

Portfolio



Creating a Portfolio

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio attests to your work, accomplishments, and skills, and documents the breadth and depth of your ability and experience. It rounds out your resume, making you more attractive to employers and increasing your chances of being hired or of receiving a promotion.

Basic Portfolio Contents

A generic portfolio might include these elements:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Personal statements (Mission, Values, and Goals)

- Resume
- 5-8 writing samples
- Brief description of the assignment or work project
- Brief description of your contribution to the sample
- Education & Training (official transcripts, relevant coursework)
- Experience & Skills (internships, workshops, leadership roles, languages)
- Letters of recommendation
- Achievements & Awards (include hardcopies or digital images if possible)

- References

Arranging Your Portfolio

As you compile your portfolio, you can rearrange these components and combine them to fit your set of work. For instance, you might include education and training on your resume, thus eliminating those sections elsewhere.

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Why is a Portfolio Important?

"In today's tough job market, you need to create a competitive difference or "brand" to generate interviews. To achieve that end, I encourage you to build an executive portfolio. A well-written resume portfolio represents a powerful, out-of-the-box alternative to a traditional resume strategy."

~Don Straits, CEO of Corporate Warriors

Arranging Your Portfolio, con't

Or you might organize the whole portfolio by skill set (for instance, Writing, Communication, Leadership, Languages, and other abilities and marketable qualities) and list your coursework, experience, and writing samples under each heading.

The bulk of the portfolio should be dedicated to showcasing your work, so pick your pieces (often called “artifacts”) carefully. Be selective: not all your work will be relevant to each employer, and no one will dedicate hours of time to read through every last piece of your writing.

Ideally, you should maintain a basic skeleton of your portfolio, adding or removing pieces to tailor it to a specific organization. As you choose pieces of writing, remember that you can also include CD-ROMs, videos, and other multimedia formats, especially if you are assembling your portfolio digitally.

Employers prefer to see the work you’ve done outside of class, so, to maximize your portfolio, choose at least half of the samples from out-of-class writing:

- an article written for the Anchor, the Sentinel, or another journalistic publication
- a creative piece from the Opus or another literary journal
- a pamphlet, brochure, or web text for a student club/organization or area employer
- a press release or brochure for an event
- a personal essay that shows self-insight and demonstrates your ability to paint vivid pictures with words
- a brief report prepared for a community project
- an essay or other writing project showing your ability to analyze and solve a problem
- an academic essay or report based on field research, library research, or both
- an example of a collaboratively written document accompanied by a description of how the team worked and what you contributed

Portfolio Options

There are three basic formats for portfolios—standard hardcopy, e-folio (on a CD), and online—each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Some things to consider when choosing a portfolio type:

Standard Hardcopy

Positives: Assembling a hardcopy is simple and straightforward for those unfamiliar with working online, and your portfolio won’t be lost if your computer crashes.

Negatives: Since organizations seldom have time to review portfolios during an interview, presenting it can be a problem: you must drop it off permanently, leave it with the potential employer to pick up later, or retain multiple copies.

Tips:

- Put your work in sheet protectors
- Print everything on quality paper
- Mount or scan photos
- Don’t use the original documents
- Number each page

E-Folios & Online Portfolios

Positives: Many organizations are moving toward interactive multimedia presentations, so presenting an e-folio demonstrates your technical skills. E-folios also allow the viewer to review the portfolio before, after and during the interview. You can duplicate them easily and cheaply, print a hardcopy if necessary, and show it many times without signs of wear.

They’re higher profile: if you’re willing to surrender control of your work, online portfolios make your writing easily and widely accessible. People may stumble upon your portfolio as they search the Internet, and you can post your web address more quickly than you can hand out hundreds of physical portfolios.

Portfolio Options, con't

Negatives: Technology can be unpredictable: formatting and incompatibility issues make it difficult to include certain pieces, and if you're not careful to back up your portfolio, you might lose the data. Depending on your field, you may be concerned with the legal protection of work that isn't copyrighted and that is left with the employer indefinitely.

Tips

- Choose a cost-effective host, such as www.epsilen.com or writersresidence.com, which offers college students a year's subscription for free. More expensive (but not necessarily higher-quality) options include TypePad, VistaPrint, Globat, Writing.com, Hosting4Writers, iPowerWeb, or Media Bistro's Freelance Marketplace. Other possibilities include the free sites blogger.com and wordpress.com, although the blog format can appear amateurish compared to using your own domain name and a hosting site.
- Consider the bandwidth and storage of your hosting site.
- Use a format that is easily downloaded so it doesn't change during transmission.
- With the exception of longer written documents, present the information so it appears on a page without requiring the viewer to scroll.
- Test all links before uploading.
- Make sure paper and electronic documents are in .pdf format.
- Make sure all images are in .gif or .jpg format.
- Resize all images and pictures before adding them, and include captions to explain items.
- Give the portfolio a uniform look by using consistent colors, headings, and graphics.
- Remember to direct employers to your online portfolio by listing its web address on your resume, and include the URL with your email signature to create more traffic for your portfolio.

Reference Material

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