

What is an Electronic Employment Portfolio?

A portfolio is generally used as a term to describe a culmination of a student's or employee's work throughout a period of time, and it is used to evaluate an individual's performance at work or in school. For a professional, portfolios are used in conjunction with cover letters and resumes in the job application process. They allow an individual to illustrate his or her professional products beyond the brief text within a cover letter or resume. An employment portfolio is important to include in your application because it serves as a visual of your previous professional writing work and demonstrates your skills as a professional in the workplace. An electronic employment portfolio is the same as the aforementioned portfolio, but the contents are digitized in order to be more accessible for you and your audience.

Portfolios are not just a collection of your projects—they also mirror who you are. They give you a chance to reflect on the work you've completed. The success of your portfolio depends on the amount of creativity and effort you put into creating it. You can shape portfolio contents to appeal to different audiences, similarly to how cover letters and resumes function. One portfolio cannot serve multiple purposes; you must choose pieces of your work to form a compilation of how you wish to represent yourself to a potential employer. As your educational or professional career continues, be sure to maintain and update the contents of your portfolio.

Tips for Building Your Portfolio

An effective and successful portfolio will exhibit what you did, why you did it, and how you did it.

The following is a list of what all portfolios have in common¹:

- Engage writers/professionals in active reflection and articulation of their development and learning. This reflection might take the form of a process statement, a letter of self-evaluation for a school setting, or an introduction to a professional portfolio.
- Contain different types of work (writing, graphics, projects) that showcase a variety of skills (formal and informal) of a particular writer, designer, or group of writers.
- Create opportunities for writers to take ownership through representative selection and presentation.
- Reflect clearly articulated goals of a particular community, classroom, program, profession, or role.
- Reflect the distinct individualism of a body of work.
- Evolve as the writer/professional develops and gains experience.

There are three types of e-portfolios: word-processor/PDF documents, CD portfolios, and web-hosted portfolios. Of the many advantages of creating an e-portfolio, the most important is that it shows your audience that you are proficient in using high-end software and have the necessary computer skills needed for many professional writing careers.

¹ Examples are taken from Smith, H., and Haimes-Korn, K. (2007). *Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Portfolio Contents

The contents of your portfolio should showcase your best work. The table below provides examples of various artifacts you can include in your portfolio².

ARTIFACT GENRE	ARTIFACT SAMPLE
Business and Professional Writing	Memos, letters, resume, annual reports, marketing materials, proposals, newsletters, style manuals
Technical Writing and Documentation	Edited texts, table/charts/graphs, training materials, user guides, software documentation, technical reports, business plans, policies and procedures
Journalism	Editorial/op-ed pieces, press releases, articles, published material, book reviews, speeches, public relations efforts
Academic Writing	Research papers, essays, creative writing, drafts and revised texts, oral reports, team projects
Graphics	Logos, brochures, web sites, design projects, digital design, photography, graphic software, forms and templates
Multimedia	Video, film, audio, PowerPoint presentations, computer animation, storyboards
Web Materials	Web pages, web sites, web-based training, online help
Awards/Honors	Certificates, references, honors

Organizing Your Portfolio

There are many ways to organize your portfolio including by chronological order, genre, individual and team projects, theme, subject area, etc. In any of these organizational strategies, remember to be aware of your audience and what they might be looking for in your portfolio. The design of your portfolio should mirror how you wish to appear to your audience. If you're presenting your portfolio to a team of hiring managers in a professional setting, your portfolio needs to be designed in a highly formal manner. On the other hand, if you're searching for a job that allows more creativity, such as a freelance writer, your portfolio can be less formal than what you would present to a team of professionals.

Before each sample of your work, include a short introductory paragraph that explains what the sample is, why it was created, who it was for, and any other pertinent information that you think your audience should know. Include attribution where appropriate if you worked collaboratively on a project. The introduction to each artifact is important because it provides your audience with the necessary information, such as context, audience, and purpose, which will aid in the critiquing and evaluation of your work by a potential employer.

² Examples are taken from Smith, H., and Haimes-Korn, K. (2007). *Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.