

Portfolios

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Before you Begin

A portfolio is your collection of your best works to showcase to employers, galleries, professionals at networking events, or friends if you just want to show off! As an artist, this is just as important as your CV or cover letter is when looking for work.

Portfolios are important for many reasons. When applying for most creative roles, you will need to have a portfolio and nowadays, having a digital as well as a physical version is crucial when applying for opportunities in most creative fields.

Having your work neatly gathered in one collection makes it easy for you to show your work and curating those pieces makes sure you put your best foot forward. Your portfolio forms a crucial part of your professional brand and how you present it says a lot about you as a creative. It's important to have a portfolio in addition to other platforms you might use to host your artwork, such as social media. You don't want to be reliant on those platforms in case they become inaccessible.

As you start to reach out to industry, it could be a good idea to consider buying a domain name. This can cost approx. £2 a month and means that you will have your own, professional website to host your portfolio with your name. Check out [this website](#) for more information.

Once you have amassed many works, it can act as an archive of your creative career that you can adapt and curate for different roles you apply for.

This article will teach you where to start when first creating a portfolio, and how to use it effectively.

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Digital vs. physical

It's a good idea to have your portfolio in both forms, as applications and communications across the creative sector become increasingly reliant on online platforms. This doesn't mean you have to create two entirely new portfolios – you can print out your digital portfolio and keep it in a binder or folder that is easy to carry and look through. Vice versa, you can scan your physical portfolio and compile the images into a PDF or something similar. You are also free to make both portfolios unique and really dive deep into the creation of them.

Whichever way you go about this, both versions should look neat, be easy to access, and they should both be updated at the same time.



Before you Begin

What should I put in my portfolio?

There are no rules that you have to follow when making a portfolio, but a few common things people include that you may want to consider include:

1. A cover page

This is the first thing you will see when viewing your portfolio – it can be a homepage on a website, the cover of a folder, or the first page of a PDF.

You have a lot of creative freedom when it comes to what you put on the cover – it could be a favourite artwork, information about you, or it could be personalised, if it's going to a specific person or company.

Whatever you choose to do, you should make sure that it sets the tone for the rest of your portfolio and practice as a whole. It should quickly communicate you, your practice and your interests. For example, if you're an illustrator known for your bright and colourful illustrations, you might consider matching your cover page in colour scheme, typeface, or even include a graphic or two – all of these things contribute to your personal brand.

2. About Me

When writing your about me section, it's important to balance being professional with being authentic. Be sure to use your own voice and get across your enthusiasm for your practice.

Decide if you are going to write in 1st or 3rd person and stick to it - for more creative portfolios, and as a new creative, writing in the first person sounds more authentic, although for Fine Art portfolios, writing in the third person is usually the norm.

A structure you could take for your about me section could include:

1. Who you are and how you got there
2. What you are best at
3. What you like working on (include you how are going to help your audience)
4. How you do it uniquely (do you have any awards or motives that make you different to other creatives? What value could you bring? E.g. do you use sustainable materials etc.?)
5. A call to action - "reach out for projects/commissions/follow Instagram for updates"

Check out this bio as an example:



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2. Your projects

Choose the projects that you're most proud of, and that both exhibit what you can do, and what you want to do in the future.

These pieces don't necessarily need to be paid work – if you're lacking industry experience, feel free to include uni work, drafts, self-initiated projects, etc.

If you have done some freelancing you might like to include some of your commercial work to show what you can turn around against a tight deadline or when working to a commercial brief. Employers are interested in seeing this as well as your more experimental work that you have done at uni!

When you start to apply for graduate roles you will need to think about curating your portfolio for different roles. Do your research and work out what they might be looking for. Think about selecting your best 6-8 projects, how would you align your style with what they might be looking for?

2. Contact info

Make it easy for employers to contact you. Make sure that your contact info is clear and easy to read – for example, if your portfolio is digital, make sure you include working hyperlinks. If it's physical, make sure that it is easily readable (i.e. type out your social media usernames as opposed to website addresses).

Even if this information is in your CV or cover letter, it's still good practice to make sure this information is available across all your documents. If it is in multiple places, however, make sure that all documents are updated and include the same information.

You can decide what information you would like to include, which can include:

- * Email
- * Business/mobile phone number



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- * Business/mobile phone number
- * Location - don't give an exact address! A city, region or country is enough
- * Relevant links (social media platforms, your website, any business pages, etc.)



Curating your Portfolio

What to include

Choosing what to include is a tough task, especially if you are proud of many of your works. When deciding what goes into your portfolio, you have to be tough, and consider the purpose of each project and what it communicates to the viewer. Start by making a list of what you would like your portfolio pieces to achieve or communicate:

- ✦ Is it technically impressive?
- ✦ Does it show your range of medium/style/platform?
- ✦ Is this the kind of work you would like to make more of?
- ✦ Does it appeal to the type of work your typical viewer is looking for?
- ✦ Does it show off my personality, passions, and interests?
- ✦ Is it eye-grabbing enough to make the viewer really pay attention?

Once you have a number of requirements each piece needs to meet, it makes it easier to whittle down your works.

The pace

Keep in mind the viewer's experience when placing your projects – if you're including a few really in-depth, detailed projects, it might be better to break this up with smaller, more digestible works, so the viewer doesn't get overwhelmed. Vice versa, if a lot of your work is simple and easy to understand, throw in a few complicated pieces, so the viewer isn't tempted to skim your portfolio.

The key here is balance of detail, size, theme, etc. However you decide to arrange the pieces, it should feel intentional.

You might wonder how many projects to include. This will depend on your practice, as well as the standard within your specific sector, but anywhere between 5-15 images is generally average.

Additionally, consider how you open and close your portfolio. If you put your most impressive works at the beginning and ends of your portfolio, this will ensure it leaves an impression on your viewers.



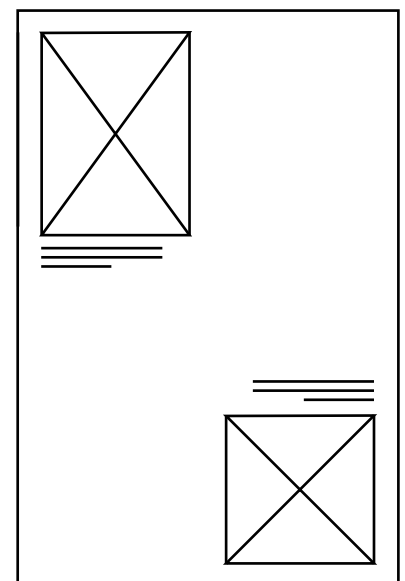
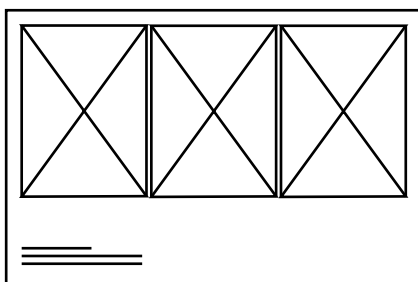
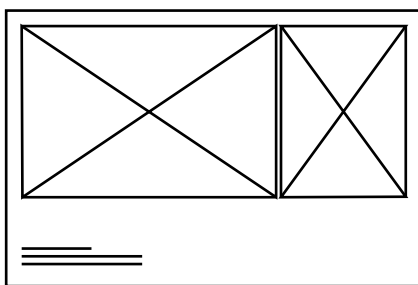
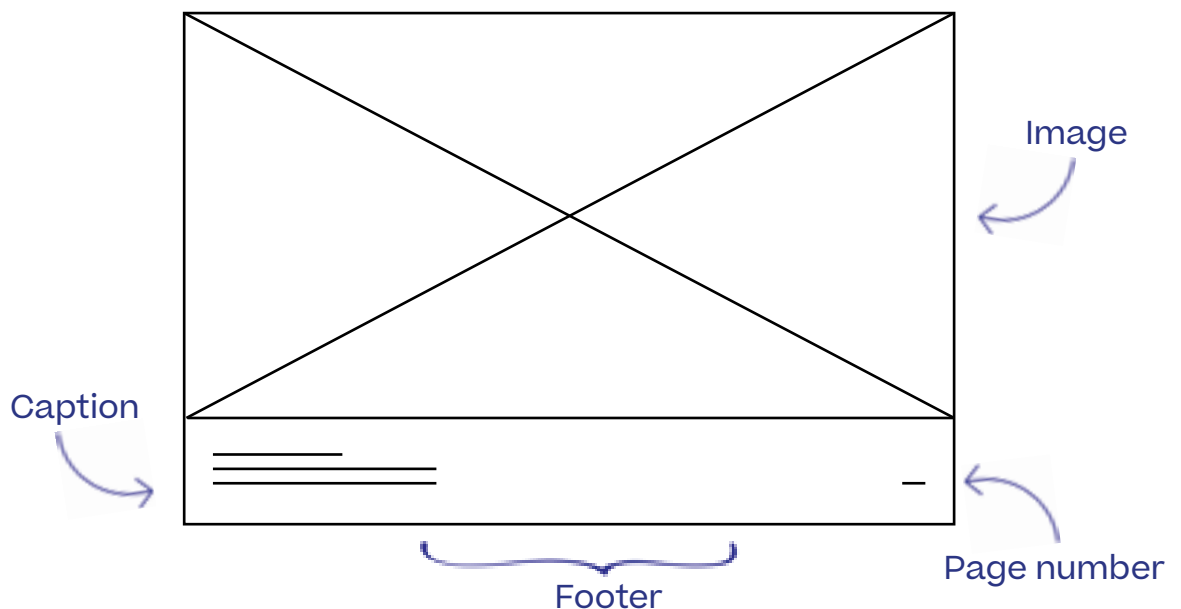
Format and Design

Layout

The layout should be created considering what highlights your work the most effectively. It can be portrait or landscape, have images segmented or full-bleed, have detail photos, or have additional stylings, such as footers or headers.

You can experiment with and create your portfolio in programmes like Adobe InDesign or Illustrator, which all students have access to.

Here are a few examples of what your layout could look like:



Examples courtesy of [Creative Lives in Progress](#).



Format and Design

If you want to make your portfolio online, check out our [website building resources](#).

Photos

The documentation of your work should be high resolution, taken in good lighting (if physical), cropped appropriately, and overall look professional.

When making a digital portfolio, you might find that large image files might be slow to send or exceed submission limits. If this is the case for you, try converting your photos to .jpegs and reduce the quality (not the resolution).

Captions

It's important that your portfolio is easy to navigate and reference, so make sure to clearly label your works. When writing descriptions for the works, the shorter it is the better – anywhere from 50-150 words is fine.

You don't want to describe the work in too much detail, but rather explain the context behind it – what it was produced for, what its goal was, any challenges you faced and any successes as a result of your work.

You might like to consider using QR codes if you want to give more background information to the project - perhaps linked to a short video or document you host elsewhere.

As far as essential information, this will depend on your individual projects, but a few common sections include:

- * Title
- * Medium and materials
- * Dimensions
- * Date made
- * Credits if it was made in collaboration



Showing your Portfolio

Other ways to showcase my work

Although having your own website and portfolio is really important, it can also be useful to showcase your work on other platforms. While great for graduates it is also really useful when you are a student developing your practice.

The following sites allow you to build a profile and upload your work. You can then share this on your CV and social channels. You will need to have a look at the sites to determine which one you like and will suit your practice best.

[Artists Network](#)

Useful for fine art

[Arts Thread](#)

A website for students and graduates to showcase their creative practice

[Behance](#)

Useful for photography, graphic design, fashion, illustration, motion, advertising, creative challenges, 3D art, fine art, crafts, architecture, product design and sound

[Crunch](#)

You can add a profile and add your writing to it

[Dandan](#)

Useful for graphic design

[Dribbble](#)

Useful for animation, branding, illustration, typography, graphic design, visual communications, web design, etc.

[Fashion Design Academy](#)

Useful for fashion

[Journo Portfolio](#)

This could be a good place to show your work if you don't want to put a website together yet

[Medium](#)

Useful for writers

[The Dots](#)

Useful for all creative industries (also posts jobs!)

[The School of Photography](#)

Useful for photography



Showing your Portfolio

Getting people to see your portfolio

Now that you have your portfolio, you need to drive people towards it. Add your portfolio link to your CV, cover letter, social channels. You could also add some of your images to Pinterest!

If you have LinkedIn, be sure to add a featured section and add your portfolio there for more exposure. For help setting up your LinkedIn account, check out our [LinkedIn resources](#).

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