

## Using LinkedIn

### What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a *professional* social networking site of individuals from a variety of career paths and locations around the world. You can use LinkedIn to connect with peers, professors, co-workers, alumni, groups of people who share a common interest (career paths, universities, hobbies, etc.), and thousands of others. Think of LinkedIn like six degrees of separation – your connections know people, who know people, who know people! This can help you build your network, which can give you an advantage when looking for information about a specific career path or when you're job/internship searching in a specific industry. LinkedIn currently has over 43 million members in over 200 countries!

### Getting Started

Go to <http://www.linkedin.com/> and create a free account. Use a professional e-mail address, such as your Clark e-mail address or yourname@ gmail, hotmail, yahoo, etc. to set up your account.

### Setting Up Your Profile

Things to include:

- Education (degree, expected graduation date)
- Jobs you've held, either on-campus or off-campus
- Involvement in student organizations, sports, activities, etc.
- Awards you've received from Clark or outside organizations
- Interests (optional)

Add a small, headshot photo – this personalizes your profile to people looking to add you as a connection. But remember, this is not Facebook! LinkedIn is a 100% professional website. Choose your picture accordingly.

### Tips and Tricks

- Develop your profile in Word and keep that as your master list of your education, experiences, etc.
  - LinkedIn has no spell check feature so use the Word spell check to ensure everything you're posting online has correct spelling and grammar
- Complete your profile in its entirety
- Make your profile public so others can find you – don't block incoming messages
- Include links to your Facebook page, Twitter account, or personal blogs *only* if they are *100% clean and appropriate* for potential employers to see

### Adding Connections

Find people you know by using the search box in the upper right corner of the page. Start with your peers, professors, or family members. Once you find someone you know, click on their profile and find the option to "Add [name] to your network." Only request to add people you know and who know you – it is not appropriate to request connections with people you don't know at all.

When requesting to add someone as a new connection, change the default message to make it more personal.

- Don't use – "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn."
- Do tailor the message to the person – "Hi [name]. We're in the same Psychology class at 2:30pm on Tuesday. I'd like to connect with you on LinkedIn."

### Tips and Tricks

- Once your peers are in your network, check their list of connections and request to add others that you know

## **Joining Groups**

Find groups of people by using the search box in the upper right corner of the page (select “Groups” from the drop-down menu). The first group you should join is the *Clark University Alumni Networking Group*. This group has over 1,550 Clark alumni as of August 2009 and it’s growing every day!

Search for other groups in your career interest area. For example, if you want to learn more about public relations, type “public relations” into the Groups search box and read through the descriptions of hundreds of groups related to this career. Join the group(s) that appeals to you the most.

## **Tips and Tricks**

- There are many regional groups for various career interest areas and alumni networks – this can help you find more local connections
- Participating in discussions is a great way to get your name out there and start making more connections to people you don’t know as well
- Check to see if there is a group for your class year – LinkedIn created an official ’09 Grads group

## **Searching for and Contacting People**

An advantage of using LinkedIn is that you can search for people you don’t know and ask for career advice or request to set up an informational interview. The easiest way to search for people is to use the Advanced Search feature.

### **Example – Looking for Clark alumni in a specific field:**

Go into the Clark University Alumni Networking Group, select the “Members” tab, and then select the “Advanced Search” option on the right-hand side. With this feature, you can search by specific location (for example, if you plan to relocate after graduating), specific companies, or general industries.

Once you find someone you’d like to contact, use the “Send a Message” option in the upper-right corner of the person’s profile page. In the brief message, introduce yourself, describe your shared connection (for example, Clark alumni, belong to the same group, have a mutual acquaintance in common), and tell the person why you are interested in contacting him or her. Remember to spell check your message!

Most importantly, *do not ask for a job or internship!* LinkedIn is a tool for networking and information gathering. It should be used to help you explore career options, get job search tips specific to a particular field, and begin networking, rather than a means to ask for a job.

## **Sample Message**

Dear Ms. Smith,

My name is Joseph Jones and I am a senior at Clark University majoring in Environmental Science. I am hoping to connect with Clark alumni, such as yourself, who have experience in the field of environmental consulting. According to the information in your LinkedIn profile, you’ve been in this field for five years. I would welcome the opportunity to ask you questions about the types of positions that exist in environmental consulting. If you would be willing to answer some questions, please email me at [jjones@clarku.edu](mailto:jjones@clarku.edu). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Jones

*\*Always remember to send a thank you note (through e-mail is fine) after receiving information or advice from someone!*