

What is a Career Portfolio?

A career portfolio is a visual representation of your skills, abilities, capabilities, knowledge. The portfolio contains two components: product and the process. The product is the collection of documentation that represent work or volunteer-related events in your life. The portfolio provides "proof" of your potential by demonstrating what you accomplished in the past. The process is selecting and reflecting on the documentation in order to articulate your learning from that experience. As part of the reflection process, you would also be making connections between you, your portfolio, and your learning.

Some benefits include:

- Enable you to be more effective in communicating your interests, skills, motivation, and personal qualities to potential employers.
- Offer you the opportunity to develop and commit to a specific action plan.
- Identify and evaluate your competencies and self-knowledge both in and out of the classroom.
- To document those skills you don't have, but need
- To place the responsibility for learning, professional development, and career development on you
- A tool for organizing life experiences into a manageable form for assessment

Why Create a Career Portfolio?

- To gather skills and knowledge gained from formal learning institutions
- To give equal value to skills and knowledge gained through life experience
- To plan a career
- To promote the development of academic skills, self confidence, and motivation to work towards those career goals
- Answers the "what", "so what", and "now what" questions

It's not the experience, but the learning

- Identify each learning experience in actual tasks performed with the level of expertise achieved and skills applied to complete the task
- Record new duties or methods developed to perform tasks as a result of each experience
- Catalogue benefits gained with each new thing learned
- Record how these new skills were applied to new situations

What's In a Career Portfolio?

Career Portfolios can take many forms. Portfolios can be paper, electronic, or web-based. As you build your portfolio, keep your audience in mind and the portfolio's purpose. For example, if you were going to take your portfolio to an interview, you would probably only bring your 0.5 inch binder that contains 5-10 items so that you don't overwhelm the interviewer. If you were trying to PLAR a course, your portfolio could be in a 4-5 inch binder.

Typical components include:

- Title Page
- Introduction
- Table of Contents
- Learning Narrative
- Goals Identification
- Résumé (Skills-Based / Chronological)
- Documentation

Steps for Creating Your Portfolio

The portfolio process involves several steps. These steps tend to overlap each other but are instructive for thinking through what needs to be done to develop and use a portfolio effectively. You may notice that you will not move through each step in a linear order. Also, remember, an electronic portfolio will go through the same steps as a paper-based portfolio. The big difference is choosing the technology for your portfolio.

- Collecting- determining what documentation you have.
- Reflecting- with the purpose of your portfolio in mind, reflecting on each piece of documentation in order to determine your skills, abilities, knowledge, and learning from this experience. Answer the so what
- Selecting- after reflecting on each item, picking the best items to put in your portfolio (depending on your portfolio's purpose)
- Storing- How do you store your documentation so that you can find it easily
- Writing – you may need to write short blurbs in order to help with making connections between your experience, your learning, and your portfolio.
- Designing- how am I going to organize my portfolio
- Presenting- if I am using my portfolio during an interview, how will I use it?
- Evaluating- how effective is my portfolio. Make changes as needed.