



CAREER PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is a record of your accomplishments in school, on the job, in internships, and volunteer work. Portfolios were originally used primarily by visual artists to present examples of their work. A career portfolio can be used by anyone, and may include work samples, letters, reports, brochures or any other item that illustrates your abilities and experience (see list below).

The Portfolio Advantage

Job seekers use portfolios to set themselves apart from the other candidates by presenting tangible evidence of their skills and abilities. Applicants present portfolios during an employment interview to illustrate their accomplishments and demonstrate the quality of work they produce. Students with minimal paid work experience may include materials related to participation in co-curricular activities, volunteer or internship experiences, outside clubs, as well as samples of academic work.

How to Organize a Portfolio

The contents of a portfolio are typically organized in a three-ring binder. Each item should be placed in a plastic sheet protector to keep it from getting damaged. The contents can be arranged chronologically, or by topic (i.e., academic work, internships, etc.) or type of item (marketing materials, reports, certificates, etc.).

Your completed portfolio may contain dozens of items. However, for a job interview you may want to bring only 10-15 items that are the most relevant to the position for which you are applying.

Suggested Portfolio Contents

1. Extra copies of your resume.
2. Official copy of your college/university transcripts.
3. Evidence of any licenses, credentials or professional certifications you hold.
4. Job descriptions from positions you have held (including internships and volunteer work).
5. Certificates of awards and honors.
6. Records of formal training, (e.g., RA training, CPR training, professional certification) including names of presenters, time commitment, new knowledge gained, skills learned, competency level, etc.
7. Letters of recommendation from faculty, or supervisors.
8. Unsolicited recommendation letters, or memos thanking you for outstanding work.
9. Short examples of your academic work (omit instructor's grade and/or comments).
10. A list of conferences and workshops you have attended, including names of presenters, time commitment, new knowledge gained, skills learned, competency level, etc.
11. Performance evaluations from jobs, internships or volunteer experiences.

12. Samples of materials you developed (handouts, flyers, promotional brochures) for a campus club or outside activity.
13. Samples of materials you developed for a job or internship (flyers, databases, forms, promotional materials, reports, charts and graphs, etc.). Do NOT include any confidential or proprietary information.
14. Records of speaking engagements or conference presentations (on and off campus).
15. Examples of nonacademic written work such as newsletter or newspaper articles, editorials, brief reports, fiction or poetry.
16. Evidence of research, such as abstracts of papers, reports or presentations, and graphical illustrations of research results.
17. Newspaper or newsletter clippings mentioning your name and your accomplishments.
18. Evidence of senior or capstone projects such as an abstract accompanied by a chart or graph.
19. Documentation of technical and/or computer skills such as samples of databases, spreadsheets or graphics you've created.
20. Evidence of involvement in campus or professional association activities such as a program from an event you planned or in which you participated.
21. Photos with brief, explanatory captions.
22. Evidence of your ability to produce work related to the job you are seeking (i.e., work you created specifically for the portfolio to demonstrate your capabilities). For example, show how you would redesign a newsletter, create a marketing campaign, describe how you would rewrite a report or revise a research design.

How to Use a Portfolio

You should mention your portfolio at the bottom of your resume (i.e., “portfolio of work samples available on request”) or in your cover letter. Always bring your portfolio to the interview. When the interviewer begins to ask questions about your resume you can use your portfolio to support your responses. For example, if an interviewer asks you about a particularly challenging experience, you might describe the effort behind a team research project and show the interviewer the section of the final report for which you were responsible.

During some interviews you may not have time to show your portfolio in detail. It's a good idea to bring extra copies of some of your best work samples, which you can leave with the interviewer. If an employer is interested in particular items but you do not have copies available, offer to mail copies of those documents after the interview.

Never leave original copies of your documents or your entire portfolio with anyone. In fact, it is best to use only good quality photocopies in your portfolio and ***keep the originals in a safe place***. Your portfolio should be continuously updated and reorganized to reflect your most current accomplishments and meet your changing needs.

The career counselors in the Career Services Center are available to assist you in developing, organizing and evaluating a career portfolio. Call 415-422-6216 for appointment and drop-in times.