

CREATING A PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is a compilation of files or work samples documenting your experiences and accomplishments. Portfolios can take a number of forms, and the format you choose depends on the purpose of your portfolio and how you plan to use it.

The main purpose of a portfolio is to document your professional achievements. Depending on your field of study, you may wish to highlight different aspects of your professional work. For example, if your emphasis is in academia, you will focus your portfolio on your education, teaching philosophy and experience, teaching evaluations, research endeavors, honors and awards, related work experience, and service work. On the other hand, if your background is in marketing and communications, your portfolio may consist of marketing pieces you have created, promotional campaigns you spearheaded, and events you planned and implemented.

- A **traditional portfolio** is maintained in a printed format with hard copies of your work samples carefully organized and professionally presented in a three-ring binder or coil binding. You may have created a traditional portfolio as part of your academic program.
- An **online portfolio** contains electronic copies of your work samples. The file types/formats can vary depending on the type of information you are sharing. For example, you could include pdf files, html files, hyperlinks, audio files, and video files. The online portfolio adds versatility by enabling you to share your work by sharing a url or embedding your portfolio into a professional website.

The format of portfolio you choose depends on how you plan to use it. For example, if you have an upcoming interview where you will meet with a potential employer in person, you can bring a **copy** of your **traditional portfolio**, in a coil binding format, to *share and then leave behind* at the interview along with a copy of your references. This sends a strong message to your potential employer that you are well-prepared, thorough, and able to provide concrete examples of your work. The portfolio can help to facilitate your conversation during the interview and also provides additional information beyond the interview itself.

On the other hand, if you are meeting with multiple employers at a job fair, you can provide company representatives with the url address for your **online portfolio** on your resume and/or business card. In addition, when you follow-up with the representatives by e-mail to thank them after the fair, include a hyperlink in the e-mail that takes them directly to your online portfolio. This provides them quick access to your work samples. This is especially useful if you specialize in fields such as graphic design, marketing, broadcasting, or print communications and have work samples to share in unique online, audio, or video formats.

START EARLY!

Begin to build your portfolio early in your academic career. The portfolio is an ever-changing collection of your work. In addition to its usefulness as a marketing piece within your job search, the portfolio provides you with a means for personal reflection and self-assessment. It can help you to highlight your strengths and identify areas for further development. The portfolio can also be a helpful reference tool and resource when you are starting new initiatives or programs and need to review your previous work to plan for the next step!

APPEARANCE OF YOUR PORTFOLIO

Regardless of format, your portfolio should be attractive, well organized, and easy to navigate.

- For a traditional printed version of your portfolio, use a high quality binder or binding, a cover page or cardstock cover, a table of contents, labeled tab dividers, and page protectors as applicable.
- For an online portfolio, use substantial colors and high quality graphic design, create file folders or menus to organize electronic documents, and utilize file types that are easily accessible (such as pdf files).
- A CD/DVD format can be used if you have audio or video files that you would like to send ahead or leave behind at an interview. This can be useful for students who are pursuing careers in broadcasting. The disc should be properly formatted, with easily accessible files, have a neat and clean label, and a protective case.

WHAT TO INCLUDE →

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PORTFOLIO

Here are some ideas of items to include in your portfolio. Ultimately, the items you choose to include will depend on your academic and professional focus, your job target, and how you feel you can best illustrate your work.

- Resume
- Reference and/or letters of recommendation
- Business card
- Philosophy/personal statement
- Listing of competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Teaching plans, evaluations, courses taught
- Research projects, publications
- Presentations
- Writing samples, article excerpts
- Listing of academic coursework
- Service contributions
- Reports you compiled
- Brochures and marketing pieces you created
- Before and after samples where you made improvements to a product or process
- Sample newsletters
- Graphic design work
- Photos
- Certifications and certificates of completion
- Kudos you received in letter or e-mail form for quality work
- Comprehensive course projects
- Journaling of field experience or internship work
- Audio or video files
- Links to websites you designed or contributed to
- Social media links that show your *professional work*, not personal accounts



Be certain that you have permission to include the items in your portfolio. Some work materials are proprietary or confidential. Do not include any items that contain this type of information. Do not include other individuals' names. Redact or omit any sensitive information. As an alternative, you can create a mock sample of a similar document and indicate it as an example of your skills/knowledge in this area.