

Portfolios

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of evidence of skills and accomplishments presented in a logical order and format used to market you to employers. A portfolio should include samples of work that evidence your skills and abilities as they relate to the type of position for which you are applying.

Why is it Beneficial to Have a Portfolio?

As you prepare for a job interview, compiling a portfolio refreshes your memory about various experiences and activities. This review is excellent preparation for supporting your answers to the employer's questions in the interview. It also forces you to think about which accomplishments will be important to the interviewer, thus helping you organize the accomplishments effectively. Finally, the simple act of preparing a portfolio gives you a better idea of how well you qualify for the position.

Having a portfolio in the interview can also:

- communicate a high level of preparation, thus implying a strong interest in the position and organization;
- demonstrate experience in critical knowledge areas, as well as enthusiasm, creativity, confidence, personality and work ethic;
- allow you some control in the interview, which is especially desirable if you know that the employer is looking for candidates with a certain level of "take charge" ability;
- add a critical visual dimension to your resume and interview process, making it easier for the interviewer to remember you from a large pool of candidates.

What is Included in a Portfolio?

Before you can assemble your portfolio, you need to collect the items (evidence) that you will include. You may want to start collecting items as you go and store them all in a working portfolio. To create a professional portfolio (which you will share with employers), you will need to identify and choose appropriate items from your working portfolio. For each job you plan to apply for, you can select and display the items that are most related to the position.

As you start identifying items you want to include, it is best to also write a brief description of each one. This may include the skill it represents, what goal was accomplished, as well as where, when, and why. By cataloging each sample this way, you will not have to be concerned with remembering the details when you choose to use one in your portfolio. Listed below are some things you may want to consider for your portfolio:

- Certificates of honor or awards
- Newspaper articles: volunteer work, project organization, community involvement, athletics
- Writing samples: papers, articles, stories, poetry
- Music
- Teaching or coaching experience: lessons/work-out plans, tutoring plans



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September 22, 2005

- Brochures/PR items
- Procedure or form development
- Pictures of bulletin boards, artwork, volunteer work/activities
- Audio or video tapes of performances
- Computing skills (hard copy and/or disks): programs, websites
- Research skills: description of research project, research papers (copy), lab reports
- Licenses or certificates such as: life guard, CPR, teaching, insurance, real estate, actuarial, CPA
- Publications: stories, poetry, research
- Miscellaneous: reference letters, thank you notes, recommendations, letters of acknowledgement

How is a Portfolio Arranged?

There are a number of ways that a portfolio can be arranged. Of primary importance is including items that provide strong evidence of your skills and that are clearly explained. For example, if you choose to include a certificate you were awarded for volunteering, you would want to include a brief description of the event and your involvement in it.

When it comes to actually constructing a portfolio, many people use a three-ring binder and display their items in clear plastic sheet protectors. By using this format, samples can be added and removed easily. You may also want to use dividers to arrange examples into particular categories, such as specific skill areas (i.e., communication, leadership, research). Again, it is very important to have descriptions or explanations for items that may not be self-explanatory or for which information will benefit the reader.

You will want to update your portfolio as time goes on. Older items can be replaced with newer ones. In-depth, specific examples of skills and achievements that are applicable to the position for which you are applying, should replace older, outdated and more general samples. Although you will make changes to your portfolio, you might want to keep the items you remove in case they are appropriate at another time.

Below are some websites to visit for more information about building your portfolio:

Ball State's Portfolio Site	www.bsu.edu/students/careers/documents/portfoli
Building Your Portfolio	www.webgrrls.com/wfs.jhtml?/career/acvice/portfolio
How to Make a Portfolio	http://quintcareers.com/job_search_portfolio.html
Portfolio Preparation Tips	www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Portfolio_65_01.htm
Skidmore's Online Portfolio	www.skidmore.edu/administration/career/resume/portfolio.html