

Preparing and presenting a professional portfolio



What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of your work that represents your knowledge and experiences in a particular area or career field. It is a tangible reflection of who you are as a professional with proof, or evidence, of your skills and abilities.

Portfolios can be presented in several ways. You can showcase your collection of work physically in binder with divided sections or digitally in an electronic portfolio or digitally on a website. How you choose to showcase your portfolio and what you include should be largely determined by the industry in which you work or intend to work.

What are portfolios used for?

Having documentation of your work product in a portfolio can be a valuable part of your career plan. Portfolios can be used for a variety of purposes and depending on your industry may be the standard practice (as with industries of art, photography, etc.) or not really used at all.

As an introduction to future employers, portfolios are an excellent way to showcase the value and experience you bring. At your current place of employment they can

also be used to negotiate promotions, raises and bonuses as well as be a repository of your professional development.

An effective portfolio may be a required submission as part of the admissions process for certain academic programs and graduate applications. Some degree programs will also require students to compile a portfolio throughout their academic career to showcase learning outcomes as a graduation requirement. Additionally, portfolios can be used when applying for scholarships, grants and/or educational credit.

What goes in a portfolio?

Contents of your portfolio will differ depending on your intended purpose and industry type. When gathering information to include in your portfolio, keep in mind what items would represent your qualifications and skills in the best way for this particular job or degree.

Typically a portfolio includes the following:

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- Resume or CV
- Samples of work (reports, projects, writing samples, research summaries, etc.)
- Licenses or certifications
- Letters of reference or recommendation
- Any other evidence of skills
- Transcripts (if applicable)

Depending on your program or industry, there may be additional content you can add to your portfolio. Here are a few examples for additional content for program specific portfolios.

Portfolios for Teachers Sample Content:

- Credentials
- Exam scores (CSET, RICA)
- Parent communication sample
- Student assessment
- Example of a lesson plan related to standards

Portfolios for Business Administration Sample Content:

- Sample proposal
- Writing samples
- Accomplishments
- Business management experiences

How and when do I present my portfolio?

Once you have created an amazing professional portfolio, your next step is to determine the best way to successfully share it.

In your job search, a digital or paper portfolio may be a required supplement requested along with an application. Other times, an employer may request for you to bring one to your interview (or email it ahead of time) and then ask you to present it.

Even if a portfolio is not requested, a good time to present it would be at the end of your interview when asked if you have anything additional to share. This would provide an opportunity to impress your interviewer and allow for a smooth appropriate transition. When you present your portfolio at an interview, it is not necessary to go through all the content page-by-page. Be sure to highlight work that supports your previous answers or showcases your experiences and skills. If you leave your portfolio with the employer it may leave an impact of a complete picture of who you are.

You can also showcase your portfolio on your social networking sites, such as LinkedIn or on [Brandman's CareerLink](#). On these sites, recruiters and potential employers can view your work along with your resume to get a feel for who you are and the value you would add to their organization.