

Professional Portfolios

What is a Professional Portfolio?

A professional portfolio can highlight a collection of your best professional work samples. Portfolios allow individuals to present their professional achievements, skills and abilities, and provide documentation of their experience and training. Portfolios are great for all job seekers in all fields.

Types of Portfolios

A **hard copy portfolio** is housed in a three-ring binder and contains artifacts and items which an individual can bring with them and integrate into their interview. The portfolio should have relevant examples of your work to show an employer what skills and abilities you can bring to their organization. The advantage of a hard copy portfolio is that it ensures the employer will see the examples of your work you find most relevant and use some of the items to answer questions.

An **electronic portfolio** can be presented on the web or on a CD. The online electronic portfolio address should be on your resume along with your contact information. Both may prompt an employer to call you for an interview. One disadvantage to an electronic portfolio is that an HR office or employer may not take the time to review your portfolio and may not see your work.

It is recommended that individuals create both electronic and hard copy portfolios to ensure an employer can see your achievements, skills and abilities at an interview.

Interviewing and Portfolios

When you attend an interview bring a copy of your hardcopy portfolio. Use items in your portfolio to help you answer questions. Present the materials to the employer and allow them time to look at them. Do not show them your entire portfolio unless they ask to see it. You can also leave your portfolio behind for them to browse. Do not leave originals. You may want to have more than one portfolio in the event that you do not pick up your portfolio prior to your next interview or in the event that you do not get it back. A CD or online copy of your portfolio is also helpful in the event where the employer is interested in further browsing through your materials.

Portfolio Organization

Your electronic portfolio and hard copy should be presented professionally and organized. To present your portfolio be aware of these general rules:

Hard copy portfolio

- Place artifacts and items in a three-ring binder, using clear sheet protectors; attach or copy smaller items to an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper, so it will not fall out of the portfolio.
- Create categories (sections) for your portfolio and place them in a logical order. Categories make your artifacts and items easy to find (see “what to include” for category titles)
- Create a table of contents at the beginning of your portfolio and create typed labels and divider tabs to distinguish each section of your portfolio.
- Give your portfolio a professional and visually attractive look. Print items in color when possible, use colored paper for the beginning of each section, and choose fonts which are neutral and professional.

Electronic Portfolio

- Organize your different portfolio items into categories using menu tables (use the same categories titles if you have a hard copy portfolio)

- Utilize free online e-portfolio tools such as <https://portfolio.umn.edu/portfolio> (Free for University of Minnesota students) or www.efoliomn.com (Free for Minnesota students)
- Attach items that can be easily opened, consider converting Microsoft office documents into PDF as well. Also provide brief introductions to each item uploaded.
- A photo of yourself and personal information should not be included, but contact information should be the same as you have listed on your resume.

Your portfolio categories will vary depending your line or work and the industry you wish to enter. Your portfolio, just like a resume, should be tailored to highlight your skills and abilities you bring to an organization and to the industry.

Items/Categories for your Portfolio

The most time intensive part of creating your portfolio is choosing what to include and how you want your layout to look like. Be sure to save all of your work from you education, work experience, volunteer experiences, and any other activity that highlights your skills and abilities.

Key items to include:

- Resume
- Transcripts or Copy of your Diploma
- Certificates and Awards
- Letters of recommendation
- Job Descriptions
- Work Projects
- Performance evaluations (provided they are good)
- Thank-you notes (from coworkers, customers, supervisors, etc.)
- E-mails acknowledging your work
- Writing samples (business letters, research reports, press releases, creative writing samples, work reports, etc.)
- Presentations you've created
- Flyers from events you planned or presentations you've created
- Computer Documents you've created (Excel, Word, PowerPoint, HTML)
- Academic projects
- Job specific examples (e.g. lesson plans, training certificates, lab write ups, work goals, sample assignments)

Categories to consider:

- Education and Training
- Experience and Accomplishments
- Professional Memberships and Involvement
- Special Projects
- Research interests