

Portfolios

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The portfolio is a career communication tool that creates a narrative about your work and artistic philosophy. It is a showcase of what you have to offer as an employment, exhibition, or academic candidate and is a compilation of your best and most recent work. Your portfolio is a piece that is always in progress and always evolving as you in turn evolve as a creative professional. There are five steps to creating a successful portfolio:

1. Self-assessment- Decide who you are as an artist and where you want this portfolio to take you
2. Organization- Decide what you will include
3. Design- Arrange your work based on size, portability, cost, durability, maintenance, and additions
4. Review- Collect and consider feedback
5. Production- Select a format and finalize the presentation of your work

Self-Assessment:

- Articulate your vision. Your portfolio should not only highlight your technical competence, but also reflect your artistic philosophy.
- Learn about the gallery, employer, or institution that will review your work. Ask yourself if that organization's vision is consistent with your own, and tailor your portfolio reflect your compatibility.

Organizing a Portfolio

- Remember that the quality of your work is more important than the quantity.
- Group your pieces by type, rather than placing them in chronological order. This will allow your interview to flow better (put pieces in chronological order by section if appropriate).
- Show your process. Employers, judges, and faculty love to see sketches, drafts, and works in progress.
- Include a publications section. You may include work published in a student publication.
- Provide your contact information in your portfolio³/₄ it could become separated from your cover letter and resume. If you have any loose pages, be sure that they are clearly labeled as well.

Designing a Portfolio

- Develop a coherent image. Use similar design elements for your resume, cover letter and portfolio.
- Present all of your samples in the same manner. Inconsistency is perceived as lack of taste or lack of focus.
- Strive for simplicity and clarity. Use line, alignment, font, and font size to organize your information.
- Consider the angle from which you shoot 3-D work. Try to capture the project in a single image as too many images of a single project will clutter your portfolio and dilute its potency.
- Be ethical. Remember to take credit for only what you did in a group, ensemble or firm project.
- Be prepared to USE your portfolio in an interview. Do not include any pages that you would not feel comfortable explaining. Use your pages as visual references to your verbal ideas.

Production of a Portfolio

- Invest in quality reproductions. Your portfolio is only as strong as your weakest image or lowest resolution.
- Laminate your pages. Plastic laminating saturates the color of your images and protects samples.
- Be sure that your first page is particularly sturdy; it will be subject to the most wear and tear.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread, and then have someone else proofread. Then proofread one more time!!!
- Consider many possible viewers or readers³/₄a portfolio should wow any reviewer, whether she thumbs through it in thirty seconds or pours over it for a half-hour.

Review

- Solicit feedback before showing your portfolio to an employer, gallery owner, or admissions committee.
- Register for the annual Make Your Living, Living Your Dream conference on campus. This event provides many opportunities for portfolio reviews by professionals in your field.
- Approach your faculty advisor, or contact the Career Center to schedule a portfolio review with your school's consultant.

Special tips for online portfolios

Online portfolios are a great way to showcase your creative talent in any medium while at the same time highlighting your technical skills. However, you must plan your website carefully to maximize usability. Your website should be easy to navigate, quick to load, and aesthetically pleasing.

Programming:

- Coding your web page yourself allows you to maintain total control over the page. It also allows you to easily edit the code later. However, web-authoring software is becoming more and more powerful and easier to use. Before beginning, investigate your possibilities: Adobe Photoshop, Imageready, GoLive, and Dreamweaver are some popular choices.

Navigation:

- Create a main menu page with links to different areas/categories.
- Create sub-menus within each category or area.
- Provide links. Each project page should at least include a link back to the main menu and to the next page.
- Provide a link to your resume. Store it in .pdf format so that your viewer can open it and print it in Adobe Acrobat.
- Use links to showcase your education and experience. Provide links to your school's web page, your previous employer's web page, or your references' web pages. Be SURE to ask permission first.
- Consider each possible user pathway. Your site should be organized enough to allow visitors to follow a logical sequence of samples, but flexible enough to allow viewers to tailor their visit to their own needs by focusing in on specific points of interest.

Speed:

- Make it snappy. Viewers will not wait for a slow page to load.
- Be sure images load quickly. The maximum resolution of anything on the web should be 72 dpi.
- Save images as .gifs except where color and clarity is important. In that case, save images as .jpegs.
- Place several small images on a page and give viewers the option of clicking on the image to see an enlarged version. This way viewers can get more detail if they want, but don't have to wait for a large image to load.
- Save your .gifs as "interlaced." Interlaced images, rather than loading from top to bottom, appear fuzzy and then grow clearer as the images loads. Viewers are more patient with these interlaced images.

Size:

- Consider that many viewers may work on monitors smaller than your own.
- Avoid any images which will require the viewer to scroll horizontally.
- Limit the number of times a viewer has to scroll vertically. Consider how this will affect the overall look of the page.
- Figure out what the narrowest monitor is that you want to target, and make sure your web page is narrower than that. Don't forget to leave room for scroll bars and menus.

Animation:

- Make animation eye-catching, but don't let it distract the viewer.
- Again, consider speed. Don't let animation slow down your load time.

~from Holly Wasilowski, CMU School of Architecture Alumnae

Visual Arts and Architecture Portfolios

Animation Portfolios

For students pursuing a career in animation, an excellent portfolio is absolutely essential. Most studios or companies only grant an interview after they have seen your work. To expedite your job search, make multiple

copies of all your portfolio materials so that you can circulate your work.

- Never include work on canvas. Use photographs or slides.
- Limit your portfolio to twenty-five pages. Organize your samples according to size and subject matter.
- Include copies of your work from your sketchbook as well as finished drawings. Show that you can draw fast, that you draw often, and that you draw well.
- Think about your potential employer. Large studios or projects look for candidates with specific expertise, smaller operations look for one candidate who can wear many hats. Use what you know about the studio to determine if you should emphasize the breadth or the depth of your experience. Always highlight the area you are most interested in working in.

Here are some tips for specific areas of interest:

- Background Layout Design: Include drawings in various styles and of various locations.
- Character and Prop Design: Showcase life drawings. Be sure to include costumed figures. Showcase your own creations rather than interpretations of classic cartoon characters. Vary the props you include in your portfolio. Include everything from mundane items like tables and chairs to large vehicles like planes trains and boats.
- Background painting: Include quality copies of original material that show your ability to work with color. Because background painters use fast-drying mediums, show work done with acrylics. You may include work done on a computer, but you must also demonstrate traditional skills.

Most studios want to see your work in action along with your portfolio. When putting together videotape, remember:

- Quality is more important than quantity. Choose 2-3 minutes of your best work. Even 1 minute of excellent footage is better than 5 minutes of spotty footage.
- Orient your viewer. Add a verbal introduction to the beginning of the tape in which you explain the nature of the project, your role in the project, and the type of software used to produce the piece.
- Add sound. Even if dialogue or music is not an essential part of the work, adding a blanket of sound beneath the video will add dimension to the work.
- Share the credit. Make it clear what role you took in a collaborative project. Your honesty will pay off-employers want to see that you are able to work in a team.

-From Jim Deusing, Professor of Animation, and Larry Huber's "The Television Animation Portfolio: A Model"

Architecture Portfolios

- Explore formatting options. Three effective options are:
 - A container with plates (for mixed uses)
 - A book or several books (to be mailed/carried)
 - A master version (to be carried and self presented)
- Choose a flexible format. Your choice should be able to accommodate the following:
 - Different image types and sizes
 - Interchangeability for client/target
 - Future expansion
- Think of the portfolio as a coherent book format: cover, contents, chapters, pages. A portfolio shouldn't have fewer than 10 to 12 samples of projects, and probably no more than 15 to 18.
- Design the table of contents for your portfolio so that it will expose the content, structure and organization of all that will follow. Consider using some of these categories:

built work	construction drawings	graphic design	research
competitions	design projects	industrial design	sculpture
computer drafting	drawings	installations	sketches
computer modeling	exhibitions	paintings	writing
furniture design	photography		

- Pay attention to the groupings and sequence of the contents. Consider the overall structure/composition and the type of representation, then seek to transfer/overlay this strategy within each page or plate.
- Develop your text. Titles should include when, where, why. Project descriptions include what, why and how.

~from Laura Lee, Associate Professor of Architecture

Art Portfolios

There are three types of art portfolios that students can develop:

- School/program entrance
 - Exhibition
 - Creative field - Visual Arts
School/Program Entrance and Creative Field - Visual Arts Portfolios
 - Compose a story or narrative out of your slide sheet-this will enable you to order your images effectively.
 - Edit your portfolio to include only the most important works and sketches. Include no less than 10-12 pieces, and no more than 15-18.
 - Select a series of works within your concentration. If you represent too many media, you won't provide an in-depth view into your specialty.
 - Mat your work.
 - Keep your presentation neat and professional.
 - Include your sketchbooks. Schools like to see what kind of work you're doing outside of class and to see how you translate an idea through to processed work.
 - Exhibition - Visual Arts
 - Edit your slides for both focus and appropriate light levels.
 - Include multiple examples of similar work.
- ~from Simone Jones, Visiting Professor of Art

Design Portfolios

Format:

- Cover your bases. Creating a web site or CD portfolio can effectively showcase your knowledge and competency with various technologies, but be prepared with a back-up paper copy in case something in the technology fails during your interview.
- Choose your paper carefully. Think about the value of the interaction of an employer opening a brochure, thumbing through a pamphlet, etc.
- Produce your final product in color if color is an important element of your work.
- Think about logistics. Choose a format that you can travel with or mail safely and inexpensively.
- Plan to update your portfolio often. Choose a format that can easily accommodate additions and deletions. An idea is to present a series of boards in a hand-constructed box/carrier.

Content:

- Be concise. For a portfolio, limit yourself to 20 pieces.
- Tailor the content of your portfolio to the position you are seeking. For example, if you are interviewing for a position that focuses on the design of the structure of interactions you would choose a different set of materials than if you intended to work on content strategy.
- Present your process work- if you can present it neatly. Show a series of thumbnails used in developing an idea along with the final product.

Text:

- Pay special attention to the cleanliness of the typography. Use a consistent style for each element of your complete employment package (your resume, cover letter and portfolio).
- Know your text. When presenting the portfolio in a personal interview, don't expect the employer to read the text on the spot - explain by talking.

Special Tips for Teasers:

- Choose 3-5 pieces of your best work.
- Include a brief paragraph emphasizing the overall concept for each piece.
- Tailor your teaser to each company.

~from Margot Bloomstein, CMU School of Design Alumnae

Performing Arts Portfolios

Drama Portfolios

Like all artists, dramatic artists of all kinds need a portfolio that showcases their talents in a neat, professional and visually compelling manner. For drama students, a portfolio must meet the additional challenge of bringing performances to life in a two-dimensional medium. Therefore, students should consider the following content guidelines in addition to the general tips outlined at the beginning of this handout.

Performance Portfolios should include:

- Resume and cover letter