

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a document. The background is a textured blue surface. The image is used as a background for a presentation slide.

2

**Does Your
Social Media
Make You Look
Ready to Work?**

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You have a good idea of the kind of job you are looking for. The logical next step sounds like completing applications. Not so fast! Before you fill out an online application, you need to check your online image.

Most employers check social media before making a hiring decision. Employers are going online to do a basic search to make certain there are no red flags that could create problems in the workplace and the community. They want to find a candidate who can demonstrate a good work ethic.

Check Your Online Image

Type your name into a search engine. It doesn't matter whether you prefer Google, Bing, Yahoo or Duck Duck Go.

If you have a profile, account, or have commented on any of these sites they will show up on the first page or two:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Tumblr
- Tik Tok
- Reddit
- Google+

You may also find links to news stories about your school sports team, charity, community or church activity. So far so good.





Take the Extra Step: Same Name, But That's Not Me

If you share the same name with other people, information about you may not be at the top of the page. Scroll down to find yourself, or search again with a middle initial or name, or your name and location.

If there are a lot of people who pop up in a search with the same name, you may want to add a middle initial to your resume and your social media. Once you make this consistent it will narrow down the results and make you easier to find.

Example of Name Searching Options

Jennifer Vargas – A lot of results, may not be you.

Jennifer Vargas White Plains NY – Will narrow the results.

Jennifer K. Vargas – Will narrow the results but make certain that the middle initial is used for your resume and LinkedIn if you have a profile there.

Employers check social media to find information about candidate qualifications and interests that align with the job. These can be work accomplishments, volunteer activities and professional associations. Employers are also taking note of red flags that can sink a candidate including commentary that is racist, sexist, inflammatory or negative about a job or boss. A rant on Facebook about the way a supervisor or customer treated you at work could take you out of the running for a new position. It is essential that you show up on social media as responsible and employable.



True Stories

Search the name 'Susan Smith' and your screen will fill up with information about a woman serving life in prison for murder in South Carolina. Smith rolled her car, with her two young sons inside, into a lake in 1994. If you share the name of someone infamous, or famous, add a middle name or initial on social media, job applications and your resume so the correct person shows up in a search.



Think Before You Post, Edit if You Can

Don't post anything on the internet that you wouldn't want your boss, or your grandmother, to see or read. Even if you think your posts can't be shared because access is restricted to friends, another user may be able to share it in a way that the content can be spread.

Remember this rule: Nothing is private online.

Let's say you went on a great vacation and have photos of all night parties. You can try to take them down, but you may not be able to erase them. Whether you can take them down or not, make a point of adding positive content that will become the first items seen.

If you were really upset about the behavior of a neighbor and posted a long comment about the fact that "they don't clean up their trash and should go back to their country," it is time to set the record straight with an apology, particularly if it can't be deleted. Comment on your own post writing what you have learned and how you had conversations to understand the damage your writing could inflict.

Content Do's and Don'ts For all Social Media	
Do Post	Don't Post
Content, articles and information related to the industry where you work, or want to work.	Complaints or negative comments about the reputation of an industry or employer.
Family events with people having responsible fun.	Pictures of lots of drinking, illegal drug use and revealing clothing.
Holiday celebrations.	Put downs of other religions, religious practices or beliefs.
Encouragement to register and vote is OK.	Content supporting a candidate or specific party.
If you are unemployed and post about an active job search, stick to positives. Write something like, "Looking for a job with a good agency as a Home Health Aide."	"Out of work again, laid off, company was bought. Anyone know about a job, any job? I'm getting tired of Ramen noodles and unemployment won't last forever." Or anything like, "Another waste of time job interview. It's pretty clear that they're only hiring cute young women for this job." If you are working, but looking for a new opportunity, don't announce your job search anywhere online. Your boss should not find out that you want to leave the job when someone sends them a link to your post.
Support for local businesses, non-profits and activities and involvement in these.	Anything that is obviously sexist or racist or could be interpreted as sexist or racist.

Isn't Facebook Just for My Friends and Family?

First of all, know that any potential employers can find anything and everything you post online. It's important that your Facebook presence is rated G and shows you in the best light. If a hiring manager searches your name and finds a Facebook posting that boasts of the number of drinks you had before you passed out, or a rant about all of the idiots you worked with, including your boss, they won't be impressed. A simple, "I hate Monday mornings" is not going to endear you with an employer looking for a reliable office worker.



Follow this basic rule for Facebook: If you wouldn't want your boss, mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother or kids to see a posting, then it shouldn't be on Facebook.

Should I spend a lot of time making my Facebook page work-ready?

The time you spend filling out this information will give you a head start on details that you can use for other social media platforms, your resume and even job applications. The minimum you should do is update your profile and cover photos to be employer-friendly and make certain your Facebook content is ready for viewing by a potential future boss.



Checklist for Success: Smile for the Camera, Customize Your Cover Photo

The top of your Facebook page has your profile photo and a cover photo. Start here to make certain you look ready to work.

- Choose an image you would present in a job interview, competent and friendly.
- There should be only one person in the photo: You. No family members, friends, love interests or pets.
- You can have a friend take the photo in front of a plain, or nondistracting, background. Wear the kind of clothes you would wear to work and try a few angles to find the one you think is best.
- Save the good picture to use for other social media.

Next, check the cover photo. It's a large space at the top of your Facebook page where you can show off your experience, skills and training. Here are some ideas:

- If you work preparing food, use a cover photo with finished items or cooking tools. For example it could be a decorated cake, a mixing bowl or a grill.
- When your experience leans towards IT, use a cover photo of computers or computer equipment.
- If you are skilled in building trades, tools for carpentry or finishes would work.
- For food service, a cup of coffee or fresh food will be nice.
- If retail is your passion, the cover photo can be racks of clothes.
- If you can't capture your work identity in the cover photo, use a background of nature, a landmark, relevant city, flowers, a pattern or item of general interest.
- Use something that complements your profile photo and doesn't distract.
- Stay away from family and the wedding party photos for this section.

Once you have made the top of the page work-ready, it's time to edit your personal information to be employer friendly.





Checklist for Success: Edit Facebook Profile

- Click on Edit Details or the About tab and start from the top making certain your work experience and education match your applications or resume. You don't have to list all your jobs.
- List your high school and post high school education.
- Current city can be general, your state or metropolitan area.
- It's your choice whether you want to include a hometown.
- Keep the relationship status blank and make certain any website or social links you include are work-ready.
- Add hobbies as long as they are ones you would share with an interviewer.
- In About, you may want to add the same statements that appear at the top of your resume.
- In About you will also find the option to add favorite quotes. These can be inspirational about success or by a leader in your field of interest.



What is LinkedIn and Do I Need a Profile There?

LinkedIn is the world's largest online professional network, with more than 150 million users in the U.S. LinkedIn is not for sharing birthdays or pictures of your last family event. Users post professional profiles. Most LinkedIn users have college degrees but this does not mean all users do, or that all jobs posted require the same level of education. LinkedIn is a great place to find people for Networking, which we will describe in Chapter 6.



Write It Down: The Email Address and Password You Used to Access LinkedIn

Add to your notebook both the email address and password you created to access LinkedIn.

To figure out if you should create a profile on LinkedIn, search the site for profiles of people you know with jobs that are similar to the one you have, or the one you want. If some of them show up with LinkedIn profiles, that may inspire you to take the time to create your own LinkedIn profile.



Checklist for Success: LinkedIn Profiles

If you have decided that a LinkedIn profile can help your job search, set aside a couple of hours to create your profile.

- Create a LinkedIn account. A basic LinkedIn account is free and should meet your job search needs. LinkedIn does a good job of walking you through building the parts of your profile once you have created an account.
- In Settings & Privacy under Visibility, make certain your profile is visible so potential employers can find you.
- When you are starting your profile in Account Preferences/Visibility of Your LinkedIn Activity, check "no" for "Share job changes, education changes, etc." If this is checked "yes," your network is notified every time you make a change. You can change this once your profile is complete.

Ready to Write Your LinkedIn Profile?

Use these tips for writing your LinkedIn Profile:

- Use a clear headline that describes the work you do. For example, Administrative Assistant at ABC Audio or Health Care Professional. Make sure it is realistic. It's one of the first things a potential employer will see so make it count.
- Include a professional photo. Use the same photo for Facebook as long as it looks professional.
- Include a background photo behind your profile photo that is related to the work you do. The beautiful sunset is fine for Facebook but on LinkedIn you will need a work setting or work tools. For example, administrative work can be represented by desks or computers.
- Write a summary that describes, in no more than a few sentences, what you do. You can use one from your resume or create a new one. For ideas look at profiles of people with similar skills and experience. It can be the same content as the About section in Facebook.
- Be precise in your job descriptions and make sure your work history does not conflict with your resume. Decide how far back you will go; it can be earlier than your resume.
- Include transferable skills, results and key words.
- Join Groups. They will be listed on your profile. Search for groups starting with Alumni from the schools you attended. Then look for alumni groups from former employers, then professional groups based on your industry, job function and interests. When searching for groups, make sure they are in the U.S. and have more than a few members.
- Provide specifics about your education.
- Choose skills to add from the list provided. Endorse other LinkedIn users for their skills.
- Request recommendations from former bosses and colleagues. Recommend people you know on LinkedIn.



It's a Good Thing I Have a Cellphone

Your primary phone is likely a cellphone. When you're searching for a job it's very important to make sure every phone call is professional, whether on a cellphone or landline, or if you are the caller or receiver.

Telephone Tips	
Do	Don't
Make and take calls in a quiet place.	Take or make a call from the supermarket, playground or with a TV playing in the background.
Ask to call back if needed. For instance, if an employer calls while you are somewhere noisy simply say, "I'm just getting off the bus, can I call you back in 20 minutes?"	Say, "I'm too busy, can you call back?"
Cancel or ignore call-waiting.	Take any other incoming calls when you are speaking with someone about employment. Tell a potential employer, "Please hold for a minute, I have another call coming in."
State your name and number clearly when leaving a message.	Think, "I don't have to leave my number, they can find it."
Reschedule the call if you hear the connection is bad or you are in a dead zone.	Blame the employer for a bad connection.
Answer politely by saying hello or stating your name. When you are looking for a job, any phone call could be from your new boss.	Answer the phone with a suspicious, "Who is this?"
Have a pen and paper (your notebook) so you can write down information.	Ask the employer to repeat themselves then to hold while you get a paper and pen.



Take the Extra Step: Record A Work-Ready Phone Message

When you are searching for a job, make sure the message people hear when you are unable to pick up your phone is work-ready. It should be short and include your name. For example, "Hi, this is Jennifer Vargas, I can't answer the phone right now, leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible." Including your name is important for the employer to know they reached the right person. Skip the background music or funny voices.

What are the details for work-ready Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr, Tik Tok, Reddit and Google+?

Once you have Facebook and LinkedIn work-ready, you can follow the same rules for any other social media site. For example, for Twitter use the same profile photo and background as LinkedIn; and the Bio is the same as your Headline on LinkedIn. Make sure the pictures and content on Pinterest would make your grandmother, and any employer, proud. Every video you post should be G rated and free from political statements.

What does your email address say about you?

A work-friendly email address is a must for a job search. You don't need to own a computer to have an email account and you can get an email account free. Sign up with gmail, hotmail, yahoo or any other free service. Make sure you remember your password and address, and write these in your notebook. If someone sets up your email address for you, make sure you know how to open your email account and use it including the password. Instructions on how to set up an email account can be found on FirstFind.org under Digital Learning.

Whether you are picking out a new email address or already have one, the address should be professional and preferably have your name in it. Since email addresses are unique and cannot be used by more than one person, your name may already be taken. tsmith@gmail.com, for example, won't be available. But an address that combines your name and or a middle name is fine. Avoid adding something that indicates your age like terrismith1985@gmail.com.



Take the Extra Step: Use Your Area Code For Your Email Address

If you need to add a number to get a unique email address your telephone area code will probably work, terrismith914@gmail.com

If you usually use mightyfinedude@gmail.com—don't! Save it for messages to your friends. Start a new account for your job search, like tosmith914@gmail.com, so emails from potential employers won't get lost in a long list of personal messages and your address will look more professional.





Write It Down: Your Email Account Address, Username, and Password

Write down your email address and password, even if it's put into your phone for you.



Chapter 2 To Do List

- _____ Search your name using your favorite search engine.
- _____ Make sure your social media makes you look ready to work.
- _____ Add content and remove red flag items.
- _____ Consider a LinkedIn profile and complete one if you find people with similar backgrounds on LinkedIn.
- _____ Make certain you have a professional-looking email address.

Quick Links to Resources

Resource Name	Web Address
First Find - Email Basics	FirstFind.org Located under Web Skills



Need Help?

The Westchester Library System offers workshops, resources, and one-to-one counseling to guide your job search and improve your interviewing skills. Find out more at FirstFind.org.

