Portfolio Guide

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Table of Contents

- Get In The Know

- Secrets To Success

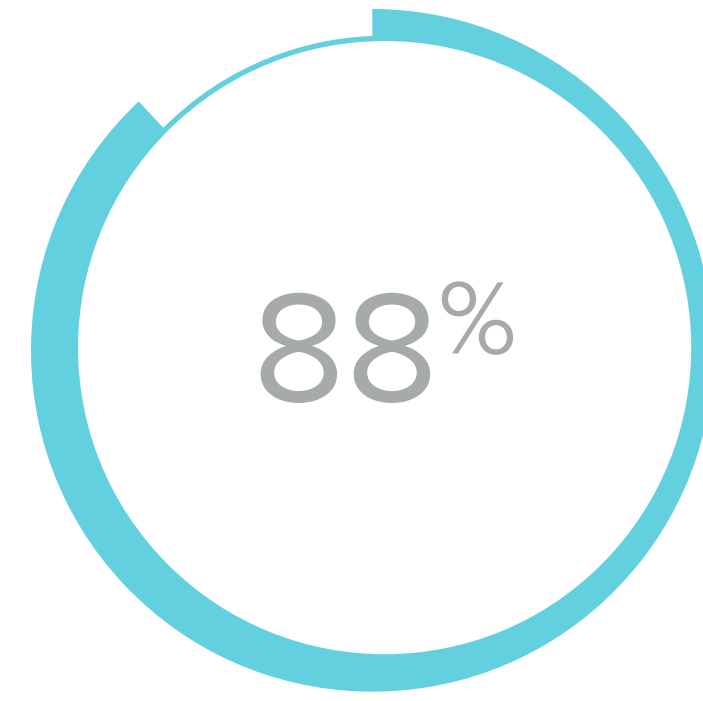- The Must-Haves

- Job Is In The Details
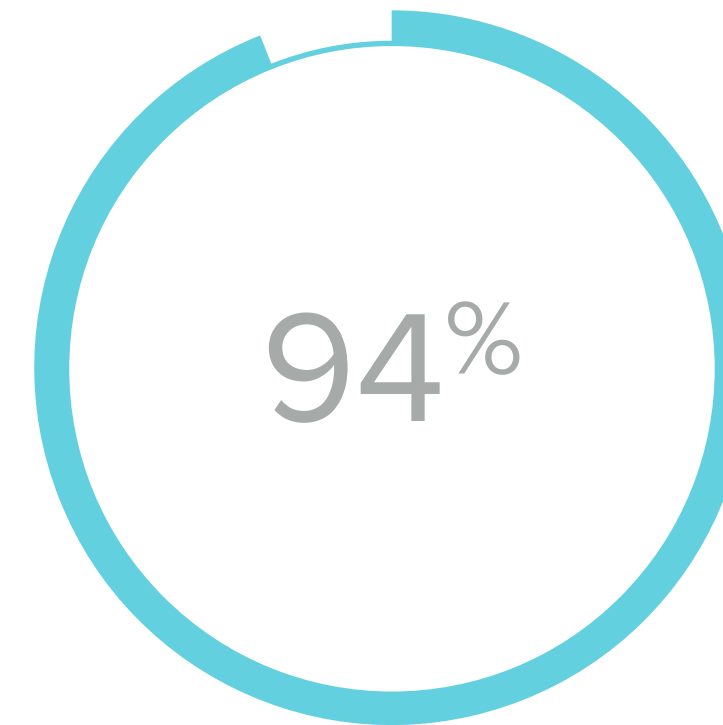
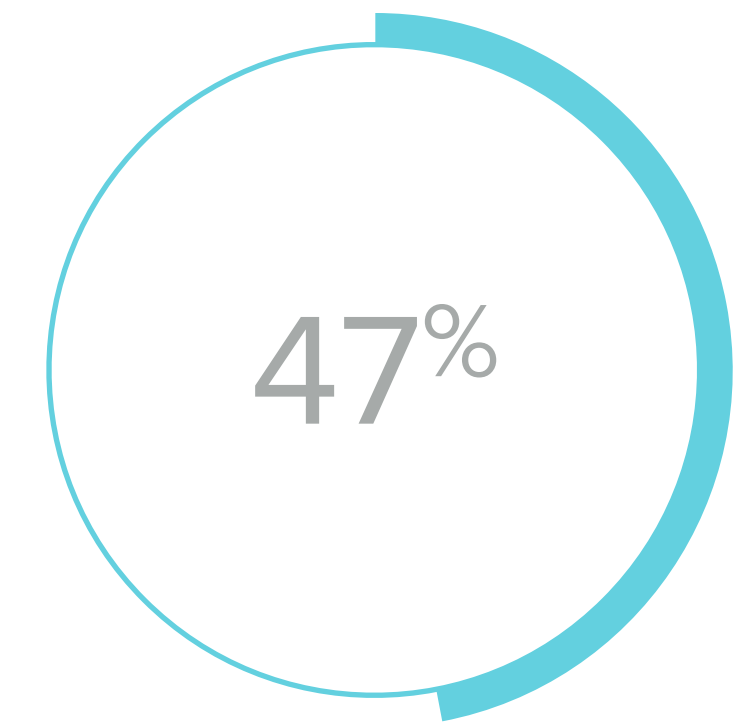- Thumbs Up. Thumbs Down.

Get In The Know

85%

85 percent of adults think that a company's mobile website should be as good or better than their desktop website

88%

88 percent of online consumers are less likely to return to a site after a bad experience

94%

First impressions are 94 percent design related

47%

47 percent of people expect a web page to load in two seconds or less

Judgments on website credibility are 75 percent based on a website's overall aesthetics

As you create your portfolio, you'll want to consider which pieces of your work to include and ask yourself these questions for each one…

1. Does this project highlight my best work?

2. Does this project represent my full potential and talent as a creative?

3. Does this project demonstrate my ability to solve design/creative problems for future clients?

4. Does this project show my range?
   (Show only your strongest work, ideally with some variety in styles or genres)

5. Does this project indicate the work I am looking to do in the future?

Mobile now represents 65 percent of digital media time, while the desktop
is becoming a "secondary touch point" for an increasing number of digital users.
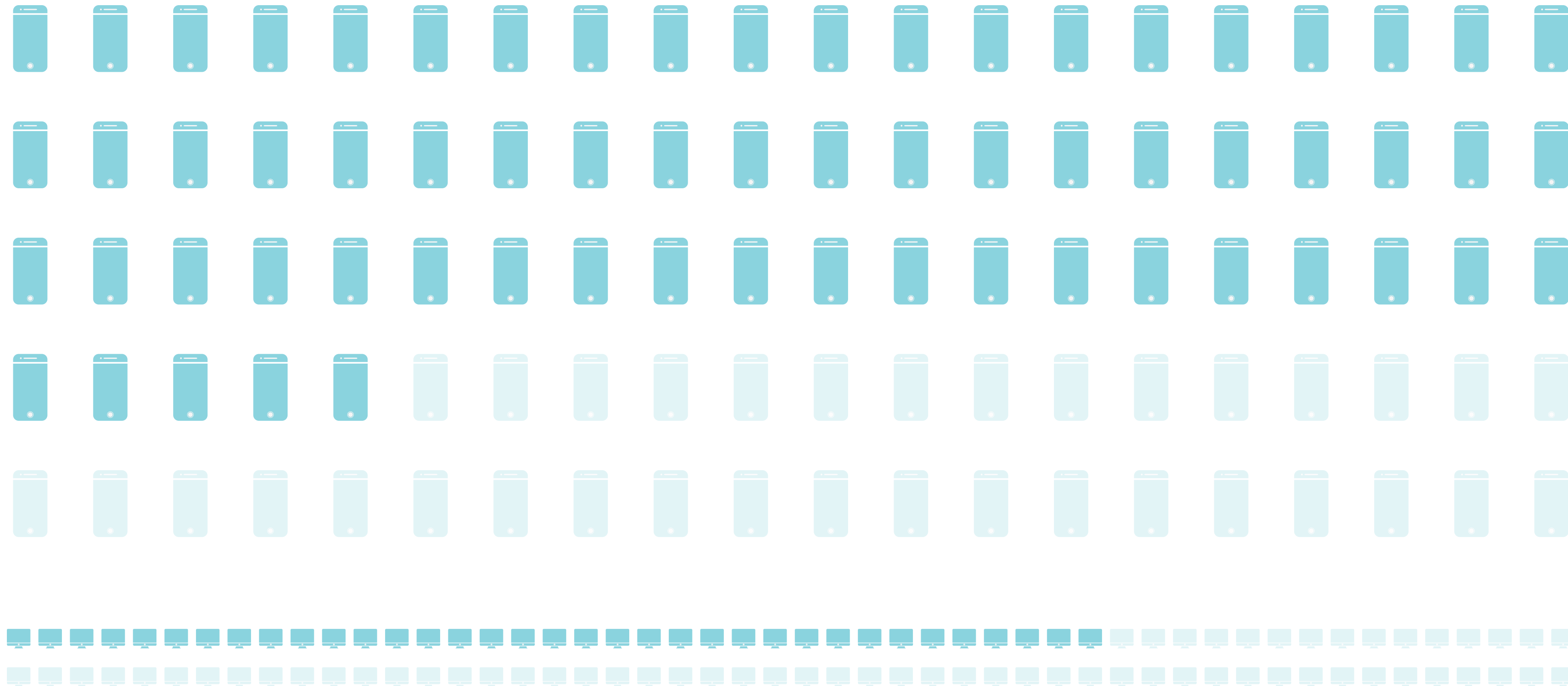
Secrets To Success: Get Yourself Noticed

1

Go digital

Not only is it quick, inexpensive, and available to view 7 days a week 365 days a year, it's much easier and more cost-effective to update—without additional printing costs! Custom-built portfolios are great to have, but thanks to technology, most information is viewed electronically, either on a computer, a tablet, or mobile device. The goal is to get yourself noticed—and to make it as easy as possible for prospective clients and hiring managers to view your portfolio. There are numerous portfolio hosting sites out there that we see and recommend all the time. Designers may want to check out Squarespace, Krop, Carbonmade, and Behance. As for writers, Squarespace and Clippings.me are top picks. Take 'em for a test drive and see which feels right for you.

2

Embrace the technology

While print portfolios are still appreciated and accepted by clients, the reality is that having a digital portfolio is a MUST. We live and work in the digital age, so the user experience is key. In addition to easy navigation, you also need to be sure that it is optimized for viewing on mobile devices and tablets, and that it loads quickly and completely. You don't want the perfect opportunity to slip away because the hiring manager got frustrated because they couldn't view your portfolio properly on their tablet or they grew impatient waiting for it to load.

3

Express yourself

Use a brief summary to introduce yourself and explain who you are and what you do. Are you a writer? An Illustrator? A creative director? Think of this as setting the table for the dinner party you're throwing—and your portfolio is the delicious seven-course meal you're serving. It should give an overview of what they can expect from you and what you're looking for, whether it's a new full-time position or cool new projects to tackle as a freelance creative. Most of all, keep it brief!

4

The 30,000-foot view

Only include your best work—don't feel the urge to fill your portfolio to the max.
Be selective and choose the work that you are proudest of. (Here's a throwback to our
Resume Guide: "Tell them what time it is, not how to build a grandfather clock.")

5

You've got some explaining to do

Tell your story and paint them a picture—Don't leave your audience in the dark. Include a brief synopsis of project details such as client name, objective, your role and responsibilities, programs used, awards won, etc. under each project in your portfolio to make things crystal clear for the viewer. If you have additional work that can't be included in your portfolio because of an NDA, you can communicate that to the recruiter and let them know you'd be able and glad to share it in an in person interview. You can include information and indicate "Client Name Withheld" or something to give an indication of the general industry the client is in. Also, it's not uncommon to include work, but scrub any of the sensitive copy out in order to give a visual overview of the project. Just make sure that you are not violating any confidentiality or NDA you may have signed.

6 Link it up

Double check to ensure that your portfolio link (and any links included inside the portfolio!) work, load quickly, and display properly on all web browsers and platforms—especially for mobile viewing and tablets! (Test it out on your own devices to see how it displays. Don't forget that user experience!) And if you've got a live link to a current client project that you're able to share, that's a major plus!

7

You are your brand

Develop a personal brand (logo, theme, color scheme) that represents you and your personality. Once you've settled on something, use it consistently across all touch points (resume, portfolio, professional social media channels, etc.). This consistency is extremely important; it shows you understand good design and you've got strong attention to detail.

The Must-Haves: What To Include

Your portfolio is the visual story of your career.
To tell your story effectively and for maximum impact…

- Go with the current (We're not talking swimming)! Lead with your most recent work samples
- Show your range! Choose a variety of projects and pieces to illustrate your diverse talents
- Let's get digital! Ensure your portfolio is optimized for viewing on all devices and loads quickly
- Take the high road—high resolution, that is! Ensure your images are high resolution and are crisp, clear, and properly displayed
- Take things step by step! Showcase your design process by sharing sketches, concepts, interactions, and prototypes
- Sum it up! Include a brief summary of each project (who, what, where, when, why/results)
- Take action! Include a call to action button to get the ball rolling (Contact Me, Email Me, Hire Me, View My Resume, etc.)

Some other things to consider when building your portfolio

- Your bio to give them a brief summary of your experience
- A .PDF of your online work samples that is easy to download and print
- Testimonials from clients, colleagues, or previous employers
- Links to any of your work that has been featured on social media platforms
- Blog—but only if there is recent content! Save the filler and fluff for your sofa cushions
- Case studies

Job Is In The Details

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- Play By The Rules
- Make An Impact
- Give Them A Backstage Pass
- Stay Organized
- Be Reachable
- Play To Your Strengths
- Stay Ready
- Celebrate Your Personality

Play By The Rules

Get permission to show client work on your personal portfolio—this is a must and an industry standard. Simply ask your hiring manager or client if it is okay to showcase the work you did for them on your personal website. Be mindful of any proprietary and/or confidential information that might not be suitable for sharing with the outside world.

" Simply ask your hiring manager or client if it is okay to showcase the work you did for them on your personal website"

Make An Impact

Use eye-catching imagery that is optimized for the web. Take the time to choose photos/images to represent your projects that are bright, clear, and eye catching. You want to make a strong visual impact, so it's important that your site visuals are optimized for the web so they load quickly and easily and display properly.

✓   "You want to make a strong visual impact."

⊘   "You want to make a strong visual impact."
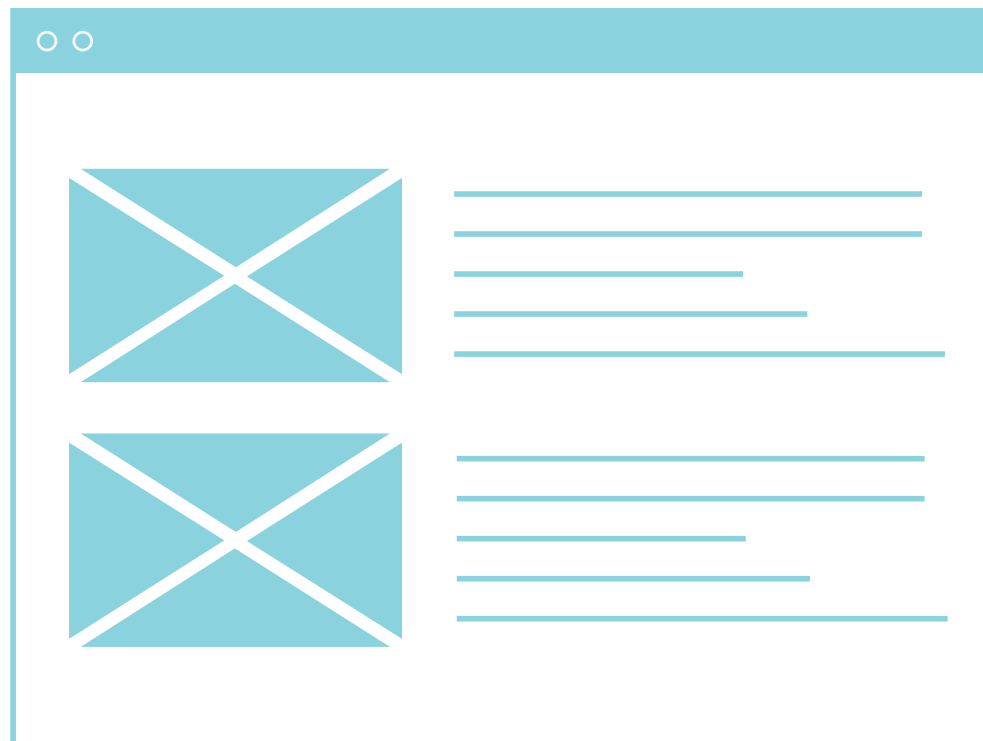
Give Them A Backstage Pass

Include process sketches and prototypes, if possible. Give recruiters and employers some insight into your creative process. It shows how you work, think, organize, and approach things. Don't just show them the final product—show them how you got there, too!

Stay Organized

Make sure your portfolio is easy to navigate. It should be as straightforward as possible for viewers to understand and explore—if they have to hunt around for navigation, you run the risk of losing their attention. Consider categorizing your online portfolio by medium, project, client, brand, and/or campaign to make it easy to digest. Organizing your portfolio by specific categories will help your audience see not only the progression of your work, but also the spectrum of your creativity. #WinWin

Medium

Client

Project

Brand   Campaign

Be Reachable

Make your contact information and resume easy to find. Your portfolio is a visual representation of your brand. The end game here is to land a great job, so make sure recruiters and potential employers can easily get in touch with you if interested.

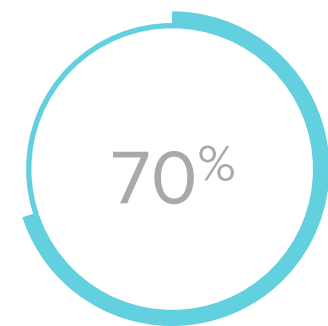" ...make sure recruiters and potential employers can easily get in touch with you if interested."

90% Photoshop

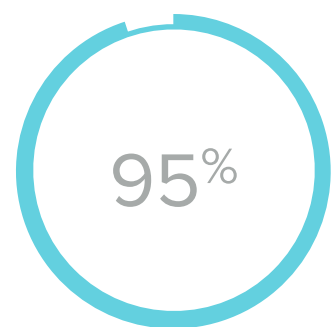85% Illustrator

70% InDesign

95% HTML

90% CSS
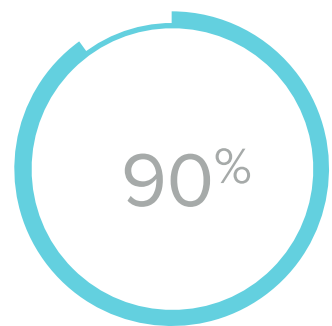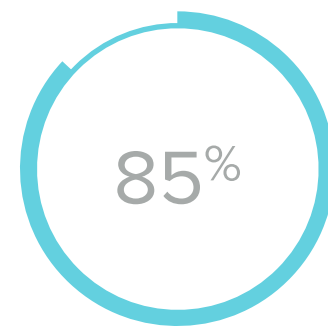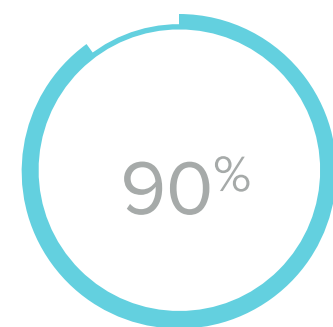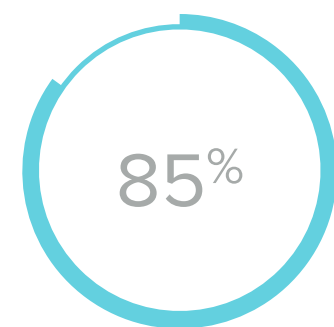
85% JavaScript

Play To Your Strengths

Be honest about your skills and abilities. Only list those areas in which you truly have expertise. There's a difference between having a well-rounded skill set and being "Jack (or Jill) of all trades, master of none." We're talking about hard skills here, such as software, technical, language, etc. If you're an ace at mechanical drawing or you're a master at certain software, then list it! You'll get a chance to speak to your soft skills—such as being detail-oriented or a true team player—during an interview. Think of what your true strengths are and which ones help sell you as a candidate. List those and lead with your strengths.

If You Stay Ready, Then You Won't Have To Get Ready

Keep your portfolio up to date at all times. A good guideline is to showcase projects within the last five years. We're not saying that's the only work that matters; it's just smart to showcase your latest and greatest. Show recruiters and employers that you are constantly creating and your skill set and experience are up to date. You can always archive older work in case recruiters or clients are looking for something specific that you can send separate from your online portfolio.
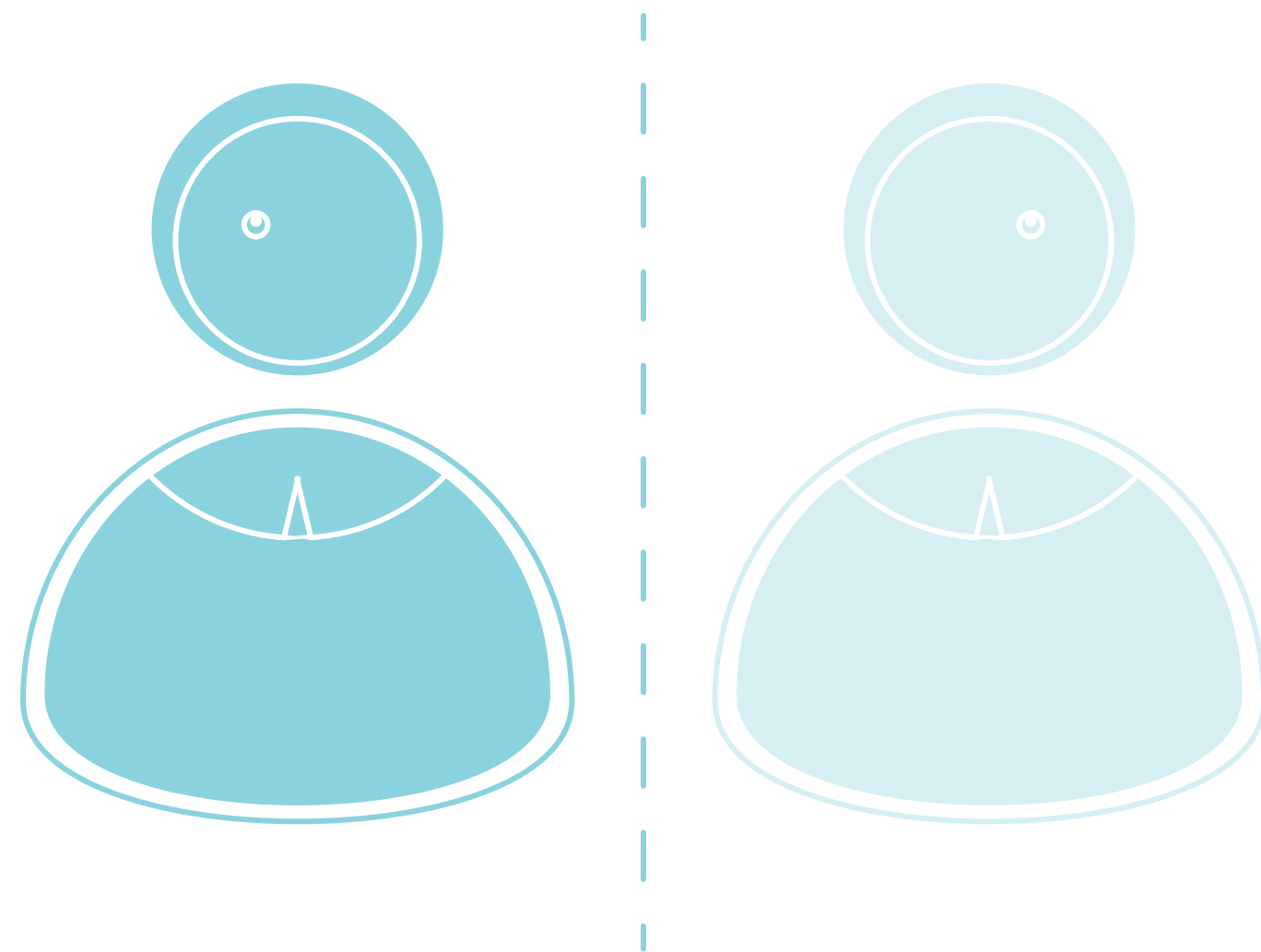
Celebrate Your Personality

Remember—your work is the main focus. Your portfolio is an extension of you. As you build your brand, use it to let your personality shine through. Your individual style, qualities, skills, and interests are all strengths; so don't be afraid to show them off a little. It gives an insight into who you are. Just make sure your personality doesn't overshadow your work.

Thumbs Up. Thumbs Down.

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✓ Thumbs Up

- Craft your portfolio to target the kind of opportunities you want
- Highlight your awards and recognitions—this is a license to brag a bit
- Let your personality set you apart
- Brand yourself—and make sure your logo links properly to your home page
- Go digital and ensure your work can be shared electronically, as well as print (Hint: .PDF is your friend!)
- Be strategic with keywords that will have maximum impact in SEO
- Customize your online portfolio URL—make sure it is appropriate, easy to spell and reference

⊘ Thumbs Down

- Make your work images too small or too big— be like Goldilocks and make them just the right size
- Discard the idea of a portfolio if you are not a creative—most people are visual learners
- Create a timeline of your entire work history— your portfolio should showcase the latest and greatest
- Include personal hobbies or projects in the professional work section of your portfolio
- Use images without providing context—include brief summaries for each one to help the viewer understand the project
- Fail to include a "Call To Action" button, such as "Hire Me"…"Read My Resume"… or "Contact Me"

For The Varsity Squad

Portfolio Tips For Senior-Level Candidates

- Since you're a seasoned pro, be sure to have career highlights from the not-so-recent past archived and ready to send out in .PDF form, in case recruiters or prospective employers want to learn more about your work
- Use your portfolio to showcase your expertise as a senior-level candidate

A Few Portfolio Tips For
Entry Level / Junior Candidates

- Since you are fairly new to the game, you might not have an extensive selection of work samples to display, so don't be afraid to highlight anything that demonstrates your technical skills and design aptitude. Include the latest and greatest software certifications and any relevant info
- Also, given that you're fairly new and don't have an extensive selection of work samples, it's okay to create some spec pieces for your portfolio to show you've got skills. You can use existing brands or case studies and create something from concept through final design

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