

# PORTFOLIO BASICS

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A portfolio is a visual, organized and portable collection of documents and artifacts that provides a cumulative record of your experience, skills, knowledge, accomplishments, and attributes. There are two types of portfolios: the master portfolio and the presentation portfolio.

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## The master portfolio

A master portfolio is a collection of the information and documents that are important in your career development. Use it to store information that you may want to access as your career develops. You would not normally show this to employers as it will just be too big.

Creating a master career portfolio will help you to:

- + Observe patterns and areas of exploration in your career
- + Clarify what you want to build in your career
- + Identify strengths and see concrete evidence of your progress
- + Create career-related documents such as résumés, cover letters, personal websites and employment proposals
- + Prepare for career events such as meetings with employers, interviews and performance reviews

This portfolio could include:

- + Career vision and goals (statements you have written about what you hope to build or accomplish in your career)
- + Self assessments (self assessment summaries and inventories, personality/aptitude test results, etc.—see the competency kit and journey kit for assessment tools and worksheets)
- + Experience (lists of your past work and volunteer experiences, descriptions of your competencies—your skills, knowledge and attributes, résumés, cover letters, etc.—see the competency kit and journey kit for assessment tools and worksheets)
- + References (names and contact information of references, reference letters, etc.)
- + Education (lists of education and training programs, copies of degrees and certificates, transcripts, etc.)
- + Training and professional development (lists of professional development activities, specialized training courses, etc.)
- + Professional memberships (lists of memberships in professional associations, etc.)
- + Awards and recognition (scholarships, certificates of recognition or achievement, letters and notes of appreciation, performance reviews, work term evaluations, newspaper clippings, photos, etc)
- + Work samples with summary captions and narratives (papers, projects, essays, reports, lab reports, fictional writing, non-fictional writing, website samples, brochures, etc.)

Your master portfolio helps you document your learning and experience over time.

## The presentation portfolio

A presentation portfolio is a small collection of critical documents or work samples that you assemble from your master portfolio and present to an employer or selection committee. If you spend the time to create and maintain a master portfolio, you'll be able to quickly put together presentation portfolios when you need them.

Your presentation portfolio needs to be brief (generally less than 8 documents) and targeted to the position at hand. Select your strongest samples or documents; it's often better to have an outstanding portfolio with only 4 samples than an average one that is longer. Make sure you do not include confidential business information from previous employers. If you are creating a hard copy presentation portfolio, select a slim professional looking folder and use good colour photocopies and not your original documents. That way you will be free to leave the portfolio with managers to have a look at when they have time.

Your presentation portfolio may be used when networking, during the application process or when interviewing for positions. Go over the contents a few times so you are confident in speaking about the different elements included.

- + Bring your presentation portfolio to informational meetings or drop it off with a letter of introduction at companies you are interested in working for
- + Put a link in your cover letter or resume to where your presentation portfolio can be found online or send it as an attachment with your application
- + Ask to present it at an interview. If there is no time for you to present your portfolio during the interview, offer to leave it with the selection committee and pick it up at a later date

Items commonly found in presentation portfolios:

- + Work samples (lesson plans, writing, marketing documents, blueprints, software, video clips)
- + Project descriptions
- + Photos of work or work sites
- + Reference letters
- + Testimonials
- + Evaluations
- + Awards
- + Certifications

## Storing your portfolio

Once you've gathered your information and artifacts and put them into categories, you will want to find an effective way to store them. You may need two forms of storage, one electronic and one hard copy. Your prime concern is to find a way for you to keep your documents together in a way that is easy to access and flexible to use.