have given you great transferrable skills (ex: retail – great customer service and personal presentation skills).
 - Entrepreneurial or freelance work.
 - Volunteer Work – Note that LinkedIn has *a separate section for this*, so you would add those experiences there (see # 5 below).

In the **Skills Section**, only add those skills that you can demonstrate during an interview (ex: taking two semesters of Spanish is *not* the same as being fluent). Whatever you do, *do not lie* about having a skill. Your future employer *will* find out — it is just a question of when.

- **Volunteer Experience, Accomplishments, Languages** – These sections are not essential, but they can be a useful addition to your profile.
 - **Accomplishments** – This is a catchall. The Accomplishments Section lets you showcase Publications, Projects, Honors and Awards (academic or extracurricular), Organizations (honor societies, Greek organizations, professional organizations).
 - **Languages** – If you speak a language well enough to have a basic conversation, you can include it here.
- **Join Groups** – becoming part of a LinkedIn group is a great way to make connections, network, and stay connected to your dreams, goals, and ambitions. It helps you to explore your job options on a broader scale LinkedIn groups come in many different categories.
 - To join the **OWU Alumni & Friends Group**, click in the Search Bar at the top of your LinkedIn page and then click on “groups” and search for OWU. This will help you connect with alumni nationwide who work for a variety of different companies and organizations!