

Portfolio Guidelines

Anyone looking for a competitive edge should have a highly individualized portfolio that showcases skills, achievements, experience and qualifications. A college degree does not guarantee employment after graduation, nor does the mention of prior work experience and your skills on your resume. Typically presented during an interview, your portfolio is tangible evidence of your accomplishments. The portfolio is a powerful assessment tool that prepares and strengthens your interview skills.

Major Components

- **Table of Contents-** Employers expect to see an easy to follow format.
- **Statement of Values and Professional Objectives-** A mission statement that defines who you are, what you do and why you do it. Include personal and professional goals, your career principles, and management or work philosophy as appropriate.
- **Career Highlights-** Present an overview of your major accomplishments. List years of experience in specific areas, special skills and unique expertise. Support with formal acknowledgements such as letters, salary increase, promotions, etc.
- **Academic/Personal Information-** Resume and cover letter; transcript and testing results (GMAT, GRE, SAT, LSAT); faculty, staff and advisor letters of reference; skill/interest/value/personality assessment results.
- **Skills and Technical Abilities** – Writing samples; documentation of technical/computer skills; samples of academic coursework (thesis paper, class project, etc.) or employment projects (manuals, brochures, professional letters, etc.)
- **Professional Information** – Certifications; licenses; list of conferences and workshops attended; thank you letters; internship/Cooperative Education/Service-Learning evaluations and projects; list of professional organization involvement
- **Honors/Award Information** – Certificates of awards/honors/recognition/appreciation; nomination to honors/academic organizations; newspaper articles or other published works about your achievements.

Format

There are three ways to format your portfolio:

- **Three-Ring Binder** – Many art and office supply stores carry three-ring portfolio binders in addition to ringless binders that showcase your documents through protective sheaths. A leather binder gives a more professional appearance and is very durable.
- **Online** – If you have a web page, you may want to have a section that features your portfolio. Most items can be scanned in or arranged as attachments.
- **Zip Disks or CD's** – These are popular choices for job seekers who wish to leave copies of their portfolios with potential employers. Depending on the information you leave behind and the nature of your career field, you may wish to be selective in what you leave with the employer. If you are unsure, discuss the issues of intellectual property rights with a professor or your career advisor.

Organization

There is no one right way to organize your portfolio. Employers do, however, expect to see an easy to follow format. You should have:

- Table of contents
- Tab-divided sections of your work, organized according to your table of contents
- Your resume and a list of references or letters of reference at the beginning of your portfolio

These are some basic tips that will help you begin compiling your portfolio. Just as you do with your resume and cover letter, you may need to customize your portfolio for each job position. Once you have a “first draft,” it is easy to maintain and add to your portfolio. Students in every major are encouraged to create a portfolio. Bring your portfolio to the Cahill Center to be critiqued.