Creating a Portfolio

The most important thing to know about portfolios is that your *interview portfolio* is NOT the same as the large portfolio you created to document your student teaching or teacher education program. Your interview portfolio is a thin notebook, with only six to ten items.

The second thing to know is that interviewers almost never say, "Show me your portfolio." Your portfolio is a visual to use when asked a specific question. For example, when asked, "How have you communicated with parents in the past?" you can open your portfolio and show a letter you wrote and sent to parents during your field experience or student teaching.

Think of your portfolio as a marketing presentation selling you and your work. A good cover letter and résumé will land you an interview, but a portfolio of actual classroom work is a must for interviews. Traditionally, portfolios are professional-looking three-ring binders measuring no more than two inches on the spine filled with plastic sleeves that contain and protect your teaching documents. Leather binders with zippers look especially professional.

Whatever style of portfolio you select, make sure that it is neat and orderly, inside and out. A good portfolio is not a large notebook that bulges at the seams, but a concise collection of significant artifacts that represent your best work.

Most portfolios today are actually ePortfolios because they are created using an app or a software platform. This is great since most colleges will soon require you to have videos of yourself teaching and managing your class during your student teaching or internship. Put these videos in your portfolio! Add your résumé and letters of recommendation and you are on your way. Continue by adding examples of a unit you designed and taught, communications with parents, and more.

Interview Portfolio

Just do not forget to print the important pieces you will talk about before heading off to a job fair or interview. Basic documents to include are:

- Résumé and cover letter used for this particular job;
- Teacher certification;
- Your philosophy of teaching or key beliefs about teaching;

- 1-3 successful lesson plans or a sample syllabus;
- Sample letter to parents about the beginning of the school year or semester;
- List of rules, consequences, and positives that you've used in the classroom;
- Samples from a unit (one to three pages);
- Sample of a student's work (with the name removed);
- Photos of a bulletin board or learning center you created or photos of students engaged in activities you organized;
- Proof of membership in a professional organization, such as Kappa Delta Pi, International Educational Honor Society; and
- Letter noting a special achievement or volunteer activity or a thank-you letter from a student or parent.

Career and Teacher Portfolios

Veteran teachers also use portfolios. They use them to track and showcase their work and display their professional development, which many states require. Often these portfolios are based on the Teacher Evaluation Framework being used by the school district (such as Danielson or Marzano) with samples to correlate to each part of the rubric. These can be used during evaluations and for the teacher (and a mentor) to reflect upon her practice and seek ways to improve.

With a teaching portfolio, you can
- Share your teaching philosophy,
- State your teaching goals,
- Showcase your teaching ability,
- Organize aspects of your teaching practice,
- Demonstrate your growth as a teacher,
- Demonstrate the quality of your lessons,
- Reflect on and articulate your practice,
- Share your personal teaching style, and
- Show evidence of your teaching goals.

To build your portfolio,
- Collect material throughout the year and organize it as you go.
- Include various types of examples that demonstrate different aspects of your practice.
- Focus on quality, not quantity.
- Style it to be readable and engaging.
- Use friendly but professional introduction and parts pages.

- Include your teaching awards, student feedback, sample lessons, and teaching evaluations.
- Invite a friend or colleague to review it before you share it with an evaluator or prospective employer.

Teacher portfolios become career portfolios when a job change is desired. The longer you have been teaching, the more samples you may want to add. If you are an experienced teacher or substitute teacher looking for another position, you may want to include some additional information in your portfolio.

Include a table of contents and only the best-of-the-best work samples in the portfolio:

1. Table of contents

2. Background information

- Résumé
- Transcripts

- State certification
- Key beliefs

3. Teacher artifacts

- Lesson plans
- Projects
- Videotapes
- Extracurricular interests
- Examples of collaboration/teaming

- Unit outlines
- Pictures
- Student work samples
- Class newsletters

4. Professional information

- List of professional activities
- Awards and achievements
- Letters of recommendation

- Ongoing professional development

- Evaluations

There are many times you will use your teaching portfolio. Use it in a job interview or at a job fair to demonstrate evidence of your practice. Share it as part of a licensure review. Access it to demonstrate growth in a promotion or tenure review. Refer to it as a teaching tool when you are acting as a teacher-leader or mentor to new teachers. Document your practices, continued learning, and roles in your district to record your personal and professional growth.

Electronic Portfolios

Candidates increasingly are creating electronic portfolios on Web pages and CDs. Electronic portfolios are convenient, creative, current, and show potential employers the candidate's technological aptitude. Hard-copy portfolios are still important however, because they provide testimony to your work and teaching strategies during interviews. The bound portfolio also serves as a backup in case the interviewer did not have time to review the electronic version or the disc is incompatible with the interviewer's computer system. Portfolios developed as PDF (portable document format) files are read easily with Adobe Acrobat Reader and increase software compatibility. Download this PDF software at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

Microsoft documents (2007 and later) can be saved as PDFs by simply doing a "Save as" and choosing the PDF format. Many copy machines will now scan documents and save them in PDF format, but the quality may not be as good as you would like.

Free program for creating an online portfolio: www.portfoliolounge.com

Learn about developing a professional portfolio at http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/creating-teaching-portfolio

You also may transfer your files onto a USB (universal serial bus) drive that recruiters can simply plug into their computers to view your portfolio. USB drives are very affordable and convenient ways to carry your records with you.

Guides to Portfolio Preparation

Learnovation offers portfolio resources for career changers and others. One section, Teaching with Portfolios is devoted to teachers assisting their students in developing

career portfolios.

[Selling Yourself: Creating the Ultimate Teaching/Interview Portfolio](#) gives specific ideas and tips.

Software for Portfolio Preparation

Many companies produce software that can be used to develop or store portfolios. Some examples are provided below:

- http://www.kdp.org/resources/viewyou.php - available for $12 a year for the Plus version to KDP members, shows up on administrators' spreadsheets of candidates, easy to use
- http://portfoliolounge.com/ - works on any device, free, and easy to use, picture-based
- http://www.PortfolioGen.com/ - specifically for teacher portfolios
- [DIGI[cation]™ + Google](#) - e-Portfolios are for both teachers and students, so give it a try in your classroom and use it for yourself. (This program costs about $35/yr for teachers and $20/yr per student.)

If your portfolio is going to be a live website, you will need to purchase a domain name (often as cheap as $2-5 through www.godaddy.com) and pay quarterly or annual hosting fees for it. For the cheapest and best web hosting companies, go to www.Top10BestWebsiteHosting.com.

Apps for Creating a Portfolio

1. [Easy Portfolios](#)   **Platform: iOS**   **Price: $1.99**

This app is very easy to use for both teachers and students. It allows you to create various classes and portfolios, while maintaining its easily navigated layout. This app allows for audio recordings, video, text, and pictures to be captured directly into the portfolio. Documents can also be imported from Dropbox.

Easy Portfolios allows the user to share items in the portfolio via email or upload to a Dropbox account. For younger students, an educator can maintain the digital portfolios for the entire class in one place. Older students can download the app themselves and maintain their own portfolio on their own device.

2. Evernote   **Platform: Android and iOS**   **Price: Free**

Evernote has become a very popular app to use for digital portfolios in classrooms. With this app you can capture photos, take notes, record audio, and make entries searchable. Other apps, such as Skitch and Penultimate, work flawlessly with this app.

3. VoiceThread   **Platform: iOS**   **Price:Free**

VoiceThread allows you to add work samples, images or video from right within the app. It accepts multiple file types. It is easy to flip through work and annotate it. Sharing work is as easy as sending an email. However, it must be kept in mind that a connection to the Internet is required while using this app.

4. Open School ePortfolio   **Platform: iOS**   **Price: Free for Teachers**

A teacher can get it for free, then use it with up to 100 students. It works as both an app and a website, where you can create classes and sections. Student profiles include goals and separate areas for teacher-directed and student-directed work. Tags can be added to work to make entries searchable.

5. Three Ring   **Platform: Android and iOS**   **Price: Free for Teachers**

This app is easy to use once it is set up. It allows you to add work samples and comments (private for the user or public for others to read). Photos and video can be captured from within the app and used to show work. Comments can be added that are.

6. Wikispaces for Education   **Platform: Website**   **Price: Free**

This option is entirely based on an Internet website, so it can be created and maintained by computer only. Using Wikispaces as a digital portfolio tool is similar to blogging. Education communities can be made private for free, so student work is protected. Files less than 20MB can be added.

7. Weebly   **Platform: Website Use**   **Price: Free**

This option is entirely based on an Internet website, so it can be created and maintained by computer. It is very easy to set up and to use. A Pro account is available for a fee, but Weebly is a fully functional free tool as well. Pictures, video, and text are added easily to sites, as well as a blog. There is no advertising and the site is able to be viewed and updated anywhere.

8. Google Sites   **Platform: Website Use**   **Price: Free**

It is free, has no ads, is customizable, and because it's a Google product, it works seamlessly with Google Docs, YouTube, Google Calendar, Picasa web albums… you get the picture. A portfolio created in Google Sites is never married to a server, so long after you are no longer affiliated with a school, you can keep updating and accessing her portfolio. Sites is very simple to edit and maintain. If you want your own domain name, you can purchase it and have it redirect to your Google Sites page. For full instructions, see Showcase Your Skills with an Electronic Teaching Portfolio.

Examples of Portfolios

The Gallery of Teaching & Learning from the Carnegie Foundation provides digital representations of knowledge related to teaching and learning. Check out several.

Elementary Teachers:
Kathleen Fischer - http://durak.org/kathy/portfolio/
Stéphanie Landner- https://sites.google.com/site/stephanieladner/
Danielle Van Patter - http://eduportfolio.org/3160
Kelly Tam - http://tams.yolasite.com/
Monica Östergren- http://ostergrenm.weebly.com/
Amy Tessler - http://amytesslersteachingportfolio.weebly.com/
Megan Carnaghi - http://carnaghiteachingportfolio.weebly.com/

Middle School English:
Kelly Larmour - http://www.kellylarmour.com/

Secondary Social Studies Student Teacher Portfolios -
http://sbs.mnsu.edu/socialstudies/studentportfolios/examples.html

Elementary, Special Ed., Secondary, and Library Media Portfolios -
http://portfolio.iweb.bsu.edu/resources/studentteaching/examples.html

Learn More about Electronic Portfolios

Dr. Helen Barrett, School of Education, University of Alaska Anchorage (retired) is a premiere source of information on ePortfolios.

Online Teacher Portfolio Resources by the Division of Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs at Texas Tech University includes articles, examples, software links, and even teaching quotes. (Not all Samples are currently active, but Ann Nevin's, Glen Bull's, and Don Wardell's are active but not upt-to-date. Most other links on this site are active.)

Creating a Teaching Portfolio is a PowerPoint presentation geared toward getting a job in higher education.

Tips for Polishing Your Professional Portfolio

As many job seekers and hiring managers will tell you, a portfolio can be a useful way to demonstrate your proficiency within your area of study or professional expertise.

Your portfolio can –and should — be as unique as you are. Depending on the field in which you work (or hope to work), your individual portfolio may contain certain types of documents or work samples, which could vary significantly from that of a friend or colleague who works in a different field. Furthermore, you may decide to create a physical portfolio you can carry from appointment to appointment, or you may opt for an "e-portfolio" that displays all your evidence on one cohesive and thoughtfully organized website.

Though you should certainly take these variables into account, do note that some common elements can demonstrate your achievements in a tangible manner, no matter where you're hoping to work. In *The Ultimate Job Hunter's Guidebook,* Seventh Edition, Susan D. Greene and Melanie C.L. Martel provide a list of items that allow you to build a polished portfolio that clearly and effectively displays your talents, skills, and abilities. Read through the list we've created based on their recommendations, and consider making these items the basis of your interview portfolio, as you never know when you might need to provide evidence of your qualifications and accomplishments.

- Be sure to include a copy of your **résumé,** as this key document lists your skills and work history and in one place. It is an expected part of any job applicant's materials.
- A **list of references,** as well as your **letters of recommendation,** are also generally expected when you apply for a job, so they are appropriate pieces to include in the portfolio as well. (You may wish to simply include that the references, and their contact information, are available upon request; this can help stave off any potential privacy issues.)
- Copies of **professional licenses, certificates, awards, school transcripts, military records, and other pertinent documentation** can help you demonstrate your skills, leadership, professionalism, and achievements in areas related to your chosen field.

- Feature **samples of your work.** Identify the skills you want to highlight and choose the work that best represents your abilities. For example, if you know a job requires writing skills, include well-written (and non-confidential) plans, process documents, formal papers, or business letters. If giving presentations would be part of your potential new role, include a print-out of a Microsoft® PowerPoint® slide deck (or perhaps a video, if your portfolio is online).
- In a similar manner, **case studies** illustrating a challenge you've faced, the solution you devised, and the steps you took to resolve the issue can be a powerful demonstration of your problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities.
- **Performance reviews and school transcripts** are official records that detail your strengths, achievements, and professional & educational track record.
- **Accomplishments**. A detailed list highlighting your major career achievements to date can be persuasive.
- If you have attended **conventions, conferences, or seminars** related to your field, provide a list of these as well — especially if you have participated in some capacity (e.g., as a speaker).
- List the **community service, volunteer opportunities, or *pro bono* efforts** to which you've contributed. Photographs and other documents can provide potential employers with further evidence of your dedication to hard work and service.
- If your **hobbies** happen to be relevant to the job you seek (like you work with kids), or if they demonstrate a pertinent skill set not readily apparent from other pieces of your portfolio, consider adding a section that illustrates your talents in those areas. (However: do note that these items should still relate to your career in some manner, or else interviewers may potentially see them as unprofessional. If you're in doubt, don't include these items.)
- If your work has received any **publicity** (e.g., coverage in news articles or press releases), include copies of these mentions, as they serve as public acknowledgement of your achievements. Likewise, unsolicited **letters of commendation** from employers, vendors, or organizations can function as "testimonials" for the work you've done.
- If you have a **personal business card,** place one of these in the portfolio as well. It provides all your contact information in a format that's easy to save (or pass along). Consider adding a tagline that summarizes your professional role and goal, as well as a brief, bulleted list of your skills and accomplishments (which can be placed on the back of the card). (pp 131-132)

In addition to listing the above items, Greene and Martel also suggest that you may want to adapt your portfolio a bit, to reflect the needs or concerns of the particular employer with whom you're interviewing. By tailoring your portfolio to the position you're pursuing, you demonstrate your interest in that specific job while highlighting your specific qualifications for it.

And always remember: whether it's online or in a leather case, your portfolio is a reflection of *you*. Plan it carefully, organize it thoughtfully, make it look as sharp as you can — and more than likely, you'll leave potential employers with a positive impression!

Reference: Greene, Susan D. and Martel, Melanie C.L. *The Ultimate Job Hunter's Guidebook,* Seventh Edition. 2012. Mason, OH: South-Western, Cengage Learning.