

Lesson 5: Creating a Career Portfolio



career portfolio:
a collection of
self-selected
samples that
shows one's
skills, abilities,
talents, and
accomplishments

Ms. Chan: One of your tasks for this module is to create a **career portfolio** for yourself. This might sound daunting but as you work through the lessons in the module, you'll actually be putting together your career portfolio.

Jamal: Is a career portfolio like a portfolio that photographers or designers put together to show to prospective clients?

Ms. Chan: Yes, it's the same idea. People in many professions, such as graphic artists, architects, and photographers have portfolios to illustrate their best work and skills. They carry it with them for meetings with clients, employers, funding agencies, schools, or galleries. Your portfolio will have the same purpose.

Ashley: It'll be at least two years before we've finished high school. Isn't it kind of soon to be putting together a portfolio to show prospective employers?

Ms. Chan: At this stage, a portfolio will help you to set the path for a career. You will find that a portfolio helps you reflect upon your values, interests, and strengths. As well, it can help you in practical matters like completing a job application or applying for scholarships. A portfolio charts your growth; it is always changing.

Jamal: What should we put in our portfolios?

Ms. Chan: The contents of your portfolios will be as diverse as the people who create them. Following are guidelines to help you develop your career portfolio.

Building a Personal and Career Portfolio

What Is a Career Portfolio?

A Career Portfolio is an organized collection of evidence that shows your accomplishments both in and out of school. A portfolio contains samples of your work that exhibit and reveal the quality and variety of your learning, your accomplishments, your skills, and your experiences.

Is a Portfolio the Same as a Résumé?

A portfolio differs from a résumé in the following key ways:

- A résumé is usually only 1 – 3 pages in length and is meant to *summarize* your accomplishments. A portfolio most often contains many pages and is meant to *show evidence* of a wide variety of your accomplishments.
- A résumé *tells* someone what you have accomplished. A portfolio *shows* someone what you have accomplished.

What Are the Steps to Developing a Career Portfolio?

Step 1: Gather Your Evidence

Collect the information and records that show your interests, involvements, and achievements.

Step 2: Organize Your Portfolio

Arrange your evidence into sections that will help someone else see what you have accomplished.

Step 3: Assemble Your Portfolio

Format and compile your portfolio so it is easy for someone else to read and understand the information you have gathered.

Step 4: A Final Check

You have much to be proud of in your portfolio. Check that it has updated information and that it shows your work in the best possible light.

Step 1: Gather Your Evidence

What Evidence Can Be Placed in a Portfolio?

Evidence comes in many forms. You can include evidence of your skills, your talents, your achievements, your awards, your experiences, as well as your learning and employability skills. Be sure to include things you do both in school and away from school.

Items for Your Portfolio

Items can include the following:

- report cards
- certificates of participation (clubs, events, etc.)
- a record of your community involvement activities
- an updated résumé
- things you are proud of (newspaper clippings, certificates, awards, etc.)



Step 2: Organize Your Portfolio

Your challenge is to organize the information you have in your portfolio into an understandable overview of your accomplishments to date. Similar items and accomplishments should be grouped so that the reader can find the information easily. Consider each of the following four categories to help you organize your evidence:

Educational Accomplishments

In this section, concentrate on what you have accomplished in your studies at school.

Items to include:

- your latest report card showing your grades and your learning skills
- your up-to-date transcript (your academic record to date)
- any academic awards you have received
- any other evidence unique to you and your education



School Activities

This section should contain evidence of your involvement in school activities. School activities might include clubs, sports teams, bands, and other activities specific to your school.

Items to include:

- newspaper articles
- sports awards
- a program from a school play
- a letter from your coach
- any other evidence unique to your involvement in school activities

Work

This section focuses on your work experiences. Be sure to include both paying and non-paying work experiences.

Items to include:

- an updated résumé
- a list of references
- a sample cover letter you have written
- any letters of recommendation you have received highlighting your work skills (include employers, neighbours, friends, teachers, ...)

Community Participation

The last section should focus on your participation in community activities. Many scholarships and awards require evidence of your community involvement.

Consider your involvement in

- swimming lessons or competitions
- music lessons
- driver's education courses
- First Aid/CPR courses
- cultural clubs/organizations
- religious groups
- fund-raising events
- other activities specific to your community

Items to include:

- a written summary of your experiences, e.g., a personal story
- personal references
- photos
- any other evidence unique to your participation in community activities



Step 3: Assemble Your Portfolio

After you have selected and organized your evidence, it is time to format and compile your portfolio so it is easy for someone else to read and understand the information you have gathered.

Tips for Assembling Your Portfolio

- **Does my portfolio show a wide-range of my accomplishments?**
The strength of a portfolio is in the variety of what you show. Examples you include should show many of your accomplishments rather than many examples of one accomplishment.
- **Are my most important accomplishments clearly evident?**
Not everything you do will have equal value. The portfolio should show the best examples of your talents and abilities. Make sure that those things that you are most proud of are highlighted in your portfolio.

- **Does my portfolio have a consistent format?**

A portfolio is an organized collection of evidence. Using a consistent format and page layout throughout, connects the diverse documents so it shows a clearer picture of your accomplishments. Any graphics, arrows, or clip art should accentuate your portfolio's contents, rather than decorate it.

- **Do I have a cover page for my portfolio?**

This page should include:

- your name
- a title for your portfolio
- a photo (if you choose)

- **Do I have a table of contents for my portfolio?**

A Table of Contents provides the reader with a guide to the sections and information you have included in your portfolio. It is prepared last and helps you organize your materials in a logical sequence that is easy to read and understand. Numbering your portfolio pages or colour coding the sections will help you to organize your table of contents.

Step 4: A Final Check

As you learn and develop new skills, your Career Portfolio needs to be kept up-to-date. You will frequently update your portfolio by discarding outdated evidence and inserting new and better evidence as it is accumulated.

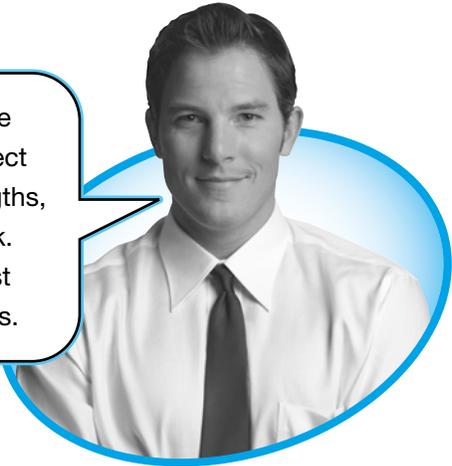
A Final Checklist

- Does your portfolio have the best examples of what you have accomplished?
- Are the examples concise and to-the-point?
- Have you edited your portfolio for clarity and for spelling and grammar?
- Is the sequence and organization of your portfolio logical?
- Does the format of your portfolio make it appealing and easy-to-read?
- Does the organization and presentation of your portfolio demonstrate that you would be an excellent person for an employer to hire?

Your portfolio is a very useful way to introduce the 'whole you' to a potential employer or when applying for admission to a college or university. It is something that you should be proud of.

¹ Tricia Slipacoff and Caroline White, "Building A Personal and Career Portfolio," <<http://www.curriculum.org/tcf/teachers/projects/portfolio.shtml>> (9 July 2007). Reproduced by permission.

Remember that your portfolio does not include absolutely everything about you or every project you ever completed; it showcases your strengths, your progress and growth, and your best work. Choose information that will create a great first impression with possible schools or employers.



A career portfolio can be your best marketing tool. If you are being interviewed for a job, you can show your portfolio as evidence of a particular skill. A portfolio supplements what you say in an interview. A well-developed portfolio and a clear understanding of your skills indicate to an employer that you have well-developed personal management skills.

Even when you are established in your career, you should keep up your portfolio. Collect your performance appraisals. Keep documentation of training and courses you complete at work. Record your accomplishments. Keep letters and thank-you notes for jobs done well. Your portfolio will evolve as you move through your life.



You've completed a number of self-assessment activities in this section. Now it is time to sort through this material in order to build your career portfolio.

Examine the activities you completed for Section 1. In your notebook or electronic file, create a list of those pieces of information you think will be effective additions to your portfolio. Explain what each shows and the value of including this information in your portfolio.

Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.

Go to page 6 of Assignment Booklet 3A and respond to question 4 of Section 1.

Looking Back; Looking Ahead

In this lesson, you have been given directions for creating a career portfolio. You will add to your portfolio as you work through this module. It will be yours to continue to develop as you complete schooling, develop new skills, and gain experience in the work world.

Glossary

career portfolio: a collection of self-selected samples that shows one's skills, abilities, talents, and accomplishments

Suggested Responses

You should have chosen those pieces of information that best show your most important personality traits, strengths, skills, attitudes, and learning styles.

Have you clearly explained what each piece of information says about you and why it would be valuable to include that piece in your career portfolio?

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