

BENNINGTON

LinkedIn Basics

If used intentionally, LinkedIn can be a powerful tool for making professional connections. Use these tips to craft a stand out profile that will help you build a strong network of alumni and potential employers. Once your profile is completed, check out the [Bennington College LinkedIn](#) and join the [Bennington College Alumni page](#) to start researching alumni in your area of interest. Just like Facebook, you can invite others to join your network based on shared interests, and you will generate more interest in your profile as your network grows.

A LinkedIn Profile should include...

- **Your full name**

With so many social media outlets being used these days, it's easy to have your name appear differently across the web. If you want people (not just employers, but other professional connections as well) to be able to find you, make sure your name is consistent across social media and online publications. For example, if you've been published using your middle initial, include that in your LinkedIn name.

- **Contact info**

You don't need to include your complete address and zip code, but make yourself available to people who want to get in touch with you. Having this information (such as an email address) makes you seem more genuine.

- **A great photo**

If you're using LinkedIn to reach out to alumni or potential employers, having a photo will make them feel more comfortable responding to you. Choose a photo that is current and professional. Keep in mind that professional can mean something different depending on the field you are in. Browse profiles of professionals in your field to see what kinds of pictures they use. If you can show yourself in action, that's great. If you're a musician, you might use a picture of you performing. If you're a scientist, you could use a picture of you in the lab. Also, if you're using LinkedIn to make yourself more attractive to employers, LinkedIn's analytics show that profiles with a photo are 14 times more likely to be viewed. Check out [LinkedIn's tips for picking the right photo](#).

- **Your experience**

The experience section is essentially an online resume. Use action oriented statements to describe your past and present roles and give a clear sense of your accomplishments. Refer to our resume guide for tips on crafting your accomplishment statements. Another tip: many online application portals will auto populate with your LinkedIn profile information if you link it during the application process. It's a huge time saver!

- **A personalized URL**

Like Tumblr and Twitter, LinkedIn gives you the option to have a personalized URL. Take the time to do this, using your name as it appears on your profile for your URL (e.g., www.linkedin.com/briannabennington). It will make your site look more professional and make you more accessible. Once you have an account, navigate to the URL beneath your profile photo. This will take you to the screen where you can change your URL.

- **A creative and descriptive headline and summary**

The headline portion of LinkedIn is one of the first things people will see. Be sure to use keywords that will make you searchable, but feel free to make it personal and descriptive. The same goes for your summary. Your summary should be around 3–5 short paragraphs. It should tell your story and give the reader a sense of your work, passions, skills, qualifications, and a list of the fields you've explored over the years. Take a look at [LinkedIn's guide to writing the perfect summary](#).

- **Your volunteer experience, interests and other skills**

Whereas a resume requires concision and curation to a specific job, LinkedIn allows you to display all aspects of your experience and personality. Any volunteer work you've done or causes you support can be mentioned here. These things add depth to your character, make you more interesting to prospective employers and allow others to find you if they search by organization or area of interest. Also, don't forget your skills section. You

can include everything from software knowledge to public speaking. LinkedIn allows your connections to endorse these skills, giving an added element of reliability to your profile.

Other Tips and Tricks

- **Treat your profile like your resume, but with added content and visual appeal**

Like your resume, your LinkedIn profile should be an expression of your most professional self. But unlike your resume, you have no page limits or content restrictions. Use this opportunity to show people what makes you, you.

- **Avoid buzzwords**

A quick google search of “LinkedIn buzzwords” will return over 100,000 articles about words to avoid using in your profile. These words (including, but not limited to, “motivated,” “passionate,” “creative,” “driven,” and “responsible”) have become so overused in the world of resumes and cover letters that they’re relatively meaningless. Be creative and deliberate in your word choice. Show don’t tell by focusing on your accomplishments and letting your examples show your talents.

- **Ask for recommendations**

Anyone with a LinkedIn profile can write a recommendation that will appear on your page. If you feel you had a particularly great relationship with a coworker or boss, ask them to write you a recommendation. This is a great way to add value to your profile.

- **Build connections**

Try to get at least 50 “connections” (LinkedIn’s version of “friends”) early on. This will show employers that you are outgoing, engaged and comfortable with technology. Additionally, the more connections you have, the more opportunities there are for recommendations and endorsements of your skills. LinkedIn offers you the chance to import your contacts in order to send a connection email to everyone in your address book. This is a great way to start building your connections, but make sure your profile is in good shape before doing this.

- **Utilize multimedia**

LinkedIn offers you the option to include multimedia in almost every aspect of your profile. Have beautiful photos of your artwork? Include them in your summary. Proud of the article you had published in a science journal? Post the PDF in the experience section of your profile.

- **Make sure people can find you**

In your privacy settings, you have the option of managing who can view your profile. Make sure you’re viewable to everyone. It shows you have nothing to hide and ensures that you make as many connections as possible.

- **Update your status with professional highlights**

As with Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn allows you to update your status. Do it! Just make sure that your posts are always professional and relevant: e.g. your excitement over a new project. Save personal posts for other social media outlets.

- **Include a cover photo**

Like other social media sites, LinkedIn has the option for users to add a cover photo to their profile. This is a great way to set your profile apart, display your work and add a bit of style. Just make sure it’s relevant and says something about what you do. Look to other professionals in your field for ideas.