

ADV3550

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What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a showcase of your creative work and the means by which most assigned work is secured. It can be digital or printed and presented in a book--or in any creative format that suits your own vision.

Branding One's Self

- * Branding is about making an emotional connection.
- * A logo is the point of entry to your brand.
- * The best brand identity systems are memorable, authentic, meaningful, differentiated, sustainable, flexible and in this case relevant to you.
- * Your entire portfolio should be reflective of your brand.
- * Understand your competition. Research different design portfolio's to help guide you in designing your own.

Tips for a successful portfolio

- * Impact counts.
- * Less is more.
- * When excellence is required (as in the design fields), "pretty good" is worthless.

The samples you show have to be directed toward the **client's specific needs**. Know your client or target employer and what their needs and aesthetic sensibilities are. You have to provide something the client isn't getting at present. If you are starting out, the "something else" is **a fresh and valid visual approach with absolute flawless execution**. Impact often results from **carefully conceived, uncluttered graphics**—single bold statements—that are easier said than done but are the hallmark of recognized professionals.

To become successful in today's market, an artist must have a vision, they must master the technical skills required in their medium, and the artist needs to understand of the business of design. When presenting a portfolio, not only is the designer's work being judged, the designer is also being judged. Is this candidate serious? Will he or she succeed on a professional level?

Your portfolio must impress viewers with your vision and with how well you have mastered the technical aspects of your craft. To go along with your portfolio, it is also a good idea to provide support materials such as a leave-behind, business cards, and your resume. From the hiring point of view

Leave Behinds A leave behind is a reminder for the client after you have just met. It need not be elaborate, anything from a postcard to a cd-rom or some clever symbol of your work.

As an Art Director puts it:

"You are establishing taste in what you are showing, so I judge you by the worst piece you show in your portfolio."

- * Most clients want predictability even in a fresh viewpoint.
- * One bad piece among many good ones, or too broad a mixture of styles causes confusion.

¹ **Designing Brand Identity**, Alina Wheeler. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

* On the other hand, a few well-formed and professionally related styles are accepted and welcome.

How much should you show?

An art director, editor, or buyer should be able to go through your portfolio comfortably in **10 minutes at the most**. Attention spans wander beyond that point, and sometimes sooner. The consensus is that the optimal amount of "slides" or prints should be about 25-35. Since you are still developing your work, this class will require **8-12 pieces** for your final portfolio.

One rule to consider: Ten great pieces will be remembered; **20 fair pieces will be forgotten**. Ten terrific pieces mixed with 10 fair ones will cause confusion or doubt in your ability. "When in doubt, leave it out," as one art director has said.

Keep the contents short and sweet. Don't assume that you need to be there to explain how a piece was done. "A good portfolio doesn't need explanation, it explains itself."

Things to Remember

Your name, and contact information should be clearly marked on your work or web site. This can be done discreetly to not interfere with the presentation.

Neatness is essential. Sloppiness is always noticed and rarely tolerated. If prints are damaged or a site had broken images or links, it will reflect upon you negatively.
Sequence

Work carefully on the sequence of your presentation. Does it tell a story? Are there groups of related work or just abrupt jumps from one unrelated subject to another. Try to think of ways that you can connect your various portfolio pieces.

Editing your own work is a difficult task. It can be helpful to enlist one or two trusted people to offer their advice. In the end, your decision will determine which pieces are the best representation of your talent, but it cannot hurt to get some advice. But, remember that too many opinions will likely cause confusion rather than clarity.

It often helps to review carefully the images you find in other online portfolios. Ask yourself why some pieces work and others don't. Then begin to scrutinize your own portfolio work with the same degree of detachment.

In-Class Assignment

www.coroflot.com
www.aiga.org
www.netdiver.net

Visit these professional databases to study the existing portfolios (in other words, your competition) listed. Consider not only the work in each portfolio but the overall presentation for each you review.

I will ask you to tell me in detail the qualities that make the portfolio work (consistency, excellence) or the portfolio fail (sloppiness, inconsistency). Use the characteristics we discussed in class today to validate your examples.