

What is LinkedIn?

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LinkedIn is a professional social network for people to connect with colleagues and business associates. It also offers a job search, events information, special interest groups and messaging facilities.

LinkedIn is particularly useful when job searching, reconnecting with ex-colleagues and for showcasing experience. There are currently over 810 million members worldwide.

Key features and benefits of LinkedIn

- It is free to join and create a basic account, however you need to pay extra for 'premium' accounts that allow you to do extra things like send messages to people that do not currently know you. This is useful if you are trying to recruit a new member of staff, for example.
- When you sign up to create an account, you need to use a valid email address (if you do not have one, see our guide [How to get an email address](#)).
- Once you have signed up, you can create your 'profile', which contains information about your education and professional experience. You can also highlight specific skills you have, and whether you are currently open to job offers and enquiries.
- Your LinkedIn profile is public and can be found by people using LinkedIn search or searching the web in general (although this is only likely if they are searching for your full name). You can change your privacy settings so that only a very basic account is visible to people who are not also members of LinkedIn.
- You can search for colleagues and people that you have worked with or done business with, using the LinkedIn search bar. You can also find specific companies or organisations, and 'follow' them, and 'connect' with people who you know from those organisations.
- You can also import existing email contacts from the main webmail providers, such as [Gmail](#) or Yahoo!
- There are also LinkedIn groups, that tend to focus on a particular industry or skill, and you can apply to join these and get involved with discussions and post information or job vacancies. Some of these groups are open to everyone, although many are subject to approval.

Online safety advice

- When signing into LinkedIn always make sure the website is legitimate by checking the URL.
- Beware of phishing and scamming attacks disguised as messages with link attachments.
- Beware of recruiters who charge you for an application fee for a job opportunity.
- Stay safe online and make sure you have an anti-virus software installed onto your computer.
- Choose a password that no-one will be able to guess and make sure that you change this regularly.

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Next steps

-  [How to find a job online](#)
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-  [6 top tips for new LinkedIn users](#)

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