

DIY LinkedIn Headshot

QUICK-START CHEAT SHEET

Everything you need on one page. See the full guide starting on page 2 for details.

What You Need

- Smartphone (any recent model)
- Tripod or stack of books
- Self-timer or Bluetooth remote
- A window with natural light
- Clean, plain background

Lighting

- Face a large window
- Shoot on cloudy days or in soft morning/afternoon light
- Never shoot with a window behind you
- Turn off overhead fluorescent lights

Camera Setup

- Camera at eye level
- Use Portrait Mode if available
- Use rear camera (better quality)
- Turn on HDR and grid overlay
- Don't zoom — move your feet instead

Solo vs. With Help

- **Solo:** Prop phone on tripod, use 10-sec timer
- **Solo:** Mark your spot with tape on the floor
- **Helper:** Have them use rear camera, 4–6 ft away
- Take 30+ shots either way!

What to Wear

- Solid colors, jewel tones (navy, emerald, teal, burgundy)
- Something you'd wear to an interview
- Iron/steam your clothes first
- No busy patterns, logos, hats, or sunglasses

Posing Basics

- Turn body 15–45°; face toward camera
- Push chin slightly forward and down
- Slight head tilt (just a degree or two)
- Roll shoulders back and down
- Think of something happy for a natural smile

5 Go-To Poses

- **Classic:** Squared shoulders, relaxed smile
- **Quarter Turn:** Body angled, face toward camera
- **Crossed Arms:** Arms loosely crossed, confident
- **The Lean:** Lean forward slightly, warm
- **Look Away:** Gaze just past the lens, candid

Edit & Upload

- Crop to square (1:1 ratio)
- Slight brightness + contrast boost
- No heavy filters or skin smoothing
- Face should fill ~60% of the frame
- Eyes in focus, natural expression

✓ TOP DOs	✗ TOP DON'Ts
✓ Face a window for soft, natural light	✗ Use flash or overhead lights
✓ Use rear camera + Portrait Mode	✗ Zoom in (move closer instead)
✓ Wear solid jewel tones	✗ Wear busy patterns or logos
✓ Take 30+ shots and pick the best	✗ Settle for 1–2 quick selfies
✓ Crop square, light edits only	✗ Use heavy filters or skin smoothing

↓ [Flip the page for the full step-by-step guide](#) ↓

Why Your LinkedIn Photo Matters

Your headshot is often the very first impression a recruiter, hiring manager, or potential connection has of you. Profiles with a professional photo get up to 21 times more views and 36 times more messages than those without one. The good news? You don't need a professional photographer to get a great result. With the right setup and a few simple techniques, you can take a headshot at home that looks polished, confident, and ready for your next opportunity.

What You'll Need

- A smartphone (any recent model with a front or rear camera works)
- A tripod, stack of books, or anything sturdy to prop your phone on
- A timer or self-timer app (most phones have one built in)
- Natural light (a window is your best friend)
- A clean, uncluttered background
- A friend or family member (optional but helpful)

PRO TIP: If you're doing this solo, a phone tripod with a Bluetooth remote shutter is a game-changer. You can find one online for under \$15.

Setting the Scene

Background

Keep it simple and distraction-free. A plain wall (white, light gray, or a soft neutral tone) works best. If you don't have a plain wall, hang a clean bedsheet or stand in front of a tidy bookshelf. The goal is for the viewer's eye to go straight to your face, not the background.

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
Use a clean, solid-colored wall	Stand in front of clutter, dishes, or laundry
Tidy up a bookshelf for a warm, professional vibe	Use a virtual background or heavy filters
Hang a plain sheet or curtain as a backdrop	Have other people visible in the background
Step far enough away from the wall to avoid harsh shadows	Use a bathroom or bedroom mirror selfie

Lighting

Lighting is the single biggest factor in whether your photo looks professional or amateurish. Natural light is the most flattering and the easiest to work with.

- **Best setup:** Face a large window.
- **Time of day:** Shoot during the golden hours: early morning or late afternoon when the light is soft and warm.
- **Cloudy days are ideal:** If the sun is harsh, diffuse it with a sheer curtain or thin white sheet over the window.
- **Avoid backlighting:** Never stand with a window or bright light source behind you—it will turn you into a silhouette.

PRO TIP: To test your lighting: stand where you plan to take the photo and hold up your hand. If you see soft, even light across your palm with no hard shadows, you're in the right spot.

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
Face a window for soft, natural light	Use flash (it washes you out and creates harsh shadows)
Shoot on overcast days for even lighting	Shoot under overhead kitchen or bathroom lights
Use a white poster board to bounce light onto the shadow side of your face	Stand directly under a ceiling light (creates undereye shadows)
Turn off overhead fluorescent lights	Mix natural and artificial light sources

Taking the Photo: Solo vs. With Help

If You Have a Helper

Having someone take your photo is the easiest route. Here's what to tell them:

- Hold the phone at your eye level or just slightly above
- Stand about 4–6 feet away
- Use the rear (main) camera, not the front-facing selfie camera—it's higher quality
- Tap the screen to focus on your eyes before snapping the photo
- Take at least 20–30 shots with slight variations so you have options

If You're Doing It Solo

You can absolutely take a great headshot by yourself. Here's how:

- Set your phone on a tripod or prop it on a stable surface (stack of books, a shelf, a mug)
- Position the camera at eye level
- Set the self-timer to 5 or 10 seconds, or use a Bluetooth shutter remote

- Use the rear camera for better image quality; frame yourself roughly using the front camera first, then switch
- Put a piece of tape on the floor to mark where to stand so you don't have to reframe each time
- Take many shots—aim for 30 or more and select the best one later

PRO TIP: Use your phone's burst mode (hold down the shutter button) to capture several frames quickly. This helps you catch the most natural-looking expression.

Camera Settings and Phone Tips

- **Use Portrait Mode**

if your phone has it—this gently blurs the background and mimics a professional camera.

- **Shoot at High resolution.**

Go into your camera settings and set the photo quality to the highest option available.

- **Avoid** using the zoom.

Phone zoom is digital, not optical, and it will reduce your image quality. Instead, physically move closer or farther away.

- **Turn HDR on.**

This helps balance highlights and shadows for a more even exposure.

- **Turn** the grid overlay on.

Use the rule of thirds: position your eyes along the top horizontal gridline for a natural, professional composition.

What to Wear

Your clothing should look professional and feel like “you.” The goal is for the focus to be on your face, not your outfit.

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
Wear solid colors that complement your skin tone	Wear busy patterns, large logos, or graphic tees
Choose jewel tones (navy, emerald, burgundy, teal) — they photograph beautifully	Wear all white (it can wash you out against a light background)
Wear something you'd feel confident in at a job interview	Wear distracting jewelry or accessories
Layer with a blazer or cardigan for polish	Wear anything you'd need to keep adjusting

Iron or steam your clothes before shooting	Wear sunglasses or hats (your eyes need to be visible)
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PRO TIP: Not sure what color looks best on you? Hold different colored shirts up near your face in the mirror under natural light. The one that makes your face “pop” without clashing is your winner.

Poses and Angles

You don’t need to be a model—you just need to look approachable and confident. A few small adjustments make a big difference.

Angles

- **The quarter turn:** Slightly turn your body about 15–45 degrees away from the camera rather than facing it straight on. This is more flattering and dynamic.
- **Camera height:** Have the camera at eye level or just slightly above. A camera positioned too low can create an unflattering angle.
- **Lean in slightly:** Lean very slightly toward the camera. This conveys confidence and engagement.

Head and Face

- **The chin trick:** Push your forehead slightly toward the camera and tilt your chin down just a touch. This defines your jawline and avoids a double chin effect.
- **Slight head tilt:** Tilt your head very slightly (just a degree or two) to one side for a natural, friendly look. Don’t overdo it.
- **Smile naturally:** A big, forced grin looks stiff. Instead, think of something that genuinely makes you happy right before the photo is taken. A slight, natural smile with relaxed eyes is the most trustworthy and approachable look.

Posture

- **Stand tall:** Roll your shoulders back and down. Imagine a string pulling the top of your head toward the ceiling.
- **Relax your shoulders:** Drop your shoulders away from your ears. Take a deep breath and let it out before the photo.
- **Hands:** Cross your arms, rest one hand on your hip, or hold your lapel. Having something to do with your hands makes you look more natural.

PRO TIP: Feeling stiff? Do a quick “shake it out”—shake your hands, roll your neck, and take a few deep breaths before shooting. Your body language will be more relaxed and natural.

5 Go-To Poses to Try

1. **The Classic:** Face the camera straight on, shoulders squared, relaxed smile. Simple and confident.
2. **The Quarter Turn:** Turn your body 30–45 degrees to one side, but keep your face toward the camera. This adds depth.
3. **The Crossed Arms:** Cross your arms loosely and smile. Reads as confident and approachable (don't grip your arms tightly—keep it relaxed).
4. **The Lean:** Lean slightly forward with your weight on your front foot. This conveys warmth and engagement.
5. **The Look Away:** Look slightly off-camera (just past the lens) for a more candid, editorial feel. Great for creative fields.

After the Shoot: Selecting and Editing

Once you've taken your photos, here's how to pick and polish the best one.

Selecting Your Photo

- Narrow it down to your top 3–5 favorites
- Ask a trusted friend or family member which one looks most like you on a good day
- Choose the one where your expression looks the most natural and relaxed
- Make sure your eyes are sharp and in focus

Simple Editing

You don't need Photoshop. Your phone's built-in photo editor or a free app can handle everything you need.

- Slightly increase brightness if your photo is a bit dark
- Adjust the crop: LinkedIn recommends a square (1:1) ratio, 400x400 pixels minimum
- Slightly increase contrast for a crisper look
- Use the “warmth” slider to add just a touch of warmth if the photo looks too cool or blue

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
Make minor brightness and contrast adjustments	Use heavy beauty filters or skin smoothing
Crop to a square (1:1 ratio)	Over-saturate the colors
Keep your edits subtle and natural	Apply black-and-white filters (color photos perform better on LinkedIn)

Make sure you still look like yourself

Use a photo that's more than 2 years old

Final Checklist Before You Upload

- ✓ Photo is well-lit with natural light
- ✓ Background is clean and uncluttered
- ✓ Your face takes up about 60% of the frame
- ✓ Eyes are in focus and visible
- ✓ Expression is natural, warm, and approachable
- ✓ Clothing is professional and wrinkle-free
- ✓ Image is high resolution and cropped to square
- ✓ You look like yourself on a great day

Your professional image starts with a great headshot.

You don't need expensive equipment or a professional studio—just good light, a little preparation, and confidence. You've got this.