



PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT RESOURCE GUIDE



SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A CREW CAREER COUNSELOR

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GETTING STARTED

PURPOSE OF A PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT

A professional headshot is your first impression to employers, recruiters, faculty, and other professionals when they view your LinkedIn profile, Handshake account, or other networking materials.

Your professional headshot does not need to be expensive or taken in a studio. With preparation, proper lighting, and a smartphone camera, you can create a photo that represents you both professionally and authentically.

BEFORE YOU TAKE YOUR HEADSHOT

- Consider your career goals and your industry's professional expectations.
 - Research professionals in your intended industry to find common styles of photos, attire, and backgrounds.
- Think of the personal brand you want to communicate.
 - While your headshot should be professional, it should also feel authentic and reflect your personality.
- Plan to take multiple photos so you can experiment with different expressions, poses, and locations.
- Seek feedback and review your professional presence with a career counselor, mentor, professor, or a professional in your desired field.
- Determine which of your professional materials will need to be updated with your new headshot, such as your LinkedIn profile, Handshake account, and other professional profiles.

REVIEW YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE WITH CREW



After selecting your headshot, update your online career portfolios and schedule a review appointment with a CREW Career Center Counselor.

- **Schedule a virtual or in person appointment here:**
<https://crew.cc/schedule-appointment>



ATTIRE & PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE

WHAT TO WEAR

The clothing you select for your headshot will communicate your professionalism and influence first impressions. Consider wearing attire similar to that worn for interviewing, networking, and other professional meetings.

DO WEAR:

- Solid colored shirts, sweaters, and jackets
- Professional attire appropriate for your industry
- Clean, wrinkle-free clothing
- Simple jewelry and accessories
- Neutral, muted, or professional colors
- Non-reflective glasses (if you wear glasses)

DON'T WEAR:

- Clothing with distracting patterns, logos, or large graphics
- Hats, sunglasses, or other items that obscure your face
- Wrinkled or poorly fitting clothing
- Excessive accessories that draw attention away from you
- Extremely bright colors or overly shiny fabrics

HOW TO POSE



As you get in front of the camera, take these steps to find a simple and natural pose:

1. Stand or sit with good posture.
2. Face your head toward the camera and turn your shoulders slightly to one side.
 - a. Remember to keep your shoulders relaxed.
3. Look directly at the camera lens.
4. Give a comfortable, authentic smile.
 - a. Relax your jaw and facial muscles.
 - b. Take several photos with different expressions, but avoid those that feel overly serious, exaggerated, or unnatural.
5. Keep your hands out of the frame.
 - a. For a traditional headshot, the photo should show only your shoulders and above.

LOCATION & SET-UP

Now that you know how to dress and pose for your professional headshot, it is time to think about where and how to take it. The good news is that you likely already have the equipment and locations needed to create a professional, high-quality photo.

EQUIPMENT

You can take your professional headshot using items you already own.

- A camera or smartphone with a camera
 - If using a smartphone, use the back-facing camera whenever possible for higher quality images.
- A tripod, phone stand, or a sturdy surface to support the device while taking the photo
- The timer function on your camera or smartphone, or a friend who can take the photo

LOCATION AND LIGHTING

Select a location that keeps the focus on you. Strong options include:

- Plain walls or simple backgrounds
- Campus buildings, libraries, or professional office settings (without other people in the background)
- Outdoor spaces with minimal distractions

Natural lighting will provide the best results.

- Take photos where light falls evenly across your face, such as near a large window or outdoors in open shade.
- For the most flattering lighting, plan to take photos during the morning or late afternoon.
- Avoid strong shadows, bright light directly behind you, and harsh overhead lighting.

FRAMING THE PHOTO

As you set up your camera, consider the following framing tips:

- Position the camera at eye-level
- Frame the photo from about mid-chest or shoulders up
- Leave a small amount of space above your head
- Avoid taking selfies while holding the camera as this can distort facial proportions



EDITING YOUR HEADSHOT

After taking your photos, you can make minor adjustments before uploading it to your professional materials. **It's important to only make simple edits in order to maintain an authentic representation of yourself.** Simple edits may include:

- Brightness and contrast adjustments
- Color corrections
- Cropping and framing
- Removal of small background distractions

AVOID:

- Filters that significantly alter your appearance or facial features
- Excessive skin smoothing
- Extreme color effects

AI AND HEADSHOTS

While AI tools are helpful, they should be used carefully. Your headshot should present an accurate and authentic representation of who you are. Before using AI edits, ask yourself, **“Would an employer immediately recognize me from this photo if I walked into an interview tomorrow?”**

APPROPRIATE USE:

AI can be used to enhance a real photo of yourself by:

- Adjusting lighting and color balance
- Improving image clarity, sharpness, and quality
- Removing background distractions

INAPPROPRIATE USE:

Avoid using AI to:

- Create an entirely new headshot
- Alter facial features, body shape, age, or appearance
- Create an image that does not accurately represent you

PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT CHECKLIST

BEFORE YOU TAKE THE PHOTO

- ☐ Select professional attire
- ☐ Choose a clean and professional background
- ☐ Identify a location with good lighting
- ☐ Clean the back-camera lens
- ☐ Arrange a tripod, timer, or photographer

DURING THE PHOTO SESSION

- ☐ Camera at eye-level framing shoulders and up
- ☐ Good posture and natural facial expression
- ☐ Face fully visible and aimed at camera
- ☐ Distraction-free background
- ☐ Even lighting on face
- ☐ Take multiple pictures

BEFORE EDITING

- ☐ Select the strongest image
- ☐ Verify the image is clear and in focus
- ☐ Confirm that attire appears professional
- ☐ Check for distracting background elements
- ☐ Ensure the image represents current appearance

EDITING & AI REVIEW

- ☐ Use only minor edits when necessary
- ☐ Avoid filters and excessive retouching
- ☐ Did not alter facial features
- ☐ Did not create an AI-generated image
- ☐ Can confidently say the image represents you accurately

FINAL REVIEW

- ☐ Save the final image in high-resolution
- ☐ Upload your headshot to LinkedIn
- ☐ Upload your headshot to Handshake
- ☐ Replace other outdated profile photos
- ☐ Schedule an online career portfolio review with the CREW career center

