



Portfolios aren't just for artists anymore. Long regarded as an essential job-search tool by creative professionals like visual artists and architects, these collections of work-related artifacts are gaining popularity in general job searches. You might want to start thinking about creating your own.

### **What is a portfolio anyway?**

A basic portfolio includes a résumé, transcripts and letters of recommendation secured in a binder or notebook. You might also incorporate items that illustrate writing or computer skills such as press releases or newsletters. In other words, anything that demonstrates the credibility of claims made in the résumé can be included in the portfolio. It is generally shown during the interview process. Bear in mind we're not talking about toting the complete works of "Me, Inc." to an unsuspecting employer. A central or archival file of relevant artifacts can be created so that your portfolio can be modified, much like your résumé, for each job vacancy.

### **What is involved in creating a portfolio?**

Like a résumé, a portfolio requires an investment of time. The following steps are suggested for creating your portfolio:

1. Research employers and job desired.
2. Review your collection of showpieces.
3. Assemble artifacts or work samples.
4. Develop a sequence for the artifacts.
5. Develop captions and titles.
6. Create an introduction & a "Table of Contents".
7. Develop the first draft.
8. Evaluate your product; get feedback.
9. Revise and develop finished draft.
10. Rehearse using your portfolio.

Once you assemble your first portfolio, you simply add to it or customize it to an employer by revising captions and text. If your portfolio is done on a computer, the revising and updating will take little effort and time.

### **The Low and High Tech Alternatives**

Two ways of designing your portfolio include high tech and low tech. The high tech alternative is to utilize multimedia software and design a computerized portfolio that can be saved on a floppy or compact disk. This alternative is easier to manage once it is finished but may take more time initially to design and complete. Another design option is the low tech alternative, which involves creating a printed hard copy portfolio. The following paragraphs describe some options and suggestions for constructing your portfolio:

**Exterior:** Depending on your personality, skills, and employment goal, your portfolio can vary widely, from a sleek black, professional zippered binder to a hand-made book bound in tarnished, painted aluminum. You may also choose to use a box, instead of a portfolio, to hold a couple of binders or loose samples.

**Dimensions:** Your portfolio should be easy to handle. Keep in mind that occasionally you will be asked to leave it for a day or two for review. You want the prospective client or employer to feel comfortable when opening the portfolio, turning the pages, or

removing samples. If your portfolio is awkward to handle, they may not review its contents.

**Number of Pages:** Use only as many pages as necessary to show your best work. Remember, quality is much more important than quantity.

✓ **HOT TIP:** A binder or portfolio that contains removable pages is much more flexible than one with fixed plastic sleeves. Removable pages allow you to interchange contents, targeting your portfolio for each use.

**Organization:** If all of your work is of one type, you may choose to lay out your contents in chronological order. When organizing your portfolio pieces chronologically, it is a good idea to put the most recent work first. If your portfolio pieces are derived from several different areas, organizing the contents by category may make more sense. When organizing by category, also place the most recent work first within each categorical section.

**Backgrounds:** Don't use distracting colors or patterns behind your portfolio pieces. Many portfolios come supplied with black or gray inserts. You can usually change these, or slip other paper into the sleeve, but be careful not to draw attention away from your work.

**Layout of Pages:** The following is a list of areas you may want to include in your portfolio.

- ◆ Personal Information (address, phone, e-mail, etc.)
- ◆ Table of Contents
- ◆ Letter of Application
- ◆ Résumé
- ◆ Accomplishments
- ◆ Awards
- ◆ Sample Work from Your Classes
- ◆ Senior Project
- ◆ Student Teaching Materials
- ◆ Work Experience
- ◆ Professional Development Activities, such as workshops or conferences
- ◆ Leadership Activities
- ◆ Community Service Experience
- ◆ Letters of Recommendation
- ◆ Include any awards, certificates, newspaper articles, photos, or examples of things you have done or in which you are skilled

### Summary

Creating a portfolio can be an effective tool in your current and future job search. By compiling updated information and maintaining it as you move to different jobs, your portfolio can be a great tool to sell your skills to interested employers.