Creating a Portfolio

Gather together examples and documentation of your accomplishments and skills, assignments, internships, special training, workshops, volunteer work activities, committees, and other activities in your life.

Possible items to include:
- Resume
- Transcripts
- Writing samples or reports
- Items created through class projects
- Publications
- Evidence of awards or honors
- Laboratory work
- Synopses of term or research paper
- Papers with instructor comments and grades
- Certificates of attendance at seminars or workshops
- Documentation of leadership experience
- Agendas of meetings you conducted
- Samples of flyers or other promotional materials that you designed
- Evidence from volunteer, internship, and paid experiences
- Licensure or certification documentation
- Positive evaluations
- Letters of recommendation
- Philosophy or personal mission statement
- Evidence of involvement in Professional organizations
- Grants and proposals that you wrote
- Sporting, music, or artistic awards
- Photographs, videos, or CDs
- Outlines or PowerPoint presentations, lesson plans
- Printouts of web pages or architectural designs that you created
- Anything that adds value to or is going to elicit additional conversation during the interview
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Organizing a Portfolio

Although there are different ways to organize your portfolio, depending on your experiences and activities and the field in which you are seeking a position, job-seekers generally organize their portfolio by skills or knowledge areas. You can use the job description to help you decide what to include. If the job description asks for teamwork, public speaking, computer and communication skills, organize your items by those skill areas.

1. Professional Statement, Work Philosophy, or Career Goals
A statement of your beliefs about yourself and your professional goals as well as your outlook on life in your career area. After reading the statement, an employer should know whether you fit the "style" of the organization. It is more in depth than a job objective and can be listed with bullets.

2. Skill Areas/Work Samples
Writing samples, artwork, research papers, reports, articles, web pages, designs, brochures, flyers, posters, class projects. For large pieces of art work or sculpture take good quality photography and include the photo or digital image.

3. Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees, Honors, Awards or Special Recognition
Simply make copies of your originals or include newspaper clippings or pictures.

4. Community Service
Photos, newspaper articles, thank you letters, flyers, agenda, certificate of participation, projects, record of sales, and any other tangible items to highlight community service projects you have been involved with.

5. Professional Memberships
Make copies of membership cards, documents, letters, journals to show your involvement and participation.

6. Conference Participation
Nametags, attendance forms, programs, presentations and any participation related to attending professional conferences.

7. Presentations
PowerPoint notes, outlines, programs, etc. that show what you have presented.

8. Transcripts
Include a copy of all college transcripts.

9. References
Enclose your list of professional references, any letters written regarding you as a recommended candidate and any other documentation that shows you as a recommended professional.

10. Miscellaneous
Remember that the above categories are a guide to get you started. Use may use some or all of the categories as appropriate. Feel free to create additional sections of your portfolio as you see necessary. Your portfolio is unique to you and what you can bring to a company or organization. Don't be afraid to highlight ALL aspects of your skills!

Portfolio Design
When presenting your portfolio to a prospective employer, you should include only necessary items needed to apply for that particular position.

- Organize items in a three-ring binder. (Good quality that looks professional and attractive)
- Use clear plastic sleeves to protect your materials and make them easier to organize and see.
- A good size portfolio is approximately 10-20 pages.
- A table of contents helps direct readers to particular items and gives a general idea of how the portfolio is organized.
- Tabs can be used to highlight areas indicated in the table of contents.
- Use captions on every piece of evidence in the portfolio. Captions work best when they are concise, specific, and eye-catching.

You may want to consider a computerized version of your portfolio (known as an "e portfolio"). You could post your portfolio on the web, bring a stand-alone version on a laptop to the interview, or produce it all on a CD that you could leave with employers. If you really want to get fancy, may want to showcase your skills by adding sound bits, video clips, and animation.

Using a Portfolio in the Interview
Using your portfolio during the interview as a way to help you answer an interviewer's questions and support your responses with documents to demonstrate abilities, skills, and accomplishments. To do so, it is necessary to think about the type of questions that will likely be asked in your interview. This can help you streamline your portfolio so that it is a compact picture of your professionalism. Practice interviewing while using your portfolio so you will be able to access your portfolio instantly in response to an interviewer's questions.

Add and subtract items as the need arises. Reorganize and edit your portfolio to suit each job opening. Your portfolio may change from employer to employer. Research each potential employer's needs and incorporate any work you've done that relates to what you learn.