

Building a Professional Portfolio

BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

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INTRODUCTION

Lynn Meade

*“Portfolio collections, with their emphasis on planning, self-assessment, and goal setting,
are an ideal vehicle for showcasing hard-to-measure abilities.*

*Portfolios have a most magical way
of transforming the ordinary and the mundane
into the elegant and eye-catching.*

It is the nature of portfolios to capture growth and change.

*They demonstrate a student’s readiness to perform
at a new level or take on a new challenge.”*

Vicki Spandel

Foreword

C. Edward Watson, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President for Curricular and Pedagogical Innovation

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American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

Being able to accurately demonstrate your knowledge and abilities is one of the most valuable skills you can develop. Doing this well will help you as you enter the job market, compete for promotions, and represent yourself in a range of contexts. As someone who has led hiring processes for decades, in almost every candidate search that I’ve been a part of, there has been at least one applicant who appeared strong, but their organization or presentation of their experiences and expertise limited their competitiveness. Being able to clearly articulate ideas, connect with audiences, and organize and craft your professional identity will benefit you tremendously now and later in life, regardless of your major or career aspirations. In truth, the ability to communicate effectively is not just a skill, it’s a necessity.

There are a variety of attributes that make *Building a Professional Portfolio* particularly exciting. First, your favorite thing about this book may already be that it is free and open access. You do not need a login to read the book. You don't need to pay for codes to access it, and your access will not end at the end of the semester. You are encouraged to bookmark this text and see it as a resource that stays with you throughout your time in college and can serve as a reference later in life. This approach, often referred to as an Open Educational Resource or an OER, has been found to have a variety of benefits for students. In addition to saving you money and granting you access forever, it also makes sure all students have equal access to course materials on the first day of class. It's simply the most fair and equitable approach available to textbooks there is. No one in class with you is at a disadvantage because they were not able to buy this textbook.

In addition to being free, this book is specifically about an evidence-based approach that maximizes learning and will help you develop the skills mentioned in the first paragraph above. Portfolios, in essence, are collections of your work, reflections, and achievements and often leverage online tools to make sharing the portfolio easier, but in educational settings, the notion of *portfolio* actually refers to a couple of things: both the product as well as the process. You can think of the notion of *portfolio* as having two identities and two purposes. While portfolios do indeed serve to provide an end product that can be shared with a range of audiences, including your instructor, parents, friends, and potential employers, research has shown that the process of creating a portfolio is incredibly important and powerful for learning.

From a learning perspective, learning ultimately results from the thinking and working that we all do. If we write an essay, orally defend an argument, or complete a set of problems, we are actively engaging in the process of learning. It is sometimes said that the one who does the work is the one who does the learning, and I can imagine there have been classes in the past where maybe you weren't necessarily brought forward to actively engage in the learning process. For instance, listening to a lecture can be a fairly passive experience, and sometimes those listening don't learn that much through that strategy. That's one reason why we take notes during lectures. We are trying to actively process what we're hearing so that we're more likely to make sense of and remember what we're hearing.

Portfolios function as a deep learning strategy, meaning that the process of creating and refining a portfolio has greater learning benefits than other, more traditional approaches that an instructor might use. The process of creating a portfolio requires a lot of reflection, decision-making, organization, editing, and writing. In short, there is a lot of thinking and active engagement that occurs as part of portfolio development. As a result, a lot of learning takes place as well. In fact, the research on portfolios as a learning strategy is so compelling that it was recently added to a list of high-impact educational practices that the American Association of Colleges and Universities promotes to higher education.

Unlike studying lecture notes or cramming for an exam, when you're creating a portfolio, you don't really have to think about learning or remembering. It just happens. As the title suggests, you can focus on the guidance the book provides in regard to building a professional portfolio, and by following that guidance to create a portfolio, you will develop skills to more accurately demonstrate your knowledge and abilities, a key life skill.

Within this book, you will find real-life examples, practical tips, and actionable advice, making the process of creating an impactful portfolio both achievable and enjoyable. The guidance and prompts are thoughtfully designed to not only help you compile your achievements but also to understand the story they tell. The book encourages you to think beyond the conventional, urging you to consider how your unique experiences and perspectives can be woven into a compelling portfolio narrative and a personal brand.

Building a Professional Portfolio is more than just a guide; it is a companion in your professional journey. It empowers you to take control of your narrative, showcase your talents, and open doors to new possibilities. Let this book be your guide as you craft a portfolio that truly represents who you are and what you have and can achieve.

C. Edward Watson, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President for Curricular and Pedagogical Innovation

Executive Director for Open Educational Resources and Digital Innovation

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

A Word from the Author, Lynn Meade

Written with You, the Student, in Mind

As I was writing this book, I was teaching a class, Professional ePortfolios. I was helping students write their portfolios and I was redesigning my portfolio. This book came out of that lived experience and was tested by the needs and experiences of my students. I wrote this book as if you were my student and I were mentoring you through the process. I tried to imagine you and what you will need to do your best work.

Practical

While this book is deeply bound in research, it is at its heart a very practical resource. Because there is not one right way to build a portfolio, I used examples from a variety of sources to help you “see” what each concept looks like in a variety of applications. Don’t think of these as the limits of ways to “do” portfolios, but rather as a springboard to use to launch your ideas.

Focused on Helping You Write for Professional Audiences

This book is geared to help you write a portfolio for professional audiences. For some, this will be writing for future employers, and for others, it will be writing for graduate schools. At the center of every chapter are the fundamental questions, “What is your purpose” and “Who is your audience?”

Centered Around Critical Reflection

Portfolios done right should lead to deep reflection and personal growth. As you engage in critical reflection and write about the experiences and what they mean to you, you will be transformed. The portfolio process is as much about growing and learning as it is a process of crafting your identity for others to see you as a professional.

Four Stylistic Choices

1. **I dropped the e.** I attended a conference where Tia Brown McNair, of The American Association of Colleges and Universities spoke. She said that the use of the “e” in ePortfolio was slowly becoming obsolete so I decided to drop the “e” in this book and just refer to them as “portfolios”.
 2. **I opted for an informal, comfortable tone.** I am capable of impressing you with my vocabulary, but that didn’t seem necessary here. I wanted to talk with you like a friend. The choice to say “you” instead of the generic sounding “students” was one way I attempted to make the materials approachable.
 3. **I included references at the end of the chapters instead of the end of the book.** I thought that you might download only one chapter and I felt it was important that you have easy access to those references in case you wanted to know more about an idea.
 4. **I embedded the teacher’s manual into the chapters.** I decided to put suggestions for teachers at the end of each chapter instead of putting them in a teacher’s guide. I believe the information should be for everyone to access. That means that you, the student, have the same access to information and ideas that your teacher has.
-

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Are you using this textbook in your class? [Let me know!](#)

PART I

MAIN BODY

1.

BUILDING A PORTFOLIO: WHY YOU SHOULD SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Lynn Meade



Welcome

Welcome to the wonderful world of digital portfolios or as some call them “ePortfolios.” In this chapter, you will learn the “what” and the “why” as well as the different types and basic parts of a portfolio. In addition, you will view a variety of different portfolios. Let’s start with the “what.”

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is you telling your story. For years, people assembled a notebook of their work to share with others, now most people put that work online. It goes by many names “ePortfolios,” “digital portfolios,” “digital dossiers” or just plain “portfolios,” but the goal is the same—to tell your story about who you are and about what you have learned. According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities, it is “a personal website used to deepen student learning through reflection on, and curation of, work products produced across the college experience.”

There are many types and purposes for portfolios.

Types of Portfolios

Professional Portfolio

Designed to showcase professional skills and communicate educational achievements.

Learning Portfolios

Designed to demonstrate learning in a class or a program.

Program Assessment Portfolios

Compilation of things you learned in your major that are used to assess your learning and often used to assess the program's efficacy.

To develop further understanding, watch this short video.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=5#oembed-1>



Now that you know a little about portfolios, let's move on to answering the question, "Why should *you* build a portfolio and why should *you* make that portfolio available online?"

Why Should You Build a Portfolio?

It Can Help You with Career Focus

Building your portfolio can help you reflect on how your college courses connect to your future career. Research shows that students who reflected on the relevance of their coursework tended to be more

motivated in their studies. When college students were asked, “How have you benefited from the process of portfolio development?” One student answered it best when they wrote, “The portfolio development itself is a means of becoming professional.”

It Can Showcase Your Career Readiness

Once you begin to see how what you are learning in college connects to your professional goals, you become more career-ready. Employers can look at your portfolio and see your past positions as well as how the things that you have done in college prepared you for a career. The American Association of Colleges and Universities reported that most “employers say an electronic portfolio would be useful to them in ensuring that job applicants have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their company or organization.” Transcripts are good, “but ePortfolios are better” because they help you to tell your story. Nine in ten employers said they were “very likely” to click on an applicant’s portfolio link.

It Can Help You Begin to Think of Your Professional Identity

Creating a professional portfolio helps you to think about your online presence. As you begin to work on your portfolio, it can help you think about what image you project, who you want to be, and how you want others to view you. A portfolio is also a good place to align your online presence by connecting your media in one place. For example, you can connect to your LinkedIn, your YouTube channel, and other media where you present yourself as a professional. Rowley and Munday’s research highlights that the act of working on your online identity can help you find your voice leading to a stronger sense of self as a professional.

It Can Let You Show Off to Your Friends and Family

This may seem like an unusual thing to highlight, but stay with me here. Chances are, you have family and friends who have helped you along your educational journey. For those who are helping to pay your way or helping you by giving emotional support, it can be rewarding for them to see your work. They like to see what you are doing and they like to celebrate your achievements.

This benefits you in several ways. It helps to keep those in your social support network involved. Next, it helps others to see how you are evolving. Sometimes those you have grown up with have a hard time seeing you as more than just a child. Seeing your accomplishments and reading your thoughts, help them to see you as a professional. Many opportunities come from family and friends who are willing to say to someone they know, “Hey, check out my nephew’s portfolio.”

It Can Help You with Networking

Once you have your portfolio built, you can share the link with potential employers, with graduate schools, and with family and friends. Employers in one study suggested that there are often many good candidates to apply for a job and they are willing to forward information about qualified candidates that they did not hire to friends and colleagues. One employer said they would be less likely to take the time to mail a resume or even download the resume, but the portfolio made it easy for them to send it forward to interested parties.

It Can Help You Be More Successful in College

You are more likely to push through and persist to graduation because you can “see the point” and can imagine the end goal. A report from the US Department of Education showed that students who build portfolios are more likely to have higher course completion rates and are substantially more likely to return to college from semester to semester. It makes sense, students who can make sense of what they are learning and how it applies to them are more likely to find meaning in their classes.

It Can Help You Document Learning

Your portfolio is a useful place to store your grading rubrics, research papers, and projects. When you upload those and add a personal reflection, it gives you a place to think about your learning. Once you have that in place, you can then show others what you have learned.

Peter Seldin asked students in his organizational behavior class what benefits they observed by doing student learning portfolios. Here are a few of their answers.

- Portfolios capture intellectual substance and deep learning in ways that other methods of evaluation cannot.
- Portfolios encourage improved student performance.
- Portfolios place some responsibility for assessing learning in the hands of the students instead of relying only on the judgment of others.
- Portfolios engage students in what they are learning so that transformation and internalization can take place.
- Portfolios lead students to relate new concepts to existing experiences and critically evaluate and determine key themes.
- Portfolios show evidence and learning that stems from deep reflection.

Reflection is at the very heart of portfolio learning. “Through deep reflection,” Seldin writes, “Students explain what the evidence shows about what they have learned. They tell their own stories, assess their own strengths and weaknesses as learners, evaluate their products and performances, reflect on past learning, and think about paths for future learning.” By telling the story of what you have learned, you are engaging in metacognition— thinking about your thinking. Research indicates that by engaging in metacognition you are learning even more. Portfolios can help you show what you have learned, monitor what you have learned, and evaluate what you have learned.

To understand more, watch this two-minute video on metacognition.



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What Are the Parts of an Electronic Portfolio?

Portfolios vary greatly based on the purpose and the audience of the portfolio. If you are in a class and are required to make a portfolio, check with your teacher to know which items to include.

Here are some of the parts that you may see in portfolios.

Welcome / Landing Page

A welcome page is an invitation for the reader to engage with the content. The welcome page should include the purpose of the portfolio.

About Me

The About Me page is targeted information about you. It is similar to the interview question, “Tell me about yourself.” The goal is not to tell them everything, but rather to begin personal branding. Tell the story of you as a professional or as a student. If it is a professional portfolio designed for career advancement, then “Tell me about yourself” should be answered with content that will make them want to hire you.

For more information, check out the chapter [Crafting Your About Me Statement](#)

Professional Photo(s)

Your photo begins to tell the story of who you are. It is the first thing that someone will notice when looking at your portfolio and they will form impressions about you even before they read the first word. Do not use your high school senior photos. It is important to know the audience for your portfolio since some employers do not allow photos on employment documents as a way to reduce bias.

Resume / Curriculum Vitae

Include an updated resume or vita. Before you upload it, make sure to remove your phone number and address since you don't want to put those on a public website.

This is a good place to add a link to your LinkedIn page as well.

For more information, check out the chapter [Crafting Your Professional Story: The Art of Resume Building](#)

Artifacts

Artifacts are the objects that you display in your portfolio that are intentionally chosen to tell your story. They are used to show what you know. It is important that you choose your artifacts to fit the purpose of your portfolio and that you organize and label them in a way that they forward your story.

Artifacts might be a number of different things: an essay, a photograph, an art project, a blog, a video, a lab report, and much more.

For more information, check out the chapter [Showcasing Your Artifacts: Show and Tell What You Know](#)

Reflection and Storytelling

You tell the reader why your artifact matters by writing a narrative reflection. This narrative should connect the artifact to the story about yourself that you are telling.

For more information, check out the chapter [Documenting Your Learning and Personal Growth: Critical Reflection](#)

In addition, you may choose to include stories that help the reader to get to know you. This might be a story of how you overcame an obstacle or how you learned a new way to do things.

For more information, check out the chapter [Telling Your Story](#)

Navigation

You are the architect designing not only the content for your portfolio but how you move from place to place. Since your portfolio will likely have multiple pages, it is important for you to have an easy way to navigate these pages and access all the content. In a survey of employers, one wrote, “I really appreciated how I had options that I did not have to look at the whole thing (portfolio) to find what I wanted. I liked having options to see what I wanted to see—to navigate quickly.”

For more information, check out the chapter [Designing Your Portfolio: You are the Information Architect](#)

Contact Information

Let your reader know how to contact you. It is best to use a form rather than putting your personal information on the web for all to see.

Watch this video by Anna as she shows you her portfolio and talks you through the sections explaining why she included each category.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=5#oembed-3>

Examples of Portfolios

[Kristin Morgan -Sociology and Social Work](#)

[Jeffrey James -Public Administration](#)

[Kelsey Sherard-Health Science](#)

[Mitch Carter – Geography and Geosciences](#)

[Shaniqua Lanea Williams -Public Administration](#)

[Brooklyn Groen – Biology](#)

[Stevie Selby -Psychology](#)

[Amanda Thomsen- Economics and Math](#)

[Gowthaman Ilango–Digital Production Arts](#)

[David Gonzalez – Studio Art](#)

[Lauren Robinson – Interior Design](#)

[Maggie Canning –Veterinary Medicine](#)

[Patience Marsh – Hotel and Restaurant Management](#)

Closing

Portfolios can be a helpful tool in your personal and professional development and are an excellent way to show what you know. Now that you know a little bit about the “what” and the “why” of portfolios, you are ready to begin building your own portfolio.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- An electronic portfolio is a collection of items that you have assembled to showcase your skills, talents, and qualifications. It is designed to showcase your learning over time.
- There are three main types: professional, learning, and assessment.
- There are many benefits to creating and having a portfolio.
- Portfolios include many different parts and which items you include is determined by your audience and your purpose.

Exercises: Portfolio Reconnaissance Using the Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono created the six thinking hats to critically reflect on ideas. In its truest form, it is used for analyzing decision-making and problem-solving, but it can also be used as a tool of reflection. As a group, look at three to five portfolios and apply each of the six thinking hats.

1. Wear an imaginary hat. For this exercise, each person in your group will pretend to be wearing a different hat. You should have the same hat color for the whole activity. If it is a small group, you may have more than one hat.
2. Pick portfolios to look at from the list below.
3. Look at each of the portfolios through the hat color. Answer the corresponding questions. Write down the answers.
4. Share your answers with the group.

Here is how it works. Imagine you are wearing a white hat. When you have a white hat on, you look at just the facts. If you look at a portfolio, you look at what are the key facts they have presented in their portfolio. If you are wearing a red hat, you look at feelings, hunches, and intuition. If you look at a portfolio through the red hat, you think about how it makes you feel. Does it look professional? Do the photos feel consistent with the story? Do you have a hunch that they just did their portfolio to get it done instead of doing it right?



The White Hat: Known or needed information.

- What are the facts?

1. What are some of the facts about the person that you notice from the portfolio?
2. What facts seem to be missing?
3. What story do these facts tell about the person?
4. Who are the potential audiences for this portfolio? Make it personal.

What facts do you want to share in your portfolio?

Who do you want to see your portfolio?



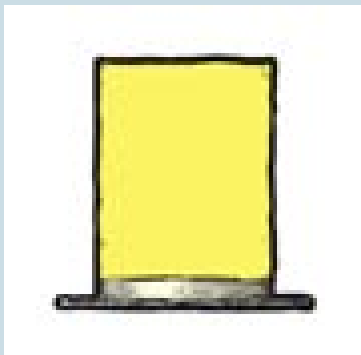
Black Hat: Risks, difficulties, problems

- What is not working?
- What are the risks?

1. What issues do you see with the portfolio?
2. Are there any problematic parts?
3. Are there any challenges with navigation?
4. How might the information they disclose in the ePortfolio be risky to them or their institution? Make it personal.

What problems do you foresee when making your portfolio?

What is a problem that you see that you don't want to replicate?



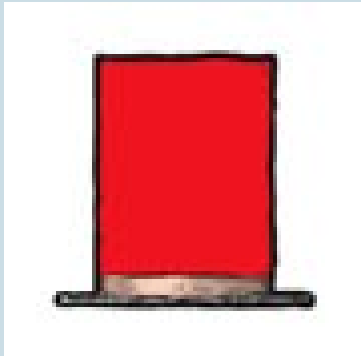
The Yellow Hat: Brightness and optimism.

- What are the positives?
- What is the value?

1. How could this portfolio be used to benefit the person?
2. What positive things could possibly come from it?
3. What are the strengths of this portfolio? Make it personal.

How has viewing this ePortfolio given you insight and caused you to be optimistic about the process?

What is one great idea that you can "steal" for your own ePortfolio project?



The Red Hat: Feelings, hunches and intuition.

- What are your gut feelings?
- What are the emotions?
- What feelings result?
- What are the loves/hates?

1. What are your initial emotions when looking at this portfolio?
 2. Summarize this portfolio using 3 different emotion words?
 3. What do you love about this portfolio?
 4. Just looking at the photos, what emotions do you associate with the person?
 5. Just looking at the format, what are your feelings?
- Make it personal.

What are the primary emotions you hope to share in your portfolio?

What are some ideas you learned from looking at others that can move you towards that goal?



The Green Hat: Creativity, possibilities, new ideas, new concepts, new perceptions.

1. After looking at the portfolio, what are some new ideas that you have about what a portfolio is or does?
 2. How does the portfolio show creativity?
 3. Where does the portfolio spur new ideas?
 4. How do the reflections demonstrate growth?
- Make it personal.

What new possibilities to you see from looking at the portfolios of others?



The Blue Hat: Process, the leader. De Bono used this as a way to look at which process was most useful; we are going to change it up a bit to look at the process and the audience.

1. How might an employer look at this portfolio?
2. How might a program or department look at this portfolio?
3. How could the structure be best adapted for different audiences?
4. In what ways are they limited by the platform?
5. How could they overcome it?

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2.

LOOKING AT YOUR STRENGTHS AND VALUES: SELF REFLECTION

Lynn Meade



Thinking about how to highlight your strengths is an important first step.

Your portfolio is as unique as you are. When considering what to include, you should always think about your purpose and your audience. Whether you crafting your portfolio to use as part of a graduate school admission packet, for your career packet, or as a way to showcase your skills for an unknown future audience, you will likely want to talk about your strengths and values and also share any high impact learning opportunities you have had.

Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.
Oscar Wilde

Highlight Your Strengths and Values

You should start the portfolio process by brainstorming. List what you believe to be your top strengths, ask your friends and family what they consider to be your top strengths, and take some online assessments that will tell you more about your strengths and values. Take the time to brainstorm fully before you begin writing.

Step One: Take Self Assessments

Take Assessments to Find Out More About Your Strengths and Values

1. [The High Five Test](#) 120 questions
2. [Myers Briggs -Jung Typology](#) 60 questions
3. [Personal Values Assessment](#) (10-15 minutes)
4. [The Big Five](#) OCEAN -60 questions
5. [The Enneagram](#) 105 questions
6. [DISC Personality Test](#) 54 questions

[Clifton Strengths Finder](#): This one requires a fee or institutional membership. Check with your school to see if they have an account.

There is a lot of debate about which of these is the most accurate and which ones should be used for career applications. There is also debate about how much meaning we should give the results. I am avoiding this discussion altogether by suggesting that you use these tests as a brainstorming tool to get started thinking about and writing about yourself. Once you get your results, you can agree or disagree with them entirely, but at least you now have some ideas to consider.

Step Two: Ask Others to Evaluate You

Ask Others to Evaluate You

Ask three different people to complete these questions about you. The results are much richer if you pick people from different groups: friends, teachers, co-workers, coaches, and parents. Copy this quick questionnaire into an email or paste it into a document so that you can print it and then distribute it to a variety of people.

Please rate me on a scale of 1 -5 for each of these attributes.

1= Not at all and 5 = Extremely

1. Self Confident
2. Cooperative
3. Problem-solver
4. Defiant
5. Open to new ideas
6. Reliable
7. Agreeable
8. Imaginative
9. Creative
10. Organized
11. Hard Worker
12. Flexible
13. Team-Oriented
14. Leadership Material

What one word best describes me?

What story could I tell to a potential employer that really defines my character?

What are three main strengths I possess that would interest an employer?

What are three weaknesses that I need to work on overcoming?

Adapted from an activity in *Communicate* by Communication Research Association

Step Three: Write Down Thoughts About Yourself

Exercises: Brainstorming to Help You Think About Your Strengths

I see myself as a _____

People describe me as _____

What sets me apart is _____

Most people would say my strengths are _____

People often comment on my ability to _____

If I were to be a part of this career/graduate program, I would contribute by adding my _____

If someone were telling a potential client about me, they would say _____

Step Four: Look at Ways that Others Have Highlighted Their Strengths

Examine Ways That Others Highlighted Their Strengths and Values in a Portfolio

Look at these portfolios and see how each highlighted their strengths and values in a way that was unique to them and their audience.

[Kennedie Hudson highlights her character strengths.](#)

[Sam Beskind highlights his values](#)

[Brandon Sans highlights his values](#)

[Rachel Anders writes about her values](#)

Step Five: Make a List of the Types of Things that an Employer or Graduate School Want to See

Once you determine your strengths and values, you should think about your target audience and then try to use examples that might interest them. Make a list of keywords that you think an employer or graduate school will be looking for in your portfolio. You can do that by looking at the job descriptions for a particular type of job or you can research the industry to see the types of things that they value. For example, I am very creative and do painting, I make mosaics, and I write creative pieces. These are not relevant to many of the jobs that I would apply for so I would not use them as examples. Rather, when I talk about creativity as a trait of mine, I want to use examples such as creative fundraising campaigns that I led if I am applying to a not-for-profit organization or I might talk about creative assignments that I have created when writing to academic audiences.

Where Will You Use The Information?

Your strengths and values will be sprinkled throughout your portfolio. They will be on your About Me page as you write important things about who you are, they will be part of your career competencies, and may even decide to make separate pages to highlight particular strengths. By emphasizing your strengths, you are not only acknowledging your unique capabilities but also presenting a distinct narrative that can set you apart

Conclusion

The journey of creating and curating your portfolio is a powerful exploration of self-awareness and is one of the first steps toward personal branding. Taking the time to do a deep dive into your strengths by looking inward,

taking a strengths assessment, and asking for feedback from others will provide you with rich ideas that you can use when building your professional portfolio. As you navigate the exciting paths ahead, find ways to showcase your strengths in ways that are meaningful to your audience.

Key Takeaways

- The process of portfolio building begins with self-reflection.
- Take strengths and personality assessments to give you ideas for personal strengths you might want to highlight in your portfolio.
- Looking at the portfolios of others can be helpful to help you brainstorm ways to write about your strengths.
- Ask others to assess you as part of the reflection process.
- Consider the expectations of the audience and be willing to match your strengths accordingly.

3.

CRAFTING YOUR ABOUT ME STATEMENT

Lynn Meade



“You never get a second chance to make a first impression” and this section is your opportunity to form that first impression. This short introduction tells your audience a little bit about you, and it sets the tone for the rest of your portfolio. This chapter will help you to adapt your statement to your audience and purpose. In addition, there will be brainstorming activities to help you craft an about-me statement that is right for you.

What is an About Me Page?

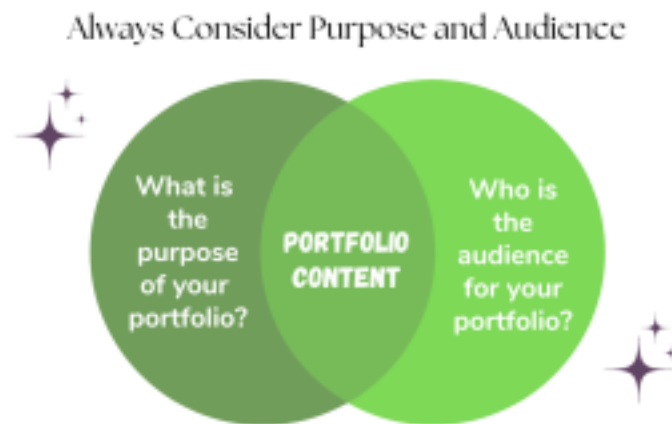
According to Dr. Angela Williams, former Career Center Executive Director and Teaching Assistant Professor, “The about me page is an opportunity for you to describe more about you and highlight the connections between your skills, experiences, and knowledge. Consider including your major, interests, or future plans. What future challenges do you plan to work on? What motivates you? What background details about yourself do you want your professors, employers, or other possible visitors to know? Make sure your biographical information is relevant and professional. The about me page could also feature your personal brand or message and can include a professional photo and even fun videos and photos or whatever you think represents you and other relevant hobbies, skills and experiences.”

Think of These Things First

As you begin to write your about me statement, you need to ask yourself, “Why am I writing this” and “Who

do I want to read it?” Defining your audience and purpose will help you craft your about statement in a way that best tells your story.

What is the Purpose of Your Portfolio?



The About Me is where your story begins. Much like the opening scene of a movie where you meet the character for the first time, your About Me Page allows the reader to begin to see who you are. You are not telling everything about you, rather you are telling them the things that help you get closer to your goals. Your About Me should include things about your purpose and write about your potential audience.

[Jeremy Zimmet](#), has graduated and is seeking a career in data librarianship, in his About Me statement, he makes his purpose and his passion clear.

For me, pursuing a career in data librarianship is a call to action. It is a call to engineer technologies and ideas that will dismantle the barriers that separate us from one another. It is a call to build a better bridge between people and information. It is a call to build community through the act of reading, togetherness, and access to resources. With drastic changes occurring in government and the economy every day, it's clear that the time to act is now—and we can't waste any of it.

[Emmira Harris](#) is a Junior Civil Engineering major and writes this on her About Me Page:

I am currently an Undergraduate Research Assistant for Dr. Sarah Hernandez, a transportation civil engineering professor in the College of Engineering. Education and STEM are two of my passions, so through the years I've had to figure out how to incorporate these passions in the development of my future. I have goals that align with both, and I plan to fulfill them through my life's journey.

[Hunter Anderson](#), a Senior Music Major writes about the intersection between his passion and his major:

I'm Hunter, a driven and compassionate musician who has been studying, teaching, and performing the guitar for most of my life. Currently, I'm a senior at the University of Arkansas with a major in Guitar Performance. Post-graduation, I strive to teach and inspire others through lessons, performances, compositions, and to continuously ignite my passion for music.

Exercise: Brainstorm Your Purpose



Spend two minutes writing on each of these prompts to help you brainstorm your purpose.

1. Where do you see yourself in one to three years?
2. How does the work that you want to do fit into the world you want to live in?
3. What is a story about you that shows your character?
4. What kinds of creative endeavors or projects interest you?
5. How have you grown as a person in the last few years?

Who is the Audience for Your Portfolio?

You are making your portfolio for a particular audience—a professor, a program director, a graduate school committee, or a future employer. To get into the mind of your audience, write out the answers to these questions and keep these answers in front of you whenever you work on your portfolio.

- What are your professional goals?
- Who can help you reach those goals?

- What things are important to that person/people?
- What skills, experience, and knowledge are they looking for in a candidate?
- What motivates them?
- What phrases or terms would appeal to them?

What Buzzwords Should You Include or Exclude?

Once you determine your purpose and your audience, you need to decide if that is a narrow or wide audience. If you are writing to a graduate school in a particular field, that is a very narrow audience and you will want to use insider language. They will be looking for certain words that demonstrate your knowledge. If this is the case, make a list of insider words that they expect to see. If you are making your portfolio for a variety of different employers, you will want to minimize specialty language and explain any necessary insider terms that you decide to use.

What is the Level of Your Audience's Understanding?

While we are talking about audience and purpose, it is important to think about the knowledge level of your portfolio audience. For example, in my early career, I interviewed with a board of directors made up of physicians and social workers. They wanted to hire me to be a fundraiser, volunteer coordinator, and a media director for a not-for-profit. As a newly minted master's graduate, I might be tempted to reference the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Judgemental Heuristics and how I built my projects using those as foundations. It is unlikely that my interviewers would understand. They would, however, understand that I studied persuasive theory and how it applied to the way people make decisions. They would understand that I worked on projects where I used persuasive theory to get concrete results. They would especially understand a story about a project that I worked on and the results that I got.

When we work closely with things for a long time, we don't even realize that we speak in "code." Alan Alda realized that the more people know, the harder it is for them to talk to others; he called this the "curse of knowledge." In his book, *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on my Face?* he wrote, "Once we know something, it's hard to unknow it, to remember what it's like to be a beginner. It keeps us from considering the listener. Using shorthand that is incomprehensible to the other person, or referring to a process they're unfamiliar with, we lock them out, and we don't even realize it because we can't believe we are the only person who knows this stuff."



Taking the time to think about your strengths helps you to think about how to “sell” yourself to others.

Thinking About Who You Are

When crafting your about me statement, it can be helpful to take a deep dive into who you are and what you value. After all, how can you tell someone who you are if you don’t know yourself?

I want you to think about your identity. Who are you? If I were to ask your parents who you are and then ask your best friend, I might get different answers. One might see you as outgoing and confident and the other might see you as unsure about yourself. Different people know different versions of you. In short, you have different identities. Most of us never really take the time to think about the many different ways we live out those different identities. When faced with building a portfolio, most students find they have never really thought about all the different identities they bring to the world and how to align those. For your portfolio, you are building your professional identity and you are highlighting your strengths, and talking about your experiences in a way that will be meaningful to employers or graduate programs.

To get started, you need to brainstorm your strengths. There is a chapter dedicated to helping you with this. Engaging in assessments, employing brainstorming frameworks, or seeking input from trusted friends and family can all prove instrumental. Once you have a list of your strengths, you can use those to start crafting your about me statement. Take a look at these examples and notice how each person highlights their strengths.

I am a chronic puzzle-seeker and a lifelong learner. I unpack complicated problems by approaching each with the flexible process and attention it deserves. This means that I work with others to ask questions, find approaches and execute solutions...[August Winfield Miller](#)

I learned, at a very early age, the importance of a strong work ethic, diligence, organization, and ambition.

Growing up on my family's farm involved physical labor, a willingness to work, and an ability to keep a positive attitude in adverse working conditions. [Patience Marsh](#)

Throughout my life I have prided myself upon my ability to adapt. Moving around a lot as a child forced me to take charge of my situation and surroundings. I excel at improvisation as well as complex problem solving as a result of my childhood experience. [Amanda Seidner](#)

The trick is to talk about professional skills and examples while still showing your personality. Look at these two statements to see how they are professional and still highlight the person's personality.

From a very young age, I was always the type of person who loved helping people and got satisfaction out of making a difference in someone's else's life. [Abby Christie Personal Statement](#).

I'm a Photographer and Designer based in Edinburgh.

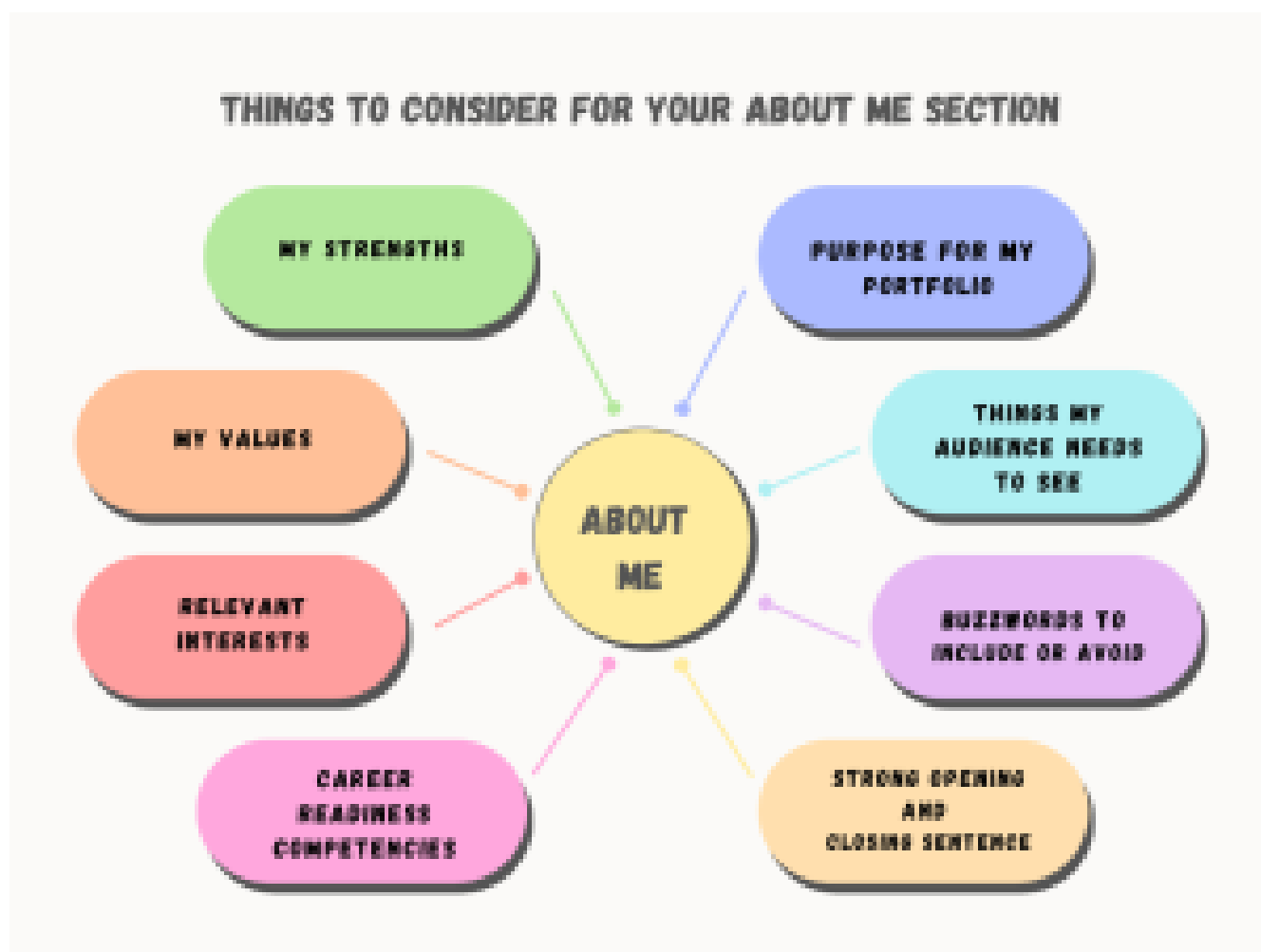
The photography approach to the work I create is very much simplistic but also cinematically inspired. I love what I do, and I adore the creative process; it is an addiction and can give never ending possibilities.

Highlight Career Competencies

As you are highlighting, your strengths, you should consider the types of things that employers are looking for and add those if they apply. The National Association of Colleges and Employers suggest that there are eight things that employers are looking for in college graduates that indicate career readiness. These are called career competencies. Showing evidence of these competencies throughout your portfolio can increase the chances that an employer will consider you. These are the types of skills that employers report that they are looking for in candidates.

- Career and Self Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity and Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

There is an chapter dedicated to help you write about your [career competencies](#).



Example of Using Career Competencies in the About Me Statement

So far, we have talked about audience, purpose, buzzwords, and career competencies. Let's take a look at an example so you can see what it looks like when it all comes together. Fawn Kurtzo was a student at the University of Arkansas and her About Me is an excellent example of highlighting career competencies and writing to a specific audience.

I am currently a junior at the University of Arkansas, "Home of the Razorbacks" located in Fayetteville. My hometown of Parthenon is located in the most rural, yet renowned, county in

Arkansas. Newton County is home of America's first national river, which visitors often refer to as "The Buffalo". In 2003 equine enthusiasts along the Buffalo National River began calling upon me for farrier services as well as my ability to start a young colt. By 2006 my journey to learning communication skills was well underway, because training the horse is far from the hardest part in satisfying clientele. Having a specialized skill of horsemanship was the kick-start of my path to understanding communication skills. I became a teacher for owners seeking to understand my practices, which eventually led to conducting private lessons to young children, peers and even adults. Along with dedication in schoolwork, my demeanor and equine skills earned a full-ride scholarship to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri to study Equine Science the year of 2008. Though the burning desire to pursue a well-rounded agricultural degree brought me back to my home state for the following sophomore year; within the next few months I had given volunteer seminars across the state of Arkansas, was commonly featured in the Horseman's Round Up magazine and filmed once for RFD-TV's Southern Tales and Trails series.

Fast forwarding to the present, my past decade as a professional in the equine realm taught me how imperative communication skills are, not only in horsemanship – but every facet of success. In conjunction with my collegiate studies, I feel prepared for any job task. Professors have shown me the ropes of: up-to-date software and technology, campaign marketing along with approaches and evaluation, leadership skills, conducting presentations, and created awareness of available resources throughout to maintain adaptability. By adding these skills to my pre-existent "hang till the hair slips" outlook, I am geared up and ready for the next occupational chapter in the book of life- wherever that may lead.

Audience: As you read her statement, you will notice that her target audience is people who specialize in horses. She uses insider words like "farrier services," "shown me the ropes" and "hang til the hair slips" which would appeal to that audience. If her audience included non-horse enthusiasts, she would have needed to exclude or define those terms.

Career Competencies: Fawn does an excellent job of highlighting her career competencies.

- Career and Self Development
 - Along with **dedication** in schoolwork, my **demeanor** and equine skills earned a full-ride scholarship to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri to study Equine Science the year of 2008.
 - In conjunction with my collegiate studies, I **feel prepared** for any job task.
- Communication
 - By 2006 my journey to learning **communication** skills was well underway, because training the horse is far from the hardest part in satisfying clientele.
 - Having a specialized skill of horsemanship was the kick-start of my path to understanding **communication** skills.
 - Fast forwarding to the present, my past decade as a professional in the equine realm taught me how imperative **communication skills** are, not only in horsemanship – but every facet of success.
- Critical Thinking

- I became a teacher for owners seeking to **understand** my practices, which eventually led to conducting private lessons to young children, peers and even adults.
- Equity and Inclusion
 - I became a teacher for owners seeking to understand my practices, which eventually led to conducting private lessons to **young children, peers and even adults.**
- Leadership
 - I **became a teacher** for owners seeking to understand my practices, which eventually led to conducting private lessons to young children, peers and even adults.
 - Professors have shown me the ropes of: up-to-date software and technology, campaign marketing along with approaches and evaluation, **leadership skills**, conducting presentations, and created awareness of available resources throughout to maintain adaptability.
- Professionalism
 - Fast forwarding to the present, my past decade as a professional in the equine **realm taught me** how imperative communication skills are, not only in horsemanship – but every facet of success.
- Technology
 - Professors have shown me the ropes of: **up-to-date software and technology**, campaign marketing along with approaches and evaluation, leadership skills, conducting presentations, and created awareness of available resources throughout to maintain adaptability.

The First Sentence Should Hook the Audience

Starting your about me with “I’m a sophomore at the University of Arkansas” is not a very interesting way to start. Saying, “Welcome to my ePortfolio page! This is where I will display all college my work” is also not very interesting.

After you have written your about me statement, you should go back and just read the first sentence. Is it interesting? Does it make you want to read more? What is the emotional tone?

Look at these statements for examples of strong opening statements.

- “I am a chronic puzzle-seeker and a lifelong learner.”
- “I am an experienced Marketing and sales professional, working full time in the wine & spirits industry with a current focus on executing luxury spirits initiatives.”
- “As a child, I was interested in things that were rarely noticed; my goal was to be on the lookout for these magical, seemingly invisible things.” [Sydney Maples](#)

- “I’m Hunter, a driven and compassionate musician who has been studying, teaching, and performing the guitar for most of my life.” [Hunter Anderson](#)

Typically, you would have an engaging opening sentence (or two) followed by your thesis. Your thesis should make clear who you are and what you want.

The Thesis Should Be Clear

I’m John, a junior studying organizational psychology with minors in business and leadership studies. After graduation, I hope to attain a full-time job working in the field of human resources in a corporate setting. [John Prescott](#)

The Last Sentence [Should Be Purposeful](#)

The last part of your about me statement should tell the reader what to do or where to go next. It might tell them your overall goal or the areas you want to work towards. Be friendly and be specific.

- “Ultimately, I am inspired by what cannot be seen directly – it must be felt, realized, or understood. To me, that is where the beauty of science comes in, and as a lifelong science communicator, I hope to articulate that beauty to the best of my ability.” [Sydney Maples](#)
- “Instilling respect for the music of the past, building good techniques, and fostering communication skills is what I believe should be the heart of an aspiring guitarist. [Hunter Anderson](#)
- “The teaching assignment at Tarleton State and Penn State University gave me opportunities to evaluate my ability as a teacher, and I believe that I have the qualities and desire needed to become a respected researcher and instructor. I would like to play a significant role in contributing in the areas of international adult and extension education by identifying important researchable problems and raising both local and global issues through active involvement.” [Roshan Nayak](#)

The About Me as a Video

The About Me can also be done as a video. In a study of high school principals, 93% of principals said they would use the video in hiring practices. They felt like they gained insight into the person from their video and you could tell from the way they spoke that the person in the video had a passion for teaching. One principal said, “I think that the video really enhances the ePortfolio . . . I think that it is wonderful. It is a whole different way to connect with a person without that person being here.” This study was on teachers and the connection is an easy one to make. Depending on your audience and purpose, the video may be the right option for you.

Check out this video by [Kendall McCallum](#) for an example of an about-me video.

It is important to know your audience because not all businesses want photos or videos.

With increasing pressure on businesses to provide equitable hiring practices, some companies will not consider you as a candidate if you include photos or videos.



Most people feel insecure when writing about themselves. Let that feeling push you to work harder.

Let Doubt Drive You to Work Harder

If you are like me, the thought of writing an “about me” statement makes you feel inadequate and self-conscious. I want you to know that you are not alone. In fact, most people have trouble with this.

Maybe you have heard of the imposter syndrome. It is the idea that most of us go around feeling like others are more equipped than we are and that if people would just see into our minds then they would know how inadequate we feel. It might surprise you to know that, 70% of professionals report feeling like an imposter.

Just because you feel like an imposter doesn’t mean you are going to fail, quite the contrary. Tewkik, an Assistant Professor at MIT says, “Interestingly, to date, there’s no empirical quantitative evidence that

impostor thoughts degrade performance.” In fact, the Yerkes-Dodson stress performance curve, “shows that a few nerves—up to a point—improve performance. It may be that having the right amount of impostor thoughts can provide just enough motivation to bring out your best work.”

So if you have self-doubt, let that motivate you to work longer, try harder, and use the many resources available to you.

Exercises: Evaluate These Welcome Pages

Pick three to five of these welcome pages and evaluate them using the following questions.

- Is the first sentence engaging? Does it hook the reader?
- Do they include their strengths?
- Do they highlight career competencies?
- Does it appear to fit their purpose?
- How are buzzwords used to include or exclude readers?
- [Lea Jackson – Journalism and Public Communication](#)
- [Maggie Engler – Electrical Engineering](#)
- [Jacob Langsner Film and Law](#)
- [Christine Alibozek -Hospitality](#)
- [Brent Warr – Environmental Design](#)
- [Roshan Nayak – Agriculture and Extension Education](#)
- [Sydney Maples- Science Communication](#)
- [Robin Shattler – Marketing](#)
- [Jarelle Hooks – Social Work](#)
- [Baylee Brown – Law](#)
- [Cam Cavaliere – English Rhetoric](#)
- [Kristin Ramsey – Sociology and Criminal Justice](#)
- [Sam Beskind – Management Science and Engineering](#)
- [Carrie Natasha – Pre Medical](#)
- [Kristin Morgan- Sociology and Social Work](#)
- [Megan Diem- Marketing](#)
- [Annabelle Farrow – Human Development](#)
- [Kyndal Driver- Marketing](#)

- [Mitch Carter – Geography and Geoscience](#)
- [Carrie White – Biology](#)

Closing

We all have many different identities and different people know different versions of us. Most of us never really take the time to think about the many different ways we live out those different identities and how we can shape our professional identity. Your portfolio is your chance to shape that identity.

Now that you have brainstormed ideas and thought about your audience and the purpose, it is time to get to writing. It won't be perfect at first. Writing is a process. As you work through the rest of your portfolio, come back from time to time and revisit your About Me statement and see if you are telling a consistent story.

You really are unique and amazing. Let your portfolio give them a reason to want to get to know you more.

Key Takeaways

- Always write with your audience and purpose in mind.
- Let your purpose determine whether you want to include industry buzzwords.
- Highlight your strengths in your about me statement.
- Try to include career competencies in your about me.
- Make sure that your first sentence is interesting.

Exercises: Additional Activities and Resources for Teachers

In addition to the exercises in this chapter, teachers might want to do the following to help students prepare their About Me page.

- Have students write a self-eulogy of what they want to be remembered for as a warm-up to writing the About Me page.
- Have them pretend to be the person/employer/teacher who will read the portfolio and make a list of everything that the person thinks is important.
- Do the exercise in this chapter “evaluate these welcome pages.”
- Have students sit in groups and finish the sentence, “I feel like an imposter when...”
- Work in groups and write an about me of a fictitious student that includes examples of each of the career competencies.
- Give them a page of thesis statements and have them evaluate them.
- Have students take the strengths and/or values assessment and then discuss in groups these questions: What about your strength sets you apart? Can you give an example of how you have demonstrated your strength in a way that might interest a future employer?
- Watch [Good Communication 101: Mirroring, Jargon, Hifalutin Words](#) by Alan Alda and talk about specialized language and how it can help and hinder communication. Discuss times that someone talked in a way that you didn’t understand. Reflect on your own writing and how you might use words that will make it difficult for your reader to connect with what you know.
- Watch [Sharing Science Through Story](#) by Fergus McAuliffe and discuss the importance of using audience-appropriate language.

Exercises: Try a Six Word Story

Try writing your story in six words. This can be a brainstorming activity or it can be included in the portfolio.

Fourth-year medical students were asked to write three six-word stories exploring their reasons for pursuing a career in medicine.

Unknown world of the deepest connections.
 Feet grounded, mind sharp, heart fulfilled.
 Preserving dignity throughout life, into death.
 -Tori Ehrhardt

At the end, everyone is vulnerable.
 Listening to people. Learning new perspectives.
 Loud monitors. Your lullaby. Rest peacefully.
 -Larissa Andrade

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4.

BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Lynn Meade

Building Your Personal Brand

*Whether you realize it or not, you have a personal brand.
If I looked you up on Google and didn't find anything
about you on the first page of the results,
that's your personal brand.
If I found an out-of-date LinkedIn profile
or a bunch of random social media posts,
that too is your personal brand.*

Marcos Salazar

Personal branding refers to your public identity. It is a combination of beliefs and feelings that people have about you. Marcos Salazar says, “People tend to think about a personal brand as bragging, self-promotion, and all about yourself, but it’s actually something much more important. It’s your reputation. In other words, it’s how people perceive you.” According to the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, “Your brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

When building your personal brand, you should consider your motivation and intent. Why do you want to build your brand? Who is your audience? What do you want people to say about you when you’re not in the room? Your brand should reflect your strengths, beliefs, and goals.

Watch this thought-provoking video on building your personal brand:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=1173#oembed-1>

When you are building your portfolio, you are intentionally telling stories that will give people positive

impressions about you. Is that impression consistent with other things that they will find about you? For a glimpse into your personal brand, complete this exercise.

Exercises

Let's look at the whole story that is available about you. Complete these four steps to discover what your current personal brand says about you.

- Pull up a search engine and search for your name. If you have a more common name, search for your name and the state where you are living.

Did you know that many employers and most graduate schools will do an internet search of your name? It is important that you regularly search for your name so that you know what is out there.

- Open up your LinkedIn and imagine you are an employer or graduate school leader, what would your impression be?

When pulling up a LinkedIn, the things that most people notice right away, are the description section under the name and the about me section. Make sure that those are thoughtfully created and consistent with the story you are telling in your portfolio. Once you have completed your portfolio, you may want to add a portfolio link to your LinkedIn profile.

- Open up any of your social media accounts that are public—Instagram, Facebook, X, Pinterest, and imagine you are an employer or graduate school leader, what would your impression be?
- Pull up one of your social media accounts that is public and then hand your phone/computer to your friend. Have them look at it in detail. (yes, this feels creepy and that is a good thing. I want you to feel the discomfort of seeing someone make judgements about you based on what they see). Ask them to notice your pictures, who you follow, who you like, and what you post. Now ask your friend to pretend like they have never met you before and have just looked you up on social media, what would be their first impression?

Employers Are Looking At Your Social Media

Like it or not, employers frequently utilize these platforms as a supplementary tool for candidate evaluation, providing them with insights into an applicant's character, values, and overall suitability for a given role. Take a look at these numbers from a poll of employers and hiring managers.

- 71% of U.S. hiring decision-makers agree that looking at candidates' social media profiles is an effective way to screen applicants.
- 70% believe employers should screen all applicants' social media profiles.
- 67% say they use social networking sites to research potential job candidates.
- 55% have found content on an applicant's social media that caused them not to hire the applicant.
- 78% of U.S. hiring decision-makers believe employees should maintain a work-appropriate social media profile.

*according to the Harris Poll of over 1,005 employers and hiring managers.

Colleges are Looking Too

- 11% of college registrars and admissions officers denied admission based on social media content.
- 7% rescinded college offers based on social media content.
- Almost three-quarters either monitor social media as part of the admissions decision-making or will review social media brought to their attention.

*[*American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers](#)*

Closing

A strong personal brand is consistent across various platforms. It is crucial that you align your personal brand on social media, LinkedIn, and your portfolio to ensure a cohesive, professional, and authentic representation. By building a compelling narrative, and actively managing your brand, you can shape your professional identity and stand out in a competitive world.

Key Takeaways

- Personal branding is your reputation.
- You can influence your branding by being consistent across platforms—portfolio, LinkedIn, and social media.

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5.

DOCUMENTING YOUR LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Lynn Meade



One key aspect of a portfolio is reflective expression. According to Carole Rodgers, “Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationship with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible.” While the resume and curriculum vitae show what you have done, a reflection shows what you think about what you have done. It allows you to demonstrate thought, and process and document personal growth.

“Reflecting means being intentionally thoughtful about defining an experience, explaining that experience, and determining future implications and actions,” according to Parkes, Dredger, and Hickes. Reflection most often takes the form of writing, but it can also include video or audio reflections. Reflection should take place throughout the portfolio and it “reaches its full potential” when it becomes progressive in that each reflection builds on the others. It is woven into the about me and is an important part of the gallery of artifacts.

Guiding Principles of Reflection

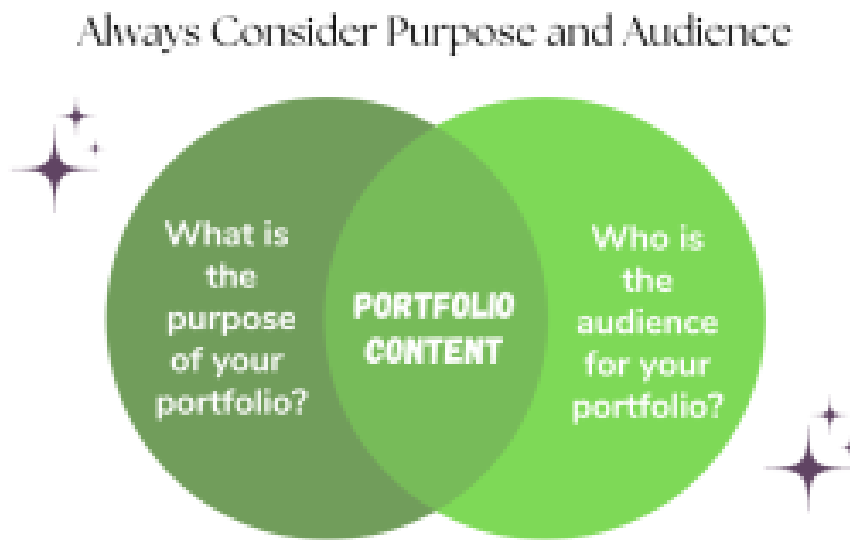
Carole Rogers suggests there are several guiding principles of reflection and at the heart of these are meaning-making, systematic thinking, and personal growth.

1. **Meaning Making:** Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences

and ideas.

2. **Systematic Thinking:** Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking.
3. **Focused on Personal Growth:** Reflection requires attitudes that value personal and intellectual growth.

Now that you know the role of reflection in a portfolio and that it is made up of meaning-making, systematic thinking, and personal growth, let's look at several ways to get started with writing your reflection.



The Importance of Audience and Purpose

As with all writing, you should have a clear sense of purpose and audience. For example, “I am writing these portfolio reflections to be read by future employers for the purpose of getting a job in the field of marketing” or “I am writing these portfolio reflections to be read by the admittance committee for the purpose of getting accepted into graduate school.” Finally, your purpose may be, “I am writing these reflections as a way to help me better understand my skills so I can visualize a variety of paths in my future.” It is likely that your portfolio will have multiple audiences and you should proceed keeping those audiences in mind. As Gallagher and Poklop suggest, students should consider “inviting different readers to have different experiences of the portfolio by offering them guidance in how to understand, experience, and interact with the portfolio.”

Let's look at one model of using critical reflection referred to as the what, so what, and now what reflection,

also called the Driscoll Cycle. I will explain the cycle, share with you question prompts, offer a video review of the cycle, and then an example of what the cycle looks like when applied.



Critical Reflection Using the Three Step Model

The Driscoll Cycle of Reflection includes three very basic steps:

1. What? Describe what happened.
2. So What? Analyze the event.
3. Now what? Anticipate future practice based on what you learned.

Let's break them down one at a time.

What?

In the “what” stage, you should recall what you did and write about it as objectively as possible. Just the facts.

- What happened?
- What is your artifact? Name and describe it.
- What context/background information is important or relevant to your audience?
- What happened in a particular situation? What did you do? What were the results?
- How much did you know about the subject before we started?
- What process did you go through to produce this piece or complete this project/activity?

- What problems did you encounter while you were working on this project/activity? How did you solve them?
- What were the challenges?
- What were powerful learning moments?

Let's look at an example from a student portfolio. Kaitlyn LaMaster answered the “what” step this way.

Undertaking the task of writing a paper on the “Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Paralysis from Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)” was an enormous challenge that tested my critical thinking and organizational skills. My neurobiology professor had challenged us to select a topic that interested us, dive into the relevant scientific journals, analyze the findings, and produce a final product of professional quality. Despite feeling overwhelmed, I approached the task step by step, reading one journal after the other, and using my available resources to help me prepare. After numerous drafts and revisions, I submitted the paper, and it earned me an A grade, which reinforced my dedication and hard work.



Why did this encounter or assignment matter to you?
What did you learn?

So What?

In the “so what” step, you begin to look for patterns and for what it means. You are talking about moments of significance. Your goal is to write about why this encounter or assignment matters to you.

- What insights did you gain from the project or assignment?
- What are your feelings about this?
- How does what you learned relate to your education or career aspirations?
- What did you learn about yourself from this?
- How does this connect to other skills, experiences, or knowledge?
- What was important about the situation?

- How did you apply course concepts?
- What skills did you use or acquire?
- How did you overcome barriers or challenges?
- What part are you most proud of? Why?
- What would you do differently?
- How was your experience different from what you expected?
- What is the most important thing you learned personally during this project/activity?
- How do you feel about this project/activity?
- What were your goals for this project/activity? Did your goals change as you worked on it? Did you meet your goals?
- What does this project/activity reveal about you as a learner?
- How does this project/activity link to previous experiences/knowledge?
- In what ways did this change how you looked at this subject/topic?
- What did you learn about yourself while working on this?
- What moments are you most proud of your efforts/involvement?
- In what ways have you improved at this kind of work?
- In what ways do you think you need to improve?

Kaitlyn LaMaster answered the “so what” step this way.

This experience taught me invaluable lessons about preparation and organization, which I can apply to any other aspect of life, including sales. I not only researched my topic but also familiarized myself with the best practices for writing a paper of that size. This helped me discover useful resources and applications that aided me in keeping track of the vast amount of information I needed to read, summarize, and cite. With these skills, I could effectively manage dozens of articles, citations, photographs, and other sources, leading to the success of my paper.



Critical reflection requires you to think about what you will do as a reaction to having encountered something new.

Now What?

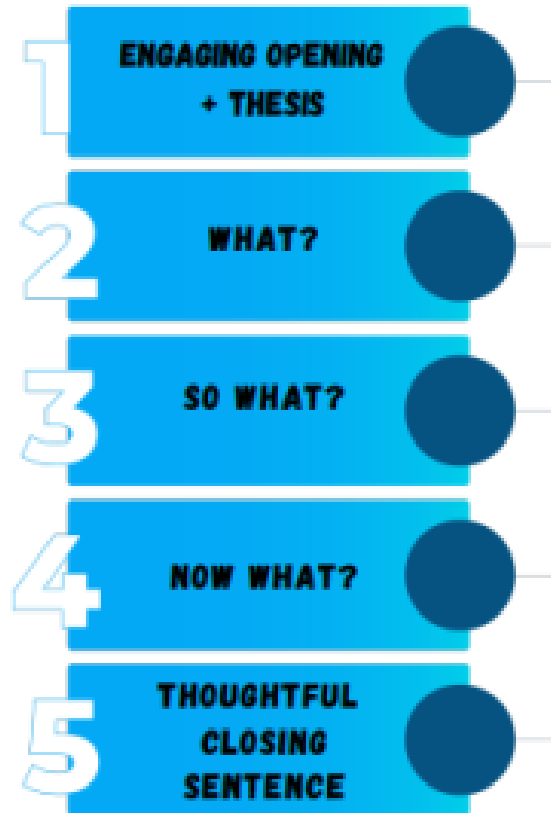
In the “now what” step, you will write about what you will do next.

- How will this influence the way you approach future projects or endeavors?
- How have you changed or grown because of this experience?
- What will change as a result of this?
- What would you like to learn more about?
- What are you going to do as a result?
- What did this experience teach you?
- How will you apply what you learned from your experience?
- What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?
- What is the impact on others from your project?
- How does this advance the understanding of the topic?
- What is one thing you want people to notice when they look at your work?

Kaitlyn LaMaster answered the “now what” step this way.

Through this experience, I realized the importance of being organized and prepared, and I know this will be an asset in any career, including sales. It has taught me the value of breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps, using available resources, and being organized in managing information, all essential skills in a sales position.

As with all writing, you should have an engaging opening sentence, a clear thesis, and an interesting closing sentence. In essence, each of your reflections should follow this five-step process.



Now that you know the process, let's take a look at a couple of examples.

Examples of Using the What, So What, Now What for Study Abroad Reflections

Xavier Smith, Career Counselor at the University of Arkansas helps students write about their experiences while studying abroad. Here is his advice and an example.

How can you explain your story in your portfolio? A helpful method in describing your story is a technique called “What? So what? Now what?” “What” calls for you to explain what took place in your involvement or what you noticed. “So what?” calls for you to connect the relevance of it. What was the impact? Discuss any themes, skills, or lessons that were learned. Lastly, describe the

“now what”. “Now what” calls for you to describe how you will use the new skills, experience, or insight in future endeavors.

What?

“While studying abroad in Belize, I collaborated with 10 classmates to coordinate rural health clinics in villages in Belize. My classmates and I performed basic diagnostic tests such as the hip-waist test and blood-glucose readings.”

So What?

“Because the village was removed from the city, the locals had limited access to health assessments. I was able to connect with the locals and help work towards better overall community health. The experience allowed me to learn culturally competent communication. It was important that I meet the locals where they were to be able to connect with them. Additionally, I learned how to organize a health clinic and collaborate with local community leaders to be able to build rapport with the community.”

Now What?

“The project informed me of the importance of actively listening to the people I am working with instead of trying to impose my values on them. As a career counselor, I am learning how to listen to the experiences of others and help them discover their unique path. Because of my time in Belize, I am extremely considerate of the perspectives and culture that people bring with them to any space. I intend to continue to grow in understanding through active listening to maximize the efforts of the students.”

Check out [Xavier's Portfolio to see how he uses the “what”, “who what,” “now what” in other examples.](#)

After viewing Xavier's portfolio, answer these questions:

1. Which of the “now what's” resonated with you?
2. How might an employer view his experience studying abroad?
3. In what ways did the photos enhance the message?

Can You Identify the What, So What, Now What Parts?

Look at this post from Sydney Maples and see if you can identify the what, so what, and now what parts of this reflection.

The “Empathy” Study: A Virtual Exploration of Homelessness

“While I worked as a programmer in Stanford’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab (the campus virtual reality lab), we received a grant to work on an Empathy-based study in virtual reality. I, along with another person within the lab, spent the summer creating a study that immersed participants in a virtual world in which they were homeless on the streets. This in itself required some aspect of science communication, as we both worked on separate components of the study and ultimately tied each component together — which required a lot of justification and debate over best programming practices for the study. I also worked on this study when I was still fairly new to programming, and while most of the knowledge was self-contained within the platform, working on a team to create something so important was part of what got me interested in science communication so early on. It was a wonderful blend of mediums (from video game engines to the Oculus Rift), and watching my programs being used in social psychology studies on participants — including demonstrations at nearby events — was what really made a difference to me and my ability to communicate with others about scientific topics. Not only did I communicate about the current state of homelessness, but I was also given further opportunities to discuss topics pertaining to the environment, such as ocean acidification, before placing participants into a virtual world to see for themselves. Between giving scientific information about the study to participants, to consoling participants if they got upset by what they were experiencing in the virtual world, I learned how to communicate both emotionally and practically as required in a scientific setting.”

[Sydney Maples](#)

After viewing this example from Sydney, answer these questions:

1. Could you identify the “what,” “so what” and “now what?”
 2. Did she give you enough information about her project that you would understand what it was and why it mattered?
 3. Compare the format of Xavier to the format of Sydney and talk about the impact of the different approaches.
-

Looking for more examples to examine. Look at these portfolios and see if you can identify the “what,” “so what” and “now what?”

[Laura Barnum, Biochemistry major at University of Waterloo.](#)

Look at the Sample and Analyze

Analyze [Hannah Gabrielle's Course Reflection.](#)

Analyze [Carrie Whites Report Reflection](#)

Look at the sample reflections and rate the following items: (did not do) 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9- 10 (excellent)

1. The example answered the question, “What?”
2. The example answered the question, “So What?” The example represented systematic thinking. (*There was evidence of thoughtfulness and connections were made*).
3. The example represented making meaning. (*It didn't just give an example, it gave meaning to why this example was included or why it mattered*).
4. The example answered the question, “Now What?” The example demonstrated personal growth.
5. The example was engaging.
6. The example used college-level professional writing.
7. The example had an engaging opening sentence.
8. The example had an engaging closing sentence.
9. The example had a clear thesis.

Key Take Aways

- Reflection should include meaning-making, systematic thinking, and personal growth.
- Reflections can be written but they can also be audio or videos. They are not limited by modality.
- Portfolio reflections should always be written with the author and purpose in mind.
- The three-step model of writing critical reflection is what, now what, and now what.
- Reflections should have an engaging opening sentence, a thesis statement, and an interesting closing sentence.

Ideas and Resources for Teachers

- Have students use the prompts from “Here are phrases you might use in your reflection” and complete every prompt.
- Ask students to print out their reflections and then in class have them use highlighters to color in what, so what, and now what in different colors.
- Go around the room and ask students to read only the first sentence from their reflection. Have them read only the last sentence. Challenge them to rewrite them to be engaging.
- Have students complete the artifact assignment and the artifact peer review.
- Have students write about a signature assignment.
- Have students do an in-class small-moment reflection about something that happened to them that week.

Additional Resources

Check out this [Reflection Toolkit](#) from the University of Edinburgh for ideas and resources.

For an overview of other reflection models, check out the University of Connecticut’s page on [Reflection Models](#) and the [Global Digital Citizen Foundations Ultimate Cheat Sheet for Critical Thinking](#).

Consider the suggestions on how to have students reflect from an article on [Developing Innovative Reflections from Faculty Development: Lessons Learned](#).

Reflection Exercises

Looking for some creative reflection prompts? Try out one of these ideas.



Letter to Your Future Self

Write a letter to your current self from your future self.

- What did you learn in college that was instrumental to your growth?
- What goals have you accomplished?
- What thing did you learn in college that you didn't think was that important at the time but is important to you now?
- What obstacles did you overcome to get where you are?
- What core belief did you cling to?
- What do you want your current self to remember as it moves forward?

Write About Small Moments

The goal of a small moment reflection is to focus on something that was meaningful to you in the moment. For example, in a service learning experience, what is a small thing that you remember that taught you a big lesson? Why was this meaningful to you? When studying abroad, what was a small thing that someone did that made you think? What was a small moment where you realized something important about yourself?

Write Six Words

Choose six independent words that describe an experience. Write your reflection telling why you chose those six words and what that says about the lesson that you learned.

Write About a Signature Assignment

A signature assignment is something that illustrates something that you learned in the course. This signature assignment can be connected to the objectives of the course, the objectives of your program of study, or the objectives of the institution. For Roach and Alvey at the University of Michigan-Flint, it means

A signature assignment is a substantial project within a course that illustrates something quintessential about course content, embeds at least one general education learning outcome, asks students to synthesize and apply learning, gives students agency and choice in the application of their learning, and requires a *significant and intentional* reflective component to help students identify and articulate relationships between course material, the curriculum, their community, and their sense of self.

One common feature of portfolios is the inclusion of signature assignments. Typically, this involves showing what you did in the class (what), why that mattered (so what), and how you will apply that or how it impacted you in some way (now what).

[Serenna Hammons](#) writes about her coursework. In the final part of her reflection, she writes the impact of what she learned:

The most important thing I learned in this course is that I matter. My lazy decisions have a negative impact on the environment, and I have the power to make a positive influence. There are so many things I can do and so many ways to get other people involved. Just my actions alone won't be monumental, but if everyone made small changes, we can make a big difference. Educating yourself on these things and taking on responsibility is the best way to make a difference.

Tell Your Story Digitally

- Tell us the story of how you overcame an obstacle using pictures and videos.
- Create a visual journey of the highlights and insights from your collage journey using pictures and videos.

Write About Your Study Abroad with the Four P's

Career Specialist Xavier Smith writes about using the 4 P's of reflection: What are the cool people, places, perks, and projects that you were involved in? By focusing on these areas in your experience, you can provide context to all the cool things you indulged in while abroad. Listing these items is not enough; however, you need to be descriptive of those cool items by utilizing what, so what, and now what. This formula allows you to state what happened, describe its importance to your development, and describe how your new understanding will influence how you navigate the world. Taking this thorough approach in your portfolio will demonstrate your deep thought process and provide viewers with a broader scope or perspective of your experiences and what they mean to you and the larger world.

For a quick review, watch this video published by the McLaughlin Library at the University of Guelph:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=31#oembed-1>

Here are phrases you might use in your reflection.

The most important thing was...	The most significant issue arising from this experience was...
At the time I felt...	Alternatively, this might be due to...
This was likely due to...	I feel this situation arose because...
After thinking about it...	At the time, I felt...
I learned that...	Initially, I did not question...
I need to know more about...	At the time, I felt that...
Later I realized...	This (concept) helps to explain what happened with...
This was because...	This experience highlights the concept of...
This was like...	I developed my understanding of...
I wonder what would happen if...	This experience has highlighted that I need to develop my skills...
I'm still unsure about...	This provides insight into my own experience of...
My next steps are...	

From the Reflective Practice Toolkit, University of Cambridge LibGuide on Reflective Writing and Reflective Prompts by University of Cumbria

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6.

SHOWCASING YOUR ARTIFACTS: SHOW AND TELL WHAT YOU KNOW

Lynn Meade



Artifacts help you
make a case for why
you are credible.

Making the Case for Your Credibility

Imagine you are a lawyer making a case for why a person is credible. You stand before the judge and the jury, and you describe the person and the things they have done. You show evidence to support your case. Just as a skilled lawyer meticulously assembles evidence to establish the credibility of their client, a portfolio serves as your compelling evidence, demonstrating your worthiness to be considered trustworthy and knowledgeable. Within these carefully curated artifacts lies the power to not only show that you attended classes, but that you actively absorbed and applied valuable knowledge.

An artifact, in this context, becomes the cornerstone of your credibility. You use it to prove to others what you know and why you can be trusted. It serves as tangible proof of your accumulated learning, practical experiences, and ambitions. Your portfolio is a way that you can tell your story. Whether you wish to highlight your creativity, your adeptness at forging intricate connections, or any other trait, the artifacts you choose are your storytellers.

In the same way, a lawyer doesn't merely present evidence, but meticulously explains its relevance;

presenting an artifact isn't enough. It must be accompanied by your thoughtful reflection. You need to explain why your artifact matters. Never assume your audience will inherently grasp the connection; spell it out for them. If your story is that you are creative, then show artifacts that demonstrate your creativity and explain to them your creative process. If your story is that you can make complex connections, then show artifacts that support that story and write about how you brought the pieces together.

In this chapter, you will learn about artifacts and how to collect, select, reflect, and connect your artifacts. You will learn to consider lessons learned from leisure and will be asked to explore any high-impact practices you have engaged in. Your portfolio is not merely a process of assembling artifacts; it is a journey of self-discovery, purposeful selection, thoughtful reflection, and intentional connection.

Artifacts

Artifacts are evidence of what you have learned. They are used to demonstrate skills, show evidence of learning, document experiences, and showcase competencies. Artifacts typically are accompanied by a reflection to help your audience make connections. Look at the chart below for ideas and examples of artifacts used in portfolios.

Writing

- Essays
- [Science-based research paper](#)
- [Research papers](#)
- Journal entries
- [Grant](#)
- [Art analysis](#)
- [Scientific Analysis Paper](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Reports](#)
- [Lesson plans](#)
- [Grant proposals](#)
- [Scientific Writing -Children's Book](#)
- Case studies
- [Research proposal](#)
- [Technical review of scientific literature](#)
- [Thesis or Dissertation](#)
- [Literature Review](#)

- [Worksheet to teach a concept](#)
- Research Philosophy

Videos

- [Film](#)
- [YouTube Videos](#)
- [Teaching collages](#)
- Speeches
- [Performance videos](#)
- Lectures
- Video Shorts
- [Nonverbal conducting video](#)
- [Classroom video projects](#)
- Recordings of classroom projects
- [Slide show](#)
- [Conducting videos](#)
- [Video about an athlete's story](#) from the [media page](#)

Visuals

- [Photos showing you working](#)
- [Photos of artistic accomplishments](#)
- [Photos showing you doing research](#)
- [Graphic design work](#)
- [Drawings](#)
- [Scanned art projects](#)
- Posters
- [Paintings](#)
- [Three-Dimensional Art Projects](#)
- [Slideshow of your projects](#)
- [Digital projects](#)
- Flow charts
- [Flyers of programs you attended](#)

Audio Recording

- Sound Cloud files
- [Podcasts-Built for Earth](#)
[Podcast-Mosquito Control](#)
- Musical recording
- [Recitals](#)
- Vocal tracks
- [Musical arrangements](#)

Assignments

- Group projects
- [Spreadsheet analysis for teachers](#)
- [Presentation slides](#)
- [Sample lesson plans](#)
- Capstone project
- [Web page mock-up](#)
- [Journal presentation](#)
- [Specialized items for teaching artifacts](#)
- [Engineering capstone course](#)

Scientific Reports

- Lab reports
- [Lab work and collaboration](#)
- Mathematical proofs
- [Workflow chart for project](#)
- [Research poster](#)
- Schematics
- [Math Paper](#)
- [Data visualization](#)
- [Petri net data analysis](#)
- [Research poster](#)

Business Applications

- Lab reports
- [Lab work and collaboration](#)
- Mathematical proofs
- [Workflow chart for project](#)
- [Research poster](#)
- Schematics
- [Math Paper](#)
- [Data visualization](#)
- [Petri net data analysis](#)
- [Research poster](#)

Proof of Credentials

- Awards
- [Certifications](#)
- Digital badges
- [Press releases about achievements](#)
- [News articles about you](#)
- Scholarship/fellowship award letters
- Memberships
- [Posts about your work](#)

Special Projects

- Awards
- [Certifications](#)
- Digital badges
- [Press releases about achievements](#)
- [News articles about you](#)
- Scholarship/fellowship award letters
- Memberships
- [Posts about your work](#)

Artifacts

Many of these have links to examples for you to see how it looks in someone's portfolio. It is important to realize that every college and every class has different reasons and expectations for what should accompany an artifact. Be sure to check with your teacher regarding expectations around captioning and writing reflections for artifacts.

Writing	Videos	Visuals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Essays ◦ Science-based research paper ◦ Research papers ◦ Journal entries ◦ Grant ◦ Art analysis ◦ Scientific Analysis Paper ◦ Blogs ◦ Reports ◦ Lesson plans ◦ Grant proposals ◦ Scientific Writing -Children's Book ◦ Case studies ◦ Research proposal ◦ Technical review of scientific literature ◦ Thesis or Dissertation ◦ Literature Review ◦ Worksheet to teach a concept ◦ Research Philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Film ◦ YouTube Videos ◦ Teaching collages ◦ Speeches ◦ Performance videos ◦ Lectures ◦ Video Shorts ◦ Nonverbal conducting video ◦ Classroom video projects ◦ Recordings of classroom projects ◦ Slide show ◦ Conducting videos ◦ Video about an athlete's story from the media page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Photos showing you working ◦ Photos of artistic accomplishments ◦ Photos showing you doing research ◦ Graphic design work ◦ Drawings ◦ Scanned art projects ◦ Posters ◦ Paintings ◦ Three-Dimensional Art Projects ◦ Slideshow of your projects ◦ Digital projects ◦ Flow charts ◦ Flyers of programs you attended

Audio Recording	Assignments	Scientific Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound Cloud files • Podcasts-Built for Earth • Podcast-Mosquito Control • Musical recording • Recitals • Vocal tracks • Musical arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Group projects ◦ Spreadsheet analysis for teachers ◦ Presentation slides ◦ Sample lesson plans ◦ Capstone project ◦ Web page mock-up ◦ Journal presentation ◦ Specialized items for teaching artifacts ◦ Engineering capstone course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lab reports ◦ Lab work and collaboration ◦ Mathematical proofs ◦ Workflow chart for project ◦ Research poster ◦ Schematics ◦ Math Paper ◦ Data visualization ◦ Petri net data analysis ◦ Research poster
Business Applications	Proof of Credentials	Special Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Spreadsheets ◦ Financial reports ◦ Marketing Plan ◦ Marketing Research Report ◦ Leadership Development Plan and Speech ◦ Strengths Quest, Strength deployment Inventory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Awards ◦ Certifications ◦ Digital badges ◦ Press releases about achievements ◦ News articles about you ◦ Scholarship/fellowship award letters ◦ Memberships ◦ Posts about your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Internships ◦ Internship-veterinary clinic ◦ Study abroad-Internship ◦ Products from fellowship projects ◦ Volunteer experiences ◦ Service learning ◦ Campus group ◦ Social media posts

Four-Step Process: Collect, Select, Reflect, and Connect

Now that you know what an artifact is, you need to start gathering and making sense of your artifacts. This is a four-step process: collect, select, reflect, and connect.

1. Collect

As we already discussed, it is important to collect things to include in your portfolio. Create a computer file of items that shows your learning. Include anything that you can show to build the case for your competency. Don't only show things that are perfect examples, but also include some things that tell a story of personal growth. In the collection phase, you want to have many things from which to choose.

2. Select

Once you have a collection of artifacts to pick from, start sorting through them to find ones that can best tell your story. You are looking for meaningful evidence to support the case that you are credible. As with all things in a portfolio, you should determine your audience and your purpose. You should always ask yourself, why am I writing this portfolio and who will look at it? If you are applying to a graduate school that values writing, it will be important to showcase your research papers. If you are applying to be a teacher, you will provide your lesson plans as evidence. If you are applying to work as a curator of art, you will want to show your art projects.

Questions to ask yourself in the selection phase:

- How does this artifact illustrate your brand?
- Why will it matter to your portfolio's audience?
- How will you present this artifact to be engaging for viewers in your portfolio?
- Does this artifact advance the story that you are telling about your abilities?

3. Reflect

After you have selected your artifact, you need to write about what it means. This means writing a narrative reflection using the what, so what, now what process. In this step, the goal is to describe your artifact and how your interaction with it has transformed you.

There is an entire chapter dedicated to writing detailed and meaningful reflections: [Reflective Expression: Documenting Growth and Learning](#).

Examples

- Check out how [Lea Bourgade](#) highlights an artifact. In the portfolio they demonstrate the use of a Halo Sport product for a neuroscience experiment involving a violin. (It is as interesting as it sounds.) This is a great illustration of reflecting on an internship, using a YouTube video as an artifact, and writing a well-thought-out reflection that answers the what, so what, and now what.
- Look at how [Maggie Engler](#) uses the what, so what, and now what to reflect on a class project.

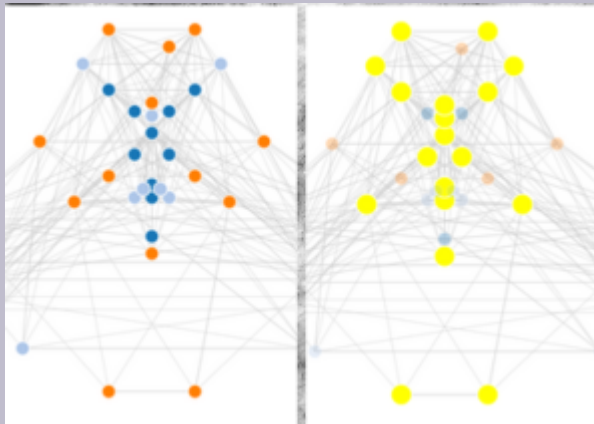
Ask yourself, “What did I learn by looking at these artifact examples?”

4. Connect

In the connect phase, you connect your artifact to the audience who will read about it and you write in a way that forwards your purpose. You want to highlight how this artifact links to the larger picture of who you are and what you want.

Examples

Notice in this example from Sydney Maples that she answers the what, so what, and now what questions. The last paragraph also links what she has learned to other things she is doing.



Sydney Maples' Artifact

The Introduction to Science Communication class that I took allowed me to blend my interest in neuroscience and computer programming. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to practice my science communication abilities through a variety of different genres, ranging from short-form articles to full literature reviews. For my final project, I was allowed to present on a scientific topic using any style or medium, and I chose to create a visual brain in a Javascript platform using the d3 library, in order to visualize which regions of the brain are affected by specific disorders.

The two images on the side reflect a sample output of the application. The image on the left presents a picture of the landing page before a brain disorder is selected by the user. The image on the right is a picture of the nodes (represented by brain regions) of the brain, with the highlighted nodes representing the relevant regions to the brain disorder selected. The highlighted nodes are clickable, and selecting a node allows you to read more about the role that the brain region plays in the respective brain disorder. I intentionally designed this such that each network had a different color, providing an appendix (not pictured) that describes the general function of each brain network.

Though I had had a small bit of experience with Javascript in a previous class, this class was (indirectly) my first “real” introduction, and I owe that to the independent nature of the project. Working on this project also showed me how compatible all the fields I am interested in can be together, and, more importantly, how they can overlap. —
[Sydney Maples](#)

Turn Leisure Activities into Career Lessons

Many people overlook the benefit of leisure activities in building career confidence. In many settings, you may

decide to include them if you can connect them to meaningful life lessons. Consider artifacts that you can display to draw attention to these activities. Xavier Smith, Career Counselor at the University of Arkansas often helps students write about and talk about leisure activities as valuable experiences so I asked him to share his ideas:

Throughout college, you may engage in several activities that you would consider to be leisurely such as intramurals, Greek life, or RSOs like yearbook. You do those things out of enjoyment, not necessarily for monetary gain or prestige. Additionally, you may find in college that some of your most impactful learning takes place outside of the classroom in times of leisure. You may not see it initially, but there are many workplace skills that you can learn in leisure activities skills such as communication, teamwork, use of technology, professionalism, networking, and the list continues. You could consider skills as currency. Skills determine how much you're worth to a company which ultimately may affect how much you may earn, or even negotiate. Skills are massively important to the flexibility and trajectory of your career. So, let's talk about the types of skills you are developing.

Let me provide you with an example. Toward the end of my undergraduate career, I rediscovered an old pastime of roller skating. I decided to transition from skating with blades to quads to learn a new version of skating. The process was very taxing mentally and physically because I had a fear of falling. I did not want to embarrass myself in front of others. One day a man in his seventies skated past me with style and stopped nearby to tell me that if I was not willing to fall then I was not prepared to learn the be an advanced skater. I had to get over myself to get better. This taught me the importance of failure to inform the master of a task. It taught me perseverance to persist in past initial frustration to achieve a goal. In the process, I learned how to teach others to skate which also translated to me learning how to communicate. Roller skating was my leisure and it informed the development of workplace skills.

- What lessons have you received from a leisure activity that can translate to the workplace?
- How would you describe the skills you developed?
- As a result of the leisure activity, who did I meet?
- How can I use the skills in other settings?
- What skills did I learn or use?
- What did I do that translates to a career skill?
- What did I learn about myself?

By highlighting the skills acquired through seemingly recreational pursuits, you can better understand your own capabilities, enhance your marketability, and navigate your career paths with a heightened sense of self-awareness and purpose.



Experiences Valued By Employers: Include Them If You Can

Some experiences carry a lot of weight with employers. Experiences where you have had an opportunity to apply what you have learned such as internships, work-study, community projects, and collaborative research may elevate you as a job candidate.

Take a look at the chart below from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. These are experiences that make you much more likely to be considered for employment by employers.

Percentages of employers who indicated they would be “much more likely to consider” hiring a college graduate with the following experiences.

Completion of an internship or apprenticeship	49%
Experience working in a community setting with people from diverse backgrounds or cultures	47%
Had a job or engaged in work-study while in college	46%
Completion of a portfolio or work showcasing skills and integrating college experiences	45%
Exposure to global learning experiences	44%
Completion of multiple courses requiring significant writing assignments	42%
Completion of a community-based or service-learning project	41%
Completion of a research project done collaboratively with faculty	41%
Completion of an advanced comprehensive project in the senior year	41%

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ [report](#), “How College Contributes to Workforce Success: Employer Views on What Matters Most.”

Check This List. Have You Participated in Any of These High Impact Practices? If Yes, Consider Including Them in Your Portfolio



High-impact practices are those experiences that result in high levels of student learning. As you are brainstorming to think of artifacts to include in your portfolio, look at this list and see if you have experienced any high-impact practices that you might be able to showcase.

- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Diversity or Global Learning Projects
- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Internships or Apprenticeship
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Undergraduate Research
- Writing-Intensive Courses

Closing

As you embark on the journey of collecting, selecting, reflecting, and connecting your artifacts, remember that your portfolio is more than a compilation of achievements; it is a dynamic narrative that encapsulates your individuality. By displaying your artifacts and writing about them in meaningful ways, you can “show what you know.” Your portfolio should resonate with the things you deeply care about and the wealth of knowledge from classes, leisure, and community activities that you have acquired. Throughout this process, consistently pause to assess whether the artifacts that you have chosen align with your purpose and audience. By doing so, you will not only craft a portfolio that reflects your journey authentically but also create a powerful story that lets others know of your skills and experiences

Key Takeaways

- Collect, select, reflect, and connect is the key to collecting and relating your artifact.
- Collect a large sample of artifacts.
- Select artifacts that fit the audience, purpose, and story you are telling.
- Reflect on the artifact using the “what, so what, now what method.”
- Connect back to your audience and purpose as well as the key learning items.
- If you have engaged in any high-impact practices, find ways to work them into your portfolio.

Appendix

Do This

As a class, look at these two portfolios and then answer these questions:

[Christina Alibozek –Marketing Major](#)

[Brenton Warr–Environmental Design](#)

- What types of artifacts did they display?
- Did they write about their artifacts in a meaningful way?
- After reading about their artifacts, what is your impression of the person?

Now, pick three portfolios from the list above in this chapter and answer these questions:

- What types of artifacts did they display?
- Did they write about their artifacts in a meaningful way?

- After reading about their artifacts, what is your impression of the person?

Consider This: Make Your Artifacts Reflect Your Career Competencies

When employers were surveyed and asked what types of things they were looking for to demonstrate that students are career-ready, they told the National Association of Colleges and Employers these things.

1. Career and Self-Development
2. Communication
3. Critical Thinking
4. Equity and Inclusion
5. Leadership
6. Professionalism
7. Teamwork
8. Technology

TIP: Demonstrate how you have these eight skills, but don't use the phrase "career competencies" or "career readiness" since those are insider terms for college researchers.

Ideas for Teachers

- Have students write a list of possible artifacts to match each of the course objectives or

program goals.

- Assign students a category of artifact and have them find two new examples of how someone showcased that artifact in their portfolio.
- Have students look up three artifacts from the chart and discuss/write/evaluate the efficacy of that artifact's presentation.
- Give students an artifact and have them brainstorm possible ways to write about that artifact.
- Have students list ten possible artifacts they might include in their portfolio.
- Begin introducing students to the idea of what, so what, and now what by having them look at artifacts from the table and see if they use the pattern.
- Have students write a one-page reflection on a leisure activity and the lessons they learned from the activity.

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Portfolios Cited

Writing

- [Lea Bourgade Art Analysis](#)
- [Lea Bourgade Scientific Analysis](#)
- [Lea Bourgade Blog](#)
- [Lea Bourgade Literature Review](#)
- [Lea Bourgade Research Proposal](#)
- [Katherine Crawford Lesson Plans](#)
- [Katherine Crawford Conducting](#)
- [Maggie Engler Science -based Research Paper](#)
- [Maggie Engler Technical Review](#)
- [Maggie Engler Worksheet to Teach a Concept](#)
- [Jessica Rae Fillis Conducting](#)
- [Hannah Gabrielles Research Paper](#)
- [Elise Miller Grant Proposal](#)
- [Elies Miller Honors Thesis](#)
- [Sara Olmstead-Science Writing](#)

- [Hayden Reynoso -Neurobiology Grant](#)
- [Carrie White Report](#)

Video

- [Emma Allyn Singing Performance Videos](#)
- [Lea Bourgade Video of musical performance](#)
- [Katherine Crawford Conducting](#)
- [Maggie Engler Classroom Projects Where a Video Was Made](#)
- [Jacob Blangsner Film](#)
- [Jessica Rae Fillis Conducting](#)
- [Lynsey Strohming Video Collage of Teaching](#)
- [Lauren Watkins Speech Slide Show](#)

Audio

- [Sam Beskind Podcast](#)
- [Jessica Fillis Recital](#)
- [Jessica Fillis Musical Arrangements](#)
- [Sonja Hansen- Podcast](#)

Scientific Reports

[Hayden Reynoso–Scientific Poster](#)

Special Projects

[Rachel Anders–Study Abroad with an Internship](#)

[Serena Hammond-Internship Vet Clinic](#)

Examples.

- [Christina Alibozeck –Marketing Major](#)
- [Brenton Warr–Environmental Design](#)
- [Kennedie Hudson](#)
- [Brandon Sans](#)
- [Rachel Anders, Pre-Med](#)

7.

DEMONSTRATING CAREER READINESS: HIGHLIGHTING CAREER COMPETENCIES

Lynn Meade



With so many things you might include in your portfolio, it can be hard to decide which things to include and which things to leave out. Research from the Associative American Colleges and Universities indicates that employers are looking for job candidates to showcase their career readiness by showing that they can demonstrate career competencies. In this chapter, you will learn about the career competencies and ways to include them in your portfolio.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers has done extensive research asking employers about what they are looking for in college graduates to demonstrate that they are career-ready and they have identified eight competencies. The list below comes from [NACE Career Readiness Competencies](#) and the descriptions and the graphics are used with permission. For each section, you will see a definition and sample behaviors. I have added examples of what these might look like in your portfolio.



Career and Self-Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Show an awareness of your own strengths and areas for development.
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback.
- Develop plans and goals for your future career.
- Professionally advocate for yourself and others.
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn.
- Assume duties or positions that will help you progress professionally.
- Establish, maintain, and/or leverage relationships with people who can help you professionally.
- Seek and embrace development opportunities.
- Voluntarily participate in further education, training, or other events to support your career.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show certificates or badges demonstrating your training.
 - List development programs or special lectures you attended and how you grew from the experience.
 - Discuss your personal journey map or your goals.
 - Write about examples of a project that you initiated and saw through to completion.
 - Write a reflection about a strengths assessment that you took and what it means to you.
-



Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside an organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities.
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills.
- Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand.
- Frame communication with respect to the diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences.
- Ask appropriate questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists, and others.
- Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show your graded speech or an outline of one of your speeches and write a reflection about it.
- Show evidence of a persuasive social media plan, persuasive speech, or other persuasive act.
- Show a multimedia product from a class.
- Show an article you wrote for the newspaper.
- Show a press release.
- Present a paper that you wrote. Include the various drafts to show progression.
- Write about a grant or fellowship proposal that you wrote.
- Upload a video of a presentation that you gave.
- Provide a variety of writing samples: Research paper, poetry, blog, essay.
- Write a reflection about an encounter with someone different than yourself.

Examples of Communication in a Portfolio

[Patricia Gonzales](#), Engineering, Stanford University

[Rachel Smith](#), Communication and Film, Arizona State University



Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based on understanding situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Sample Behaviors

- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem.
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps.
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes.
- Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived

experiences of stakeholders.

- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show a paper you wrote that involved complex reasoning and write a reflection about the process.
 - Show a lab report where you gathered facts and came to a conclusion. Write about the process.
 - Show photos of a problem-solving situation you encountered.
 - Display a SWOT analysis or VIN diagram showing complex connections.
-



Equity and Inclusion

Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.

Sample Behaviors

- Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions.
- Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change.
- Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities.
- Seek global cross-cultural interactions and experiences that enhance one's understanding of people from different demographic groups and that lead to personal growth.
- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.
- Identify resources and eliminate barriers resulting from individual and systemic racism, inequities, and biases.

- Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments.
- Address systems of privilege that limit opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Discuss the diversity programs you attended (for example, you may have taken the Ouch That Stereotype Hurts program or the Intercultural Development Inventory).
- Show projects where you encountered new ways of thinking about diverse ideas.
- Give examples of how you worked with people who thought differently and how you bridged those differences.

Example of Equity and Inclusion Reflection in a Portfolio.

When I think of the words “equity” and “inclusion”, I think of diversity and acceptance of people who come from many different backgrounds. As a civil engineering major, I understand that this field is widely lacking in areas of inclusion. Specifically, lacking in African American civil engineers. I wish to help promote and advocate for equity and inclusion in my career field.

Throughout my college career, I have chosen to input myself in environments that promote equity and inclusion. I have also made an effort to join organizations that focus on this as well. Currently, I serve as the social media manager for the Diversity and Inclusion Student Council. Other organizations that I am affiliated with include the National Society for Black Engineers, the NAACP, Engineering Career Awareness Program, which is a program designed for the success of minority engineering students, along with a few other organizations.

I believe that when you have a workspace that includes a diverse group of people, it makes for an environment of diverse thought. Equity and inclusion are described as “policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations.” You can have so many different perspectives on one situation when equity and inclusion are fostered. Every individual lives with their own experiences just based on the community that they are a part of alone. So, this can be very beneficial in a professional setting.

[Emirra Harris, Civil Engineering, University of Arkansas](#)



Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision.
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction.
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods.
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust.
- Plan, initiate, manage, complete, and evaluate projects.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Write reflections about your leadership experience.
- Write about your leadership philosophy
- Give examples of classroom projects where you took the lead.
- Write reflections about community projects where you were the leader.
- Take a leadership assessment and reflect on the results.

Example of Leadership Highlighted in a Portfolio

[Montana Humphries](#) – Human Development and Family Science, Auburn University. Winner of Auburn Universities' Award for ePortfolio Excellence

[Brandon San](#) -Biology and Medicine, University of Washington

[Patricia Gonzales](#), Engineering, Stanford University

[Baylee Brown](#), Law Student, Tennessee Tech University

[Megan Diem](#), Marketing, Tennessee Tech University



Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understanding and demonstrating effective work habits, and acting in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Sample Behaviors

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization.
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values.
- Be present and prepared.
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings).
- Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals.
- Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations.
- Have attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work.
- Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Reflect on artifacts such as this [internship time sheet with reflections](#).
 - Write about a time you had to press to get the job done.
 - Give an example of how you demonstrated [professionalism](#). (See [this example by Rachel Smith](#).)
 - Show a teacher's evaluative comments where they commented about how you exceeded expectations.
-



Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Sample Behaviors

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience.
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Provide examples of team projects.
- Share any team leader feedback about your contributions.

- Share the results of any personality or team assessment and reflect on what it means.
- Provide the output of a team project and write about your contributions, your challenges, and your lessons learned.
- Show photos of your working as a team and write about what you learned.

Example of Teamwork in a Portfolio

Teamwork

The amount of work you put in is the outcome you get back. In the African Students Organization, I serve as the Content Creator developing posts for our social media accounts and flyers for people to see as well as submitting awards for the different programs we held. While I only create content, I have had the pleasure of being involved in all aspects of the organization by helping my other executive members. I work closely with the Webmaster who is responsible for posting the content, working the website, and creating captions for posts. I felt a sense of personal responsibility to ensure that not only was our organization a legitimate one at the University of Arkansas but also recognized African culture from the students who shared that. My parents were both born and raised in Arkansas, but I lived all my life in America. Because I was not well-versed in the experience of African students, I utilized the experiences and advice of my executive team who were all born and raised in an African country to develop informational posts. While I served my role to contribute to the organization, I was also able to work with my executive team to get help with some of the responsibilities my role entails. While getting help with some of my weekly content was helpful, the most notable instance of teamwork came from preparing for the African Gala Night.

The African Gala Night is the biggest event of the semester for our organizations. I was placed to head the food committee and publicity committee. In those roles, I helped to get a list of ingredients and a menu for the food that would be served during the time of the event. Being on the publicity committee was essentially the role of the Content Creator centered on the gala. I helped make posts and flyers to be publicized for students and non-students to see. While each executive member was a part of their committee, we eventually had an all-hands-on-deck mentality. It took extensive meetings, long nights of preparation, traveling to different places, and cooking before eventually finishing the night.

While my role consisted of only doing content, it was a great experience of helping others and getting help. Everyone has days when they may experience questions or encounter unexpected situations, so serving in a leadership position also entails helping others in times of need. I can say that I can not only be relied on, but I can also rely on them when I need help. That can look like asking upper executive members questions or ideas about potential future projects. Teamwork is an expected skill to have because there could be a time when a person experiences hardship or would like to collaborate on things where they rely on another person.

[Lidia Belete, Biochemistry, University of Arkansas](#)





Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies.
- Use technology to improve efficiency and productivity of their work.
- Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks.
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making.
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Share any media projects.
 - Share data sheets.
 - List all programs where you demonstrate proficiency.
 - Write a reflection of all the media used in a project.
 - Write about a time that you had to adapt to a technology shift.
-

Pass on the Phrase, “Career Competencies”

“Career competencies” is an insider’s phrase. It is used by career services professionals and some human resources professionals. Most employers and many graduate schools will not be familiar with the phrase so consider incorporating specific phrases and examples that highlight your capabilities. In other words, you might have a portfolio page titled “skills” and then have communication and leadership highlighted on that page.

Skills Expected from Graduate Students in Search of Employment in Academic and NonAcademic Settings

Compare the career competencies to this list compiled as skills expected from graduate students.

1. Communication and Interpersonal Skills
2. Critical and Creative Thinking
3. Personal Effectiveness
4. Integrity and Ethical Conduct
5. Teaching Competence
6. Societal and Civic Responsibilities
7. Leadership
8. Research management
9. Knowledge mobilization and knowledge translation
10. Career Management

[Full report](#) and a list of ways to demonstrate each are available online.

Closing

Your portfolio is not just a digital repository of your past accomplishments; it is a tool for showcasing your readiness to tackle real-world challenges. Employers are looking for you to provide concrete examples and quantify your achievements whenever possible, especially when it comes to showing that you have career competencies. By infusing your portfolio with artifacts and reflections that highlight career competencies, you are creating a professional portfolio to get you noticed by future employers.

Key Takeaways

- Employers are looking for evidence of career readiness and your portfolio is a great place to showcase specific examples of your career competencies.
- The National Association of Colleges and Employers has identified career competencies that employers are looking for in today's graduates.

Additional Resources

- [Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce: Printable PDF from the National Association of Colleges and Employers](#)
- [Skills Expected from Graduate Students in Search of Employment in Academic and Non Academic Settings: Printable PDF](#)

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- The definitions and sample behaviors are taken directly from the NACE Career Readiness Competencies and used with permission according to the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) reprint online statement.

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[Montana Humphries](#)

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[Rachel Smith](#)

8.

TELLING YOUR STORY YOUR WAY

Lynn Meade



Tell me the fact and I'll learn.

Tell me the truth and I'll believe.

But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.

—Ancient proverb

Why Tell Stories?

Why talk about telling stories in a book on professional portfolios? Because people prefer stories. They are engaging, they ignite the imagination, and they have the potential to teach us something. Rhetorical scholar, Walter Fisher, says that stories are the primary way we understand the world. Your portfolio should not read like a mere list of achievements; rather it should tell a compelling story that reflects who you are as a learner, a professional, and a person.

A portfolio tells a story. It is the story of knowing. Knowing about things... Knowing oneself... Knowing an audience... Portfolios are students' own stories of what they know, why they believe they know it, and why others should be of the same opinion." Paulson & Paulson

Stories Help the Readers Remember You

Cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham points out that “The human mind seems exquisitely tuned to understand and remember stories” and calls stories ‘psychologically privileged’ because they are treated differently in your memory.

“Stories are easier to remember because stories are how we remember. When facts become so widely available and instantly accessible, each one becomes less valuable. What begins to matter more is the ability to place these facts in context and to deliver them with emotional impact.” Daniel Pink

John Medina, molecular biologist and author of *Brain Rules*, points out that facts attached to stories last longer. In short, the brain doesn’t pay attention to boring things. The dopamine we get when we encounter a story helps us with memory and information processing; “it creates a Post-It note that reads, ‘Remember this.’”

Let’s face it, job-related artifacts can fit into the boring and easily forgotten category. It doesn’t have to be that way. If we become fact-tellers, instead of story-tellers, then we lull our readers into boredom. They are not interested, and they are not motivated to try to relate.

Stories Help Readers Understand Why Your Experiences Matter

Anne Rinne, in a [Harvard Business Review](#) article, says that we can tell stories to help employers know why our experiences matter to them. She says, “Telling a good portfolio narrative requires understanding how the different things in your portfolio enhance one another.” She uses her own story to illustrate her point.

When I was a hiking and biking guide, some people said my career looked frivolous (or even like “too much fun”). What they didn’t see was that, as a guide, not only was I usually working 18-hour days — first up and last to bed — but also every day I was learning how to project manage, accommodate differences, balance budgets, build teams, ensure safety, forge lifetime friendships, and spark joy. I didn’t have a fancy title or earn very much, but I got a practical mini-MBA on the trail and perspective that would shape the rest of my life.

Often, I had to fill in these gaps for others. Doing this, and being able to explain why my experience was valuable in this way, didn’t just shape my portfolio. It helped me stand out from other candidates when I applied for jobs.

Stories Help Readers Connect Your Facts with Your Skills

When you make your portfolio a series of facts, there is nothing that the reader can grab onto and remember. I like to imagine that after reading my portfolio, the reader goes home, has dinner, takes their kid to soccer practice, and then goes back home to watch television. When they get up the next day and have their morning coffee, will they remember anything from my portfolio? Chances are, if I only told them facts, the answer would be “no.”

Notice the difference in these two statements from “[The Key to Landing Your Next Job, Storytelling](#).
Version one: “Boosted sales by 15% in the first quarter of the fiscal year.”

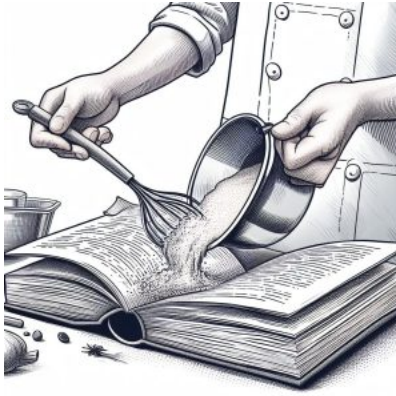
Version two: “One of my strengths is the ability to pivot strategically under pressure. For example, our sales plummeted in the last quarter of this fiscal year due to travel bans brought on by Covid-19. To work around this, I started thinking about what our customers really needed from us during this time, and how we could refocus our strategy to serve domestic markets with locally produced products. My team did this by doing A, B, and C. As a result, we were not only able to contribute to improving local economies worldwide, we also boosted our sales by 15% in the first quarter of the next year.”

Stories Help Us Construct What the Situation Means

The nice thing about writing your story is that it gives you a chance to reflect and it gives you the power to define what a situation means. In portfolios, you pick the story, and you pick the meaning. McKillup suggests, “The stories we tell are more about how we experience and perceive events than about how things really are. They enable our messages and our points of view to be conveyed to the listener or reader.”

The act of writing for a portfolio takes you through the stages of reflective learning: story finding, storytelling, story expanding, story processing, and story reconstructing. The way we construct our stories about events influences how we think about ourselves as the hero or the victim, the rightfully fired, or the wrongfully accused. By writing about your story, you are not only telling others how they should make sense of your experiences, but you are also working on meaning-making for yourself. Because of that, telling your story of growth is an act of transformation and growth. Pan suggests that “This growth, is what makes you, you.” and challenges you to tell your story for yourself first and your employers second.

The ability to define what your story means is particularly important when defining failures and changing direction. Whether you have changed majors, changed jobs, or changed paths, how you tell your transition can influence how people think about you and how you think about yourself. By telling your story, you are making yourself more memorable, you are able to provide meaning-making for yourself and your readers, and you are in control of what it all means. Now you know *why* you should write a story, let’s talk about *how* to tell a good story.



Recipe for a Good Story

- **Lead character:** In this case it is you. You must in some way cause the reader to care about you. You need to write in such a way that they see you as a person and not as just a name.
- **Driving force:** What is the catalyst that compels you? What is your why? Your stories should always reveal a little bit about your values and the things you care about.
- **Trials and tribulations.** All good stories include time spent in the wilderness. You should tell about some form of tribulation, conflict, or tension.
- **Turning point:** A point where you begin to view the world differently in some way. It could be a change in priority, a change in major, a change in ideology, or a change in how you view yourself. When talking about the change, it should always be the change that happens within. It is not that you changed your major, but that you learned what makes you happy, and that led to a change in major. It is not that you broke your leg and you could no longer play sports, but it is that you discovered other meaningful paths and learned to make peace with no longer being defined by your athletics. “Turning points tend to be much more obvious in the telling than in the living,” according to Iberra and Lineback
- **Resolution and Lesson.** This is where you make sense of all that has happened and figure out what it all means in the future.

As you write your story, you should try to incorporate all five of these “ingredients.” When telling your story, you are using an expanded version of the what, so what now what form of critical reflection.

In addition, all stories should have [strong hooks](#) and powerful endings that provide [closure](#). You can read more about these in the chapter on [advanced writing skills called Taking Your Portfolio to the Next Level Making it Polished and Professional](#).

What Types of Stories Fit Into Professional

Portfolios?

When thinking about what story to tell, you should always remember your audience and purpose. Who will be reading your story? What is the overall goal of your portfolio? The answers to these questions should guide your process. It is also important to realize that your portfolio is really a series of stories and you should not tell just one story, but rather you should infuse your story throughout: The [story of your about me](#), the [story of your artifacts](#), the story of how you have [demonstrated career competencies](#). In addition to all of those, you might want to work on a dedicated story that illustrates more about who you are. Below is a list of possible stories to include in your portfolio.

Beginnings

- Tell of a competition you entered and you won. This causes you to learn something new that you were good at.
- Describe inventions, experiments, and creations you made as a child and how they illustrate your passions.
- Tell how the childhood games you played put you on a course for where you are now.
- Explain how an event in your childhood made you who you are today.
- Describe a foundational figure from your childhood and how they influenced your values, work ethic, or thoughts.

Overcoming Obstacles

- Tell the story of how you were the underdog, but came out the victor.
- Tell about a time you failed and the lesson you learned. (Check out this example story by [Brandon San about relearning](#))
- Describe a failure and what you learned from the experience.
- Tell about a mistake you made and what you have done so not to repeat it.
- Tell about a challenge you faced and how you overcame it.

Transitions

- Describe an event that caused you to realize what *doesn't* work for you.
- Tell about the trigger that caused you to realize where you were really meant to be.
- Write about a time you tested yourself and discovered a new passion.
- Tell about a time you showed leadership and how that was a transforming moment.

Defining Moments

- Tell about “that moment when” you discovered...
- Tell about a defining moment that shaped who you are today and who want to be tomorrow.

Now that you have stories you might write, it is time to get started. It can be hard and it is easy to become stressed and frustrated. The best thing you can do to write is to just start writing.



Writing is Hard, I Get It. That is Why You Have to Just Do It!

When it comes to writing, one of the best things you can do is get started. Don't wait until you have it all figured out, just work on getting it down. Start writing. Just start getting your ideas down. Writer Ann Handley says, “Show up and throw up.” Don't write to be perfect, don't write expecting it will all just flow out naturally, just start writing. Writer Anne Lamont, author of *Bird by Bird*, describes her writing process.

Writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts. The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later...Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere. Start by getting something—anything—down on paper. A friend of mine says that the first draft is the down draft—you just get it down. The second draft is the up draft—you fix it up. You try to say what you have to say more accurately. And the third draft is the dental draft, where you check every tooth, to see if it's loose or cramped or decayed, or even, God help us, healthy.

Silence Your Inner Critics

When you begin writing, you may have the little voices tell you that you aren't good enough, you aren't smart enough, and that your idea is insufficient. You need to recognize that almost everyone has those voices and that your success depends on you telling them to be quiet. Realize self-doubt is normal. Be brave and take back your brain! Writer Anne Lamont, tells of her voices:

What I've learned to do when I sit down to work on a shitty first draft is to quiet the voices in my head. First there's the vinegar-lipped Reader Lady, who says primly, "Well, that's not very interesting, is it?" And there's the emaciated German male who writes these Orwellian memos detailing your thought crimes. And there are your parents, agonizing over your lack of loyalty and discretion; and there's William Burroughs, dozing off or shooting up because he finds you as bold and articulate as a houseplant; and so on. And there are also the dogs: let's not forget the dogs, the dogs in their pen who will surely hurtle and snarl their way out if you ever stop writing, because writing is, for some of us, the latch that keeps the door of the pen closed, keeps those crazy ravenous dogs contained. Quieting these voices is at least half the battle I fight daily.

Your inner critic will just slow you down. Take control by sitting down and writing and silencing your inner critic.

Closing

We have talked about why to tell a story and how to tell a story. You have many prompts to help get you started not it is time to just sit down and write that first draft, you will find that you will be transformed in the process.

Key Takeaways

- Stories are easier to remember than lists of facts.
- Stories connect facts with skills learned.
- Stories tell why your experiences matter.
- Good stories are about a lead character who is interesting. They have driving forces, trials and tribulations, turning points, and resolutions. There is a lesson to be learned.
- Storytelling is always an act of recreation where you make sense of what you encounter.

- Writing is hard, the best thing you can do is just sit down and start writing

Creative Writing Prompts from Other Colleges

Write About You

Who am I?

Who am I becoming?

Who do I dare to be?

LaGuardia Community College CUNY

Tell about Your Professional Development Plan Using a SWOT Analysis

“In addition to students’ assigning meaning to the past and present experiences that they track on their eportfolios, we also require that students imagine a story of what their lives may look like in the future. Students create this story by writing a professional development plan. In the plan, we ask that students perform a SWOT analysis. Using the self-awareness that they gain from their eportfolio profiles, they reflect on their professional strengths and weaknesses. Then, they examine the opportunities and threats in their industry or job of interest. In this section, they incorporate industry research, as well as anecdotes from informational interviews with an industry professional. Students conclude their plan with the specific tasks necessary to obtain their career goals.”

Emory University’s Goizueta Business School’s class Communication and Professional Development

Tell About a Signature Assignment

[Martin Causan](#) – Signature Assignment in Public Speaking

[Serenna Hammons](#) – Signature Assignment in Physical Science

Write About Inspired Insights, Magnificent Failures, and Unanticipated Connections.

University of Waterloo

For more on her assignment. Katie Willink. For an example: Lylie Myles, Senior Online Learning Assistant

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9.

CRAFTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL STORY: THE ART OF RESUME BUILDING

Lynn Meade



Depending on the type of portfolio you are making, you will likely need to include a resume. Every industry has its standard for resumes and each discipline has nuances for resumes so you should consult with your career services office and with your department as you begin to work on your resume. This chapter is the best practices for standard resumes that can be fine-tuned to meet your needs.

What is a Resume?

A resume is a short document that highlights your skills, accomplishments, and experiences in a concise and organized format.

Why Create a Resume for a Portfolio?

There are several reasons why adding your resume to your portfolio can be beneficial:

1. Meeting expectations: Resumes are an expected part of the career development process.
2. Professional presentation: Including a resume in your portfolio adds a level of professionalism and structure to your online presence.
3. Comprehensive overview: By including a resume in your portfolio, you can offer visitors a quick snapshot of your qualifications making it easier for them to assess your suitability for various opportunities.
4. Ease of sharing and accessibility: With an online portfolio, you can easily share your resume with others by providing them with a link to your portfolio website. This makes it convenient for potential employers to access your resume.
5. Ease of forwarding: There are times when your mentor might want to forward your credentials and having your resume online makes it easier and more efficient. In addition, employers report that they often forward candidates' information to friends they know who are looking to hire.

Getting Started

Collecting your materials and brainstorming is the first step in building a resume.

- Make a list of all your jobs, and volunteer experiences complete with dates and key duties.
- Do an occupation keyword search on [O*NET OnLine](#) and see ways to describe positions you have held.
- Look at the [verb list](#) and then write down all of them that apply to your experiences.
- Do an internet search for your career field and look at resumes to see the language used and formatting.

Taking the time to brainstorm and to get a feel for resume types in your field before you begin writing will help the process go smoother and with stronger results.

Sample Resumes

As you build your resume, it can be helpful to look at the resumes of others. When possible, look at the resumes of those from similar fields.

University of Arkansas, Career Connections: [Sample resumes based on major.](#)

[Resume Samples from Harvard University](#)



Do your research so you can customize your resume.

Know Your Audience

Generic resumes are seldom effective. Research the audience and the industry that will be viewing your portfolio and resume and pick headings and buzzwords that will appeal to that audience. Many career specialists use applicant tracking systems, a tool that searches for keywords in your resume and matches them to the positions available. Knowing and using industry keywords and using the proper headings will help you get your resume noticed.



Beat the Bot: What You Need to Know About Applicant Tracking Systems

When writing your resume, you should consider bots—digital software as part of your audience. Many employers use applicant tracking systems to streamline their recruitment efforts. As a result, job seekers must be strategic when crafting their resumes to ensure their documents are optimized for Applicant Tracking System (ATS) compatibility. If an employer mentions specific skills in a job description, it's safe to assume they want someone with those particular skills. Using “keywords” in your resume from the job posting will increase your resume’s chances of getting past the ATS, but it may also increase your chances of getting called in for an interview.

When building your resume, you should consider the following:

- Always include keywords. Use the same language on your resume that is used in the job description.
- Use plain fonts: Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica
- Avoid tables and columns.
- Avoid headers and footers.
- Avoid textboxes.
- Use traditional headings like “Education” and “Work Experience.”
- Keep it plain. Avoid graphics and embellishments.
- Think about the essential skills for a job and make sure you include those.

Check Your Knowledge About Applicant Tracking Systems



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=27#h5p-3>

Pick Your Resume Headings

Most employers either use applicant tracking systems or do a quick glance at resumes to look for crucial elements. If those elements are present, they may take a longer look. Your goal is to design your resume so that the important information is easily accessible. One way to do that is with headings. Your resume heading shines a spotlight on the main things that you want an employer to notice.

Here are some possible resume headings.

Education
Honors & Awards
Internship Experience
Study Abroad Experience
Relevant Coursework
Scholarships
Campus Involvement
Certifications
Achievements
Military Service
Special Recognition

Community Involvement & Service
Computer Languages & Skills
Leadership
Publications
Professional Development & Training
Professional Experience
Skills Summary
Volunteer Activities

“The set-up of the resume is based on the job description.
I make sure students put their soft and hard skills on the resume.”

Many students miss their transferable soft skills,”
Cara Martinez, career specialist at the career center for the University of Baltimore.



Once you are in college, you no longer need to mention high school.

WRITE ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION

Tailor your education section to highlight the most relevant information for the specific job or industry you are applying to. Prioritize details that showcase your qualifications and align with the employer's requirements. You will want to put your education on your resume in a way that is easy to read.

- List your education in chronological order (put your most recent education first).
- List the degree, the college, and the city and state where you earned your degree.
- In a 2019 study from NACE, only 37% of employers surveyed use GPAs to screen candidates. Because of this, there are different schools of thought about the need to include your GPA or not. If it is 3.0 or above, I would suggest you include it.
- You can put your grade point average in your major if it is higher than your overall grade point.
- If you are in your last two semesters of college, you can write “expected date of graduation.”
- If you are in your first few years of college, you can put “studying” or “majoring in.” (Never make it look like you have a degree if you haven’t earned one yet).

- You may list specific courses if they highlight skills you possess that relate to the job posting.
- Once you are in college, you no longer need to mention high school.
- If you have been out of school for a few years and have some relevant work experience, include your education section underneath your professional experience.
- If you graduated recently and your education is your most relevant experience, put your education section at the top of your resume.
- Most people include honors and study abroad in your education section.
- If you have many specialized training, certifications, or licenses list them in a separate section or include them with your education. Be sure to include the certifying or licensing organizations and the dates of validity for your credential.

Examples of resumes for your reference from the University of Arkansas Career website

Examples of Different Ways to Include Education on Your Resume

(click below to expand each item. This information is also included at the end of the chapter for those using the pdf version of the book)



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=27#h5p-5>



Mention the award and why that award is important.

Honors and Certifications

When it comes to honors and awards, you need to decide which to include and how to report them.

Example of How to Write About Honors and Awards on Your Resume

HONORS & AWARDS

Chancellor's Scholarship (\$7,000/yr for 4 years) August 2022 – Present

Awarded to the top 10% of University of Arkansas candidates from the general applicant pool

Walton College of Business Finance Department Scholarship (\$2500) January – May 2022

Awarded to top 5 finance majors with strong academic records

Notice that in these examples, the award is mentioned as well as why the award is important. Saying you have the AARCLST award means nothing unless you write out what the letters represent and why the award is important.



Tailor the summary of qualifications for each company.

Summary of Qualifications, Skills, or Professional Profile

A well-written summary of qualifications or professional profile section can be used to quickly showcase your relevant skills, strengths, or qualifications for a specific position in a short, clear section right at the beginning of your resume. It can also be a surefire way to capture the reader's interest. Hiring managers save time and energy usually spent reading through the entire resume by reading the highlighted qualifications in the summary and can get a basic understanding of what a candidate can offer their company or organization. It is also a great place to include keywords from the job posting which will increase your resume's chances of getting past the Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS).

The summary or profile section usually includes a bulleted list of three to five key strengths, skills, or experiences that make you qualified for a position or industry. It usually lists skills, strengths, or other qualifications that are based on “hard skills” not necessarily “soft skills”. Hard skills are specific teachable abilities based on facts. Either you're fluent in another language or you aren't. You either obtained a certificate or you didn't. You either know a particular software program or you don't. These are based on facts and are good for a summary or profile section. Soft skills on the other hand are subjective and based on opinion. They are often associated with personal attributes and character. Examples include motivated team player, strong communicator, hard worker, and detail-oriented. These are skills that anyone can list on a resume and are considered cliché. A recruiter or hiring manager wants to see proof of these skills as opposed to just lists of them. Employers see these phrases repeatedly, and they don't bring as much impact as actual hard skills. Soft skills are best used within your work experience descriptions to describe the type of work you are doing or did. If you do decide to use soft skills in this section, remember to provide some evidence of the skills listed by using numbers and percentages to demonstrate accomplishments and impact.

Tips for Writing a Good Summary of Qualifications or Profile:

- Read the job posting thoroughly to understand the key requirements, skills, qualifications, and responsibilities of the position.
- Identify and highlight the specific keywords and phrases that are relevant to the job. These may include hard skills such as technical skills, certifications, languages in which you are fluent, job titles, industry-specific terms and soft skills.
- Next, identify the relevant qualifications and skills you possess or can demonstrate. If you have already done this for your experience section, you are ready to create a 3-6 summarized bulleted list of your hard skills or quantifiable soft skills that match those found in the job posting.
- Tailor the section for each position for which you are applying.

Example of Summary of Qualifications

Summary of Qualifications

Senior communication major at the University of Arkansas with a combined 4 years of customer service, sales, and leadership experience. Strengths include:

- Superior Customer Service – 99% positive feedback from customer satisfaction surveys
- Ability to Increase Profits – Learned tactics to improve sales for 50% of customer orders
- Global Experience – Fluent in Italian; strong interpersonal skills working in diverse teams

For more examples of profile or summary qualifications

<https://www.resumecoach.com/write-a-resume/qualifications/>



Create a list of keywords that matter to an employer and find ways to use those in your resume.

Incorporating Keywords

Since an employer mentioned a skill in a job description, it's safe to assume they want someone with that skill. Carefully read the posting to identify keywords and then be sure to use those in your resume.

Here's how to integrate keywords into your resume:

- Read the job posting thoroughly to understand the key requirements, skills, qualifications, and responsibilities of the position.
- Identify and highlight the specific keywords and phrases that are relevant to the job. These may include hard skills such as technical skills, certifications, languages in which you are fluent, job titles, industry-specific terms, and soft skills.
- Create a bulleted list under your "Experience" section that describes the skills and experiences that you possess.
- Quantify your achievements whenever possible using numbers and percentages to demonstrate your accomplishments.
- Customize your resume for each job application. Use a master resume as your base, then create a customized version for each job. This customized version should highlight the skills and experiences that match the job posting

Do not use keywords just for the sake of having them in your resume. They need to be used in the right context and

reflect your actual skills/achievements. An ATS can't spot redundancy or a lie, but the recruiter surely can. So be honest, relevant, and accurate with your use of resume keywords.

Example of How to Use Keywords in Your Resume

Example: Let's imagine that the job posting below includes the qualifications for the Customer Service Representative position:

Job Title: Customer Service Representative

Required Education and Qualifications

Bachelor's degree in social science, or related behavioral science field OR a combination of college education and experience equivalent to a bachelor's degree OR four years' equivalent experience.

Two years experience in sales or customer service, public speaking, and group presentation and facilitation skills

Seeking Individuals Who Are:

- Creative and innovative
- Problem solvers and quick decision-makers
- Excellent communicators
- Team players with strong interpersonal skills
- Committed to building customer loyalty
- Detail-oriented

Considering the **Experience** section listed below, highlight or note where you find qualifications from the job posting integrated into the **Experience** bulleted section.

St. Charles Bar and Grill, Fayetteville, AR January 20xx-Present

- Work 20 hours/week while maintaining a 3.7 GPA
- Demonstrate ability to problem solve by increasing overall profits and upgrading 50% of customer orders with appetizers and/or desserts. (*Problem Solver*)

- Receive 99% positive feedback from customer satisfaction surveys. (*Customer Loyalty*)
- Selected as Employee of the Month 3 times for above and beyond performance.
- Reconcile daily a \$500-\$3,000 cash drawer with 100% accuracy during closing shifts. (*Detail Oriented*)

Thanks to Angela Williams for her example.



Do not put your photo on your resume.

Do Not Include These on Your Resume

- Age
- Date of Birth
- Physical descriptors
- Sex or Gender
- Social Security Number
- Unprofessional Email Address
- Photos
- Race
- Nationality
- Ethnic Origin
- Religion
- Relationship Status
- Number of Children

- Health Information
- References or the phrase “references available upon request”
- Two columns or textboxes (These can cause problems for scanners)

Protect your privacy when putting a resume online
and take your address and phone number off before you upload it.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=27#h5p-2>

Should You Include Hobbies?

One of the nice things about an online portfolio is that you can create a section about your hobbies. You can write about your hobbies in such a way that people can learn more about your talents and skills. Hobbies can be useful in portfolios, but seldom in resumes.

Alison Green, author of *How to Get a Job*, suggests that it is not necessary to include hobbies or other interests unless these relate to the position. (For example, if you’re applying to work at a company that makes yoga clothing, being a yoga enthusiast might be useful).



Your resume should not read like a job description.

Your Resume Should Highlight Accomplishments, Not Job Descriptions

Your resume should highlight *how* you did your job, not *that* you did a job. The resume should mirror the career expectations of a field in tone, language, and tense, and should answer, “What did I accomplish in this position, that someone else wouldn’t have accomplished?”

Focusing on accomplishments on your resume can make a significant impact in showcasing your abilities and highlighting your value to potential employers. Here are some tips for emphasizing accomplishments on your resume:

- **Use Action Verbs:** Begin bullet points with strong action verbs to convey a sense of achievement and impact.
- **Quantify Results:** Quantify your accomplishments to provide tangible evidence of your achievements. Include specific numbers, percentages, or other measurable indicators to illustrate the scope and impact of your contributions.
 - Boosted sales in five locations by 30% over a 6-month period.
 - Shortened wait time for new customers by 20%.
 - Increased billable hours in the third quarter by 15%.
 - Managed monthly department budget of \$450-\$530.
 - Taught up to seven art classes per day of 25-30 students in each class and offered all students personal attention as needed.
- **Focus on Impact:** Highlight the positive outcomes or results you achieved. Whether it’s improving efficiency, saving costs, boosting revenue, enhancing customer satisfaction, or streamlining processes, emphasize how your actions positively affected the organization or project. For more on [impact](#)

statements click on this link.

Take a look at this chart and look at the difference it makes between telling your job duty and explaining your impact.

Duty	Impact / Accomplishment
Don't do this!	Do this instead!
Managed company webpage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesigned and managed the company website and social media platforms to increase exposure, resulting in over a 300% increase in website traffic.
Organized fundraising events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized a clothing drive that collected over 3,000 items for low-income children. Contacted and reserved more than 20 local and regional sponsors for Race for the Cure. Raised more than \$1500 by actively promoting event t-shirts on campus. Developed an innovative marketing campaign for Cheerios that improved customer loyalty.
Served drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked 20 hours per week while maintaining a 3.5 GPA. Received 98% positive feedback from customer satisfaction surveys.
Assisted in teaching horseback riding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed 60 horses and provided daily care including grooming, feeding, riding, and training. Taught 75 students ages 6-16 basic horseback riding skills while upholding all safety precautions, resulting in a 98% pass rate in the American Horseback Riding exam.
Statements from University of Arkansas sample resumes from Auburn Career Discovery and Success and from University of Arkansas Career Connections	

When Possible Include These

There are certain top attributes employers seek on candidates' resumes according to the 2023 Job Outlook Report, when possible Include these on your resume:

1. Problem-solving skills
 2. Ability to work in a team
 3. Strong work ethic
 4. Analytical/quantitative skills
 5. Communication writing skills
 6. Technical skills
-

Formatting Your Resume

- No longer than two pages
- 12 to 14-point font
- 1 to 1 1/2 inch margins
- Fonts: Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri preferred
- No photos
- Avoid underlining
- No columns, symbols, or text boxes.
- Do not use Canva or Photoshop. Documents from these programs cannot be read by an Applicant Tracking System.

Closing

Your resume is one part of your professional profile. Taking the time to develop it as a personalized document of your accomplishments will help you in your professional career.

Key Takeaways

- Your resume should focus on accomplishment, not job descriptions
- Resumes should match the position.
- Resumes should be written with specific audiences in mind.
- Resumes should be written to be used by applicant tracking systems.
- You should never include your phone number and address when putting your resume on the web.

Basic Resume Checklist

Yes, No, NA Checklist for Headings and Format

Is your legal name clear and bold at the top?
(also on the second page if applicable)

Do the headings look balanced?

Are the headings appropriate for the type of jobs for which you are applying?

Is the font style easy to read?
(Arial, Times New Roman, and Calibri are preferred fonts)

Is the font size 12 to 14 point for headings?

Have you used boldface and italics appropriately (headers or positions) and avoided underlining?

Are the margins at least 1/2 inch on all sides, but no more than 1 inch?

Is the resume the appropriate length? (An undergraduate resume is typically one page; if you make it 2 pages, you should fill 2 pages completely)

If the resume is 2 pages, is the name listed on the second page and is there a page number at the bottom of the page?

Is there enough white space to make it easy to read?

Is format and punctuation consistent?

Yes, No,
NA

Checklist for Content

Is the content relevant to the type of positions for which you are applying?

Does each entry have the job title?

Does each entry include the name of the organization/employer and city, state

Does each entry include the month and year you began and ended working?

Is the information presented as a bulleted list?

Do the descriptions include relevant buzzwords?

Does the resume avoid the use of “I”? (You do not include “I” on a resume)

Are career-related activities mentioned first?

Are jobs listed in reverse chronological order?
(Often you can group relevant and less relevant in groupings)

Do the descriptive phrases begin with action verbs?

Are the action verbs all in the same tense?

Are the action verbs listed with the most relevant (and impressive) ones listed first?

Are there multiple impact statements that “prove” and give evidence that did a skill efficiently?

Did you quantify the results?

Did you include these when possible?

- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Strong work ethic
- Analytical/quantitative skills
- Communication writing skills
- Technical skills

Have you included all relevant skill types (computer programs, programming languages, foreign languages, lab skills, specialty tools)?

Did you avoid these?

- Age
 - Date of Birth
 - Physical descriptors
 - Photos
 - Race, Nationality, Ethnic Origin
 - Religion
 - Relationship Status
 - Number of Children
 - Health Information
 - References or the phrase “references available upon request”
-
-

Yes, No, NA **Checklist for Education**

Are the institutions and the location’s city and state listed?

Are institution names spelled out?
(i.e. Massachusetts Institute of Technology not MIT)

Is the graduation date (month and year) included?

If you graduate in the next year, do you have an “expected date of graduation” or “candidate for”?

If you are just getting started with college, do you have “pursuing a degree in”?

Is the degree listed the same as it will occur on your degree audit?

Is your GPA listed if it is 3.0 or above?

Did you mention coursework that aligns with your job search?

Are degrees listed with the most recent one on top?

If a college degree has been obtained, has high school been removed?
(Once you graduate, you no longer include high school)

Did you list honors and scholarships and why they are relevant?

Adapted from a [Resume Review Checklist](#) from the University of Arkansas which was adapted from Clarion–PennWest University and [MIT’s Resume Checklist](#)

List of Action Verbs to Help You As You Build Your Resume



Communication Skills Creative Skills Management Skills Organizational Skills

Accounted	Acted	Advised	Approved
Addressed	Adapted	Administered	Arranged
Advertised	Brainstormed	Analyzed	Cataloged
Advised	Combined	Appointed	Categorized
Apprised	Composed	Approved	Charted
Arbitrated	Conceptualized	Assigned	Classified
Articulated	Condensed	Attained	Coded
Assessed	Constructed	Authorized	Collected
Assisted	Created	Chaired	Corrected
Authored	Customized	Considered	Corresponded
Clarified	Designed	Consolidated	Distributed
Coached	Developed	Contracted	Executed
Collaborated	Directed	Controlled	Filed
Communicated	Displayed	Converted	Generated
Composed	Drew	Coordinated	Implemented
Condensed	Edited	Decided	Incorporated
Conferred	Enhanced	Developed	Inspected
Constructed	Established	Directed	Logged
Consulted	Fashioned	Eliminated	Maintained
Contacted	Formulated	Emphasized	Monitored
Conveyed	Founded	Enforced	Obtained
Convinced	Illustrated	Enhanced	Operated
Corresponded	Implemented	Established	Ordered
Counseled	Improved	Executed	Organized
Critiqued	Initiated	Generated	Prepared
Debated	Instituted	Handled	Processed
Defined	Integrated	Headed	Provided
Demonstrated	Introduced	Hired	Purchased
Described	Invented	Hosted	Recorded
Developed	Modeled	Improved	Registered
Directed	Originated	Incorporated	Reserved
Disciplined	Performed	Increased	Responded
Incorporated	Photographed	Influenced	Reviewed
Influenced	Planned	Initiated	Routed
Interacted	Presented	Inspected	Scheduled
Interpreted	Produced	Instituted	Screened
Interviewed	Revised	Launched	Set up
Involved	Revitalized	Led	Submitted
Joined	Shaped	Managed	Supplied
Judged	Solved	Mentored	Standardized
Lectured	Wrote	Merged	Systematized
Listened		Monitored	Updated
Marketed		Motivated	Validated
Mediated		Navigated	Verified
Mentored		Negotiated	
Moderated		Organized	
Negotiated		Originated	
Observed		Overhauled	
Outlined		Oversaw	
Participated		Planned	
Persuaded		Presided	
Prepared		Prioritized	
Presented		Produced	
Produced		Processed	
Promoted		Promoted	

Proposed
Publicized
Reconciled
Recruited
Referred
Reinforced
Reported
Resolved
Responded
Revitalized
Shaped
Summarized
Trained
Translated
Taught
Unified

Recommended
Reorganized
Redirected
Replaced
Restored
Reviewed
Scheduled
Secured
Selected
Streamlined
Strengthened
Supervised
Taught
Terminated
Trained

Examples of Different Ways You Might Put Your Education on your Resume

(This information is in the accordion table, but is included here for those who might use this book only in the pdf format.)

Bachelors of Science in Nursing, 2021
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR GPA 3.8

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 2023
B.A. Philosophy

(If your degree is not related to the position you are applying for, put the name of the college first and the degree second)

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
Completed 30 hours credit hours towards a BS in Computer Science
Relevant coursework: Web development, object-oriented programming, Agile software project.

Candidate for Bachelor of Science in Human Environmental Science
Expected Date of Graduation: May 2024
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
Major: Apparel Merchandising and Product Development
Minor: Marketing

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Finance
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
Honors Program GPA 3.7

Master of Social Work; Expected Graduation: May 2022
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR

Bachelor of Social Work; Graduation: May 2020
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
GPA in Major 3.9

Examples of resumes for your reference from the University of Arkansas Career website

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10.

DESIGNING YOUR PORTFOLIO: YOU ARE THE INFORMATION ARCHITECT

Lynn Meade



In this chapter, we will talk about collecting things for your portfolio, matching your portfolio to your purpose and audience, the parts of a portfolio, and design principles for creating things online. First things first, let's get started with collecting content for your portfolio.

Organize Your Contents



I recently helped someone build his first portfolio. He said it was a lot easier because he had clearly marked folders of materials on his computer. He had a folder for his study abroad photos, a folder for his important homework assignments, and a folder for his resume. When it came time to assemble his portfolio, he not only had great items to use in his portfolio, but he was also able to look through the folder at his photos and homework to get ideas for things to include.

Start by creating a folder. Add things that you think should be included in your portfolio. Include anything bragworthy. Add interesting

photos of you doing interesting things. Add more items than you think you will use—it is better to have too much rather than not enough.

What types of things should you put in your folder? Anything that demonstrates your skills and showcases your personality. This might be photos of you in action, photos of projects, papers you have written, or feedback teachers have written to you. These items are called artifacts and there is an entire chapter dedicated to showing you how to collect, select, reflect, and connect the things you have in your folder: [Showcasing Your Artifacts](#).

Clearly label items. Labeling things as you go can be helpful when it comes time to assemble. Instead of using a generic label such as “essay,” label it “Comparative essay from Dr. Smith’s Composition 2 class.” If you have a lot of things in your folder, you might even break it into subfolders: volunteer work, coursework, and personal projects.

Pick Your Platform

The platform is the place online where you will put your portfolio. Many colleges will have a centralized platform with preloaded templates for students to use. If you do not have a school platform, you can build a site for free using Wix, Weebly, Google Sites, or many other free programs you might find online.

When picking your platform, you should ask these questions:

1. How easy is this platform to use and do I have the skill to use it?
 2. Is technical support available for this platform?
 3. Do I own my site and can I take it with me once I graduate?
 4. Will there be advertisements put on my site?
-



Keep asking, “Who is my audience?” Let the answer guide you regarding what to include and what to exclude in your portfolio.

Define your Purpose and Audience

Throughout the portfolio-building process, you should keep asking “What is the purpose of my portfolio” and “Who will be looking at my portfolio?” Once you have the answer to those two questions, you will have a better idea of what to include and how to structure it. Your audience and purpose will cause you to include some things and exclude others.

Pick Your Structure

Now that you have your platform and a folder of items to include and you have a clear purpose, it is time to decide what to include in your portfolio and how you want to structure your items.

There are many variations on portfolios, but what follows is a list of core items found in **many** professional portfolios.

Landing Page/Home Page

The landing page is the first page people see. For some, the About Me Page is their landing page and for others, they make a separate welcome page.

[About Me Page](#)

The About Me Page is targeted information about you and your learning journey. Overall, this is about you as a student or about you as a professional.

[Resume / Curriculum Vitae](#)

Include an updated resume or vitae. This is a good place to add a link to your LinkedIn page.

[Artifacts](#)

Artifacts are the objects that you display in your portfolio that give evidence to back the story you are telling. Be sure to label them clearly and provide a detailed reflection for each.

[Reflections](#)

Your portfolio should include numerous narratives that tell your story. Use reflective writing to tell the story of your strengths and the meaning behind your artifacts.

[Navigation](#)

It is important for you to have an easy way to navigate these pages and access all the content. **Navigation is crucial.** Ask yourself, “Can an average person navigate my site with ease?” In a survey of employers, one wrote, “I really appreciated how I had options that I did not have to look at the whole thing to find what I wanted. I liked having options to see what I wanted to see—to navigate quickly.”

[Contact Information](#)

Let your reader know how to contact you. It is best to create a contact information page that will send you an email since you probably don’t want your email address, phone number, and address on the internet.

[Course Objectives](#)

It is increasingly popular for programs to ask you to make a portfolio as part of a capstone

for your college program or as a final assignment as part of a central course. These types of portfolios are used so you can demonstrate how you have mastered each of the course/program objectives. If this is the case, you should follow the assignment closely. If given the freedom, you should also design it in a way that it will be easy for you to convert it to a career portfolio.

Career Competencies

Many college portfolios will include career competencies. What this means is that you will organize the content in a way that you have learned about career competencies. What that means is that you will use the career competencies as major headings.



You are the architect of your portfolio designing how you want to build and organize your content.

Design the Structure: You are the Architect!

Portfolios are as personal as the people who make them, that is what makes them so appealing. In the same way that an architect has a master plan for how things will fit together, you are the **information architect** who decides what items you want to showcase and how those items should be arranged.

Your portfolio should be organized in a logical fashion that is suited to the portfolio's application but is reflective of your personality. It can be helpful to sketch out a diagram of how your portfolio will all fit

together. When working with web design, there are certain key principles to follow: Design it as art, use white space, use fonts and letters that are accessible, use design principles, and make sure it can be viewed on different devices.

Design it as “Art”

Many years ago, I went to a career consultant who looked at my resume. The first thing she did was pick it up and walk all the way across the room. When she got to the farthest wall in the room, she stood there and held it to the wall. “Is it art?” she asked. “Look at the balance between words and whitespace. Now, look at the headings and the format. Don’t look at the words, just look at the whole thing as a piece of art. How does it make you feel?”

I had mixed feelings about her asking me these very awkward questions. First, because it wasn’t what I was expecting in this consultation, but second it made me feel bad because my resume failed the “art test.” It was so packed full of words that it looked like an overwhelming mess. That lesson forever changed the way I design text-based items.

All professional items –resumes, portfolios, slides, flyers, websites–should all pass the “art test.” You should stand back from your portfolio and look at it, not as words, but as art. Before anyone reads your portfolio, they will see the visual that is your portfolio, and they will form an impression of you based on that initial viewing. One key factor in passing the art test is your use of white or negative space.

Make Use of White Space

What is white space? It is the negative or empty space around your design or your words which is why it is sometimes called negative space. Fun fact, white space doesn’t have to be white, it can be any color. It counts as white space because it creates a blank spot, so things don’t look cluttered. White space helps to focus attention on key aspects of the page and it reduces overload. In one study, having white space between the lines of a paragraph increased comprehension of the materials by up to 20%.

“White space in design composition is same as use of silence in a musical composition. Without proportionate use of silence, music is unstructured; some may call it noise. Similarly, without white space, design is unstructured and difficult to consume.” Mark den Hartog

Apply Best Practices for Font Types and Letter Sizes

Your portfolio might be viewed on a phone, a tablet, or a computer, so be sure that it is readable on all devices. One way to do that is to carefully consider when picking fonts and sizes. For example, some cursive fonts do not work on some devices and other fonts may change to a smaller font version when viewed on some devices.

Using a plain san-serif font of 14 to 16 points is usually your best bet. Look at the S's below, can you tell the difference? One set has frills or tails called serifs and one does not. Because plain letters are the easiest to read digitally, 85% of web-based fonts are plain, sans-serif font.



The one on the left is a san-serif or plain type font and the one on the right is a serif font. You should use plain, san-serif fonts to make your portfolio easy to read.

Top 5 fonts plain (san-serif) fonts for web use:

- Arial
- Helvetica
- Helvetica Neue
- Roboto
- Tahoma



Be intentional with your page layout. Follow good design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.

Follow Key Design Principles

Since your portfolio is essentially a webpage with a purpose, you should follow the best practices and design principles for websites. C.R.A.P. is an acronym created by Robin Williams (not the comedian) that is used to describe four key design principles that all websites should follow: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.

Contrast

Principle: Items should either be the same or very different. In general, high contrast provides more emphasis while low contrast provides less emphasis.

Example: Contrast large fonts with small fonts; thick lines with thin lines; or dark colors with light colors.

Repetition

Principle: Repetition creates consistency and helps the reader follow along. Repeat some aspect of design throughout the entire page or portfolio.

Example: Repeat design elements such as fonts, colors, or page layouts. Each page of your portfolio should use the same basic colors and the same basic style.

Alignment

Principle: Aligned items give the page coherence. Make sure nothing is placed randomly and there is a clear visual connection between elements.

Example: Don't make it look sloppy with things randomly scattered all over the page. Make sure things line up and look balanced. Create hard lines by aligning text and visual elements in a straight line. Connect these items through left, right, centered, or staggered alignment.

Proximity

Principle: Place related items close to each other and space unrelated items far apart. Proximity ensures related items are seen as one cohesive group rather than a bunch of unrelated parts.

Example: Things that go together should be placed close to each other. Place an image and its corresponding text next to each other.

Watch this video for examples of web design principles.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=29#oembed-1>

<https://kinsta.com/blog/web-design-principles/>

1. Pages should be easy to navigate.
2. Always leverage negative space.
3. Pages should be consistent but engaging.
4. Embrace complementary colors.
5. Design with your target audience in mind.
6. Fonts should be readable and accessible.
7. Follow Fitts Law (Make buttons big and easy to hit) and Hicks Law (Don't make your readers have to make too many decisions).
8. Use invariance: Make it obvious what is the most important.
9. Buttons: Use language that will make people want to click the button.
10. Leverage the pattern of F and Z: Design your site to follow the patterns of how people naturally look.
11. Make it mobile-friendly.
12. Break text into bite-sized chunks.

13. Use grids.
14. Remember balance: Color balance and visual balance.
15. Pay attention to the details.



View your portfolio on a variety of devices to see how it displays.

Design it to Be Viewed on Multiple Devices

Realizing that your portfolio will be viewed on many different platforms, take the time to check and see how it looks on your phone and on a tablet. Many programs have a special feature to let you preview your site on different devices.

Closing

In this chapter, we covered some of the most important things to get you started as you build your portfolio: readability and design. Later, we will talk about [ethics and universal design](#) and I will provide you with a checklist to use for your portfolio. When it comes to building your portfolio, it is not difficult if you take it one step at a time.

Key Takeaways

- Create a folder to store items that you might include in your portfolio.
- As the information architect, you should decide how things will be organized.
- Follow design principles for online content: CRAP: Contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity
- Balance items and use sufficient white space.

Ideas for Teachers

- Ask your students to create a folder of their clearly labeled artifacts. Have them turn in a screenshot of the folder and the labeled items as a way to check progress.
- Ask your students to draw an architectural map of their portfolio. Have them label the navigation and the major parts.
- Ask your students to take a screenshot of their portfolio on two different computers, on a phone, and on a tablet, and turn it in for a grade.
- As a practice exercise, ask students to imagine they are creating a theme for their portfolio. Have them find five stock photos to support that theme. For example, their theme might be “grow” and they have photos of trees and plants on one of the stock photo sites.
- Have students look at portfolios using different devices—tablet, phone, computer— and discuss the similarities and differences in how the portfolio looks on each device.
- Have students find bad examples of websites that violate any of the 15 web design principles
- Have bad examples (make a portfolio and then mess it up) for them to look at and ask them to label which web design principle was violated and have them tell you how to fix it.
- Give students two different audiences (for example an internship and a campus award) and have them describe how they might include different information for each.

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11.

TAKING YOUR PORTFOLIO TO THE NEXT LEVEL: MAKING IT POLISHED AND PROFESSIONAL

Lynn Meade



Your portfolio is a tool that can highlight your achievements while helping you to reflect on your learning. If you want to take your writing to the next level, there are several “hacks” that you can use. The first is to have a unifying theme that incorporates a metaphor. The second is to focus on the opening and closing and the order of words to create impactful messages.

Use a Theme

A theme serves as the guiding thread that weaves together the diverse elements of your portfolio, effectively showcasing your skills, experiences, and achievements in a unified and professional manner. The theme is the central insight or the big truth that you want people to get about you. Are you an innovative individual, an overcomer of challenges, or perhaps someone with unwavering tenacity? Deciding on the central theme and pointing back to it throughout your portfolio helps to anchor your attributes in the minds of the readers.

Once you decide on your theme, you will want to include parts of your theme throughout your portfolio. Another way this can be accomplished is by using a unifying metaphor.

When choosing a metaphor, consider the following:

Your metaphor should be relevant: Select a metaphor that aligns with your career goals, values, or personal

narrative. For instance, if you aspire to work in education, you might explore metaphors related to growth, knowledge, or enlightenment.

Your metaphor should be coherent: Ensure that it unifies different sections, projects, and experiences, creating a cohesive and meaningful narrative. It can be in the words that you use, the photos you show, and even in your background colors.

Your metaphor should be easily understood: Ensure that it is easily understandable and doesn't overshadow the content of your portfolio.

Examples

[Tanvi Dutta Gupta's Portfolio](#) used topsoil, undergrowth, and emergent as headings for her theme.

Growing up in a rainforest, with all its messy beauty, showed me how everything connects. I believe each story, also, exists in an ecosystem. I invite you to journey through my portfolio by ascending through the rainforest layers. Tanvi Dutta Gupta

[Jackie Lu's Portfolio](#) used the parts of a neuron to organize the parts of her portfolio.

As an homage to my love of neuroscience, my e-portfolio is organized into sections based on the three main functional parts of a neuron: the Cell Body, the long Axon, and the Terminal Branches. With my most technical writing in the Cell Body and my creative, personal projects at the Terminal Branches, my artifacts reach continually broader and broader audiences as you progress through my portfolio—mimicking the path travelled by an electrical signal through a neuron.

For more examples, look at [Stanford's ePortfolio Archive](#)



A complete brainstorming session is the key to success.

Brainstorming a Theme

To develop a theme and the unifying metaphor, you need a robust list of ideas to draw upon. Do yourself a favor and take the time to brainstorm.

After you pick your theme, start creating lists of words that stem from your theme and can work toward your metaphor. If your metaphor is “garden,” create a list of at least 25 words related to the garden. For example “grow, weed, cultivate, flourish,” and so on. Next, you need to create a word list of at least 10 things that are opposites, for example, “uncultivated soil, struggling plants.”

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that a complete brainstorming session before you begin is the key to success. When you start writing, keep looking at your list and you will be amazed at how it works its way into all your portfolio writing.

For example, if you use a theme of gardening, it might show up in your portfolio in small ways, such as, “I like to help my student grow in confidence so I create assignments...” and “I encourage them to branch out and try new things.”

The trick is to work it in subtly and to keep it sounding professional. The metaphor is not the message, it supports your message.

Exercises: Learning to Use AI to Help You Brainstorm



One of my favorite books in high school was my thesaurus. I can remember with delight when I got one for Christmas. I loved looking up words and finding new ways to say things. These days, you have an online thesaurus to help you with creative words.

You also have another tool at your disposal that can help you brainstorm creative phrases—artificial intelligence, AI, such as ChatGPT. You can use these programs to embellish your ideas.

Let's experiment with using ChatGPT as a tool to brainstorm ideas. The trick to making it work for you is to ask it the right questions in the right ways.

Tell ChatGPT who to be: "You are a college student studying history and writing an e-portfolio that will be viewed by potential employers."

Tell ChatGPT what to do: "Write me subject headings that can be used in my career-focused portfolio using the metaphor of exploration."

Fine-tune the search as necessary: "Make the subject headings more career-focused for a professional business portfolio."

A useful article that you might want to check with to refine your prompts is [A Guide to Prompting AI by Ethan Mollick](#)

Go ahead, and give it a try using your theme.

When I was in journalism class, we had a writer who would use the thesaurus to write above his intelligence. In other words, he would use words that he would never speak and I'm not sure if he even knew the meaning of some of the words he included. This caused his writing to sound fake. This can happen to you if you use AI to create your portfolio. You should never let any artificial intelligence program tell you what to say but rather use it to inspire you to think deeper about how to say things.

You probably know what I am going to say next. Having an artificial intelligence program write your portfolio is cheating. Your portfolio is supposed to be a reflection of you and your ideas and I am certain that you do not want that reflection to be that you are a cheater. Use artificial intelligence tools like you would use a thesaurus or a trusted friend who can help you brainstorm ideas and take your writing to the next level.

As an experiment, I asked ChatGPT, for examples using the metaphor of a building. I asked in several

different ways and then used the regenerate feature a couple of times. This is the list of ideas that I accumulated.

1. Laying the Foundation: Education and Skills
2. Blueprint for Success: Designing Innovative Solutions
3. Building Skills Brick by Brick: Internship at XYZ Company
4. Reinforcing Structural Integrity: Overcoming Obstacles
5. Reaching New Heights: Building a Bright Future
6. Building Bridges
7. Structural Support: Leadership and Teamwork
8. Foundation: Building Connections
9. Solid as a Rock: Dependable and Trustworthy
10. Architect of Change: Shaping a Dynamic Future
11. Constructing a Path to Success

As I look over this list, I see potential headings for sections of my portfolio and I see phrases that can be incorporated into reflections. I also see some cheesy phrases that I would never use and that is OK too. Whether using free writing or using artificial intelligence to help you brainstorm, you always want to generate more ideas than you need. You may not use all those ideas, but, thinking broadly about your topic helps you to come up with brilliant ideas afterward.

Looking at this list, I also am inspired to think of creative graphics or background elements that connect ideas.

When it comes to using a theme, you don't want to overdo it. Your theme is supposed to highlight you and your skills.

When I wrote this section, I sent it to the University of Arkansas' specialist on Academic Initiatives and Integrity, Chris Bryson, and he suggested that I add this:

Copying and pasting text produced by generative artificial intelligence will likely be considered cheating by your Instructor. Make sure to refer to your class syllabus about how to use and cite what is provided by ChatGPT, and ask your Instructor for guidance if you are still unsure. In the end, your portfolio is supposed to be a reflection of you and your ideas and I am certain that you do not want the reflection to be that you are a cheater. Use artificial intelligence tools like you would use a thesaurus or a trusted friend who can help you brainstorm ideas or take your writing to the next level.

When you use ChatGPT, you should cite it according to the [American Psychological Association's Style Guide](#).

Let me work you through another example to further illustrate the point. Read this opening sentence of an about me section and notice how many words it takes before you get to something engaging.

I have taught for many years and in recent years have come to realize that being a teacher and being a gardener has a lot in common.

I counted 17 words before the engaging word “teacher.” Now, look at this rewrite and count how many words until an interesting word comes up.

I am a teacher and a gardener and the two have more in common than you might think.

I counted three words before the word “teacher.” Now, try this one.

Teaching and gardening have more in common than you might think.

By putting “teaching” as the very first word, it engages the audience and anchors an important concept. All three sentences say the same thing, but the one that starts with a strong word clearly stands out. When taking your writing to the next level, the challenge is to rework the opening sentence of each of your sections and rewrite it so the most powerful words come first. After you have written a section of your portfolio, go to the opening sentence and read it aloud now go to the closing sentence and read it aloud. In most cases, there will be room for improvement.

Exercises

Look at these openings and rewrite them so the very first words are engaging.

- Hello, and welcome to my ePortfolio! My name is Seymour Phish, and I am a passionate college student majoring in Marine Biology. I am thrilled to share my journey and showcase my experiences, knowledge, and aspirations in the field of biology through this platform.
- I am an enthusiastic college student majoring in Art. I am thrilled to share my creative endeavors, inspirations, and growth as an artist with you. My name is Art Painter. Welcome to my artistic journey showcased through this ePortfolio!
- I’m an engineering student, and this is my “About Me.” I decided to major in engineering because it seemed like a practical choice. I’m Bob B. Builder and since I was a young child, I liked problem-solving and pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

End with Powerful Words

I have a funny little thing I do when eating a meal. After tasting all the things on my plate, I pick the food that is my favorite and I eat it last. I do this so the best flavor is the one that leaves a lingering taste on my tongue. When it comes to our writing, we want to be intentional regarding which word lingers in the reader's mind. What "taste" do we want to leave?

Once again, let me illustrate the point with a sample. As you read, notice the last two words from the final paragraph of an engineering student's "About Me page."

".... I envision a future where engineering serves as a catalyst for positive change, addressing pressing global challenges and improving the quality of life for people worldwide. I am passionate about leveraging my technical skills to make a tangible impact and leave a lasting legacy."

Do you catch the last two words are "lasting legacy?" These are powerful words.

Now let's look at an example from an artist's portfolio.

"This ePortfolio serves as a window into my creative process, showcasing my artwork, projects, and exhibitions. I hope to connect with fellow artists, art enthusiasts, and individuals who appreciate the power of art to transform."

Look at the last word —"transform." This is the last thought left to linger in the mind of the reader. Read only the last sentence again and notice that the final phrase, "the power of art to transform." Not only is the last word a powerful one but the whole last idea is strong and meaningful.

Last one. Read these closing sentences from Patience Marsh,

I view my education as a patchwork quilt of academic training and practical experience that grows with my every accomplishment. These, collectively, are a representation of who I am as a student, employee, and life-long learner.

"Life-long learner" is the perfect ending statement for an educational portfolio.

Now it's your turn. Read the last sentence of your "About Me". What are the lingering ideas that you leave with your reader? Now look at the last sentence of your "About Me," and read only the last three words....are they powerful words?

There are many ways to brainstorm, if you are still stuck and looking for an idea, try this website on Brainstorming Techniques: <https://business.tutsplus.com/articles/top-brainstorming-techniques-cms-27181>

Closing

Taking the time to elevate your writing can help you tell your story in your own way. Remember that the goal of the portfolio is not just to list achievements but to tell a cohesive story of growth and self-discovery. A well-executed theme, coupled with a unifying metaphor, will elevate your portfolio from a mere collection of experiences to a compelling narrative that showcases your unique qualities and aspirations. Being intentional with the first words sets the tone for your story and your closing statement is your final chance to sway perceptions. By mastering the art of using strong words, you harness the potential to elevate your portfolio from an assembly of achievements to a compelling narrative that lingers in the minds of those who encounter it.

Key Takeaways

- Using a theme can help connect ideas in meaningful ways.
- When trying to build a unifying metaphor take the time to brainstorm.
- Always start your first sentence with powerful words.
- End your section with strong ideas and powerful words.

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12.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND ETHICAL PORTFOLIO: ETHICS AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Lynn Meade



In this chapter, we delve into the crucial topics of ethics and the integration of universal design principles. By addressing these essential elements, you will have a way to showcase your achievements while showing respect for others by upholding ethical values and embracing the concept of universal design.

Ethical Considerations

Your portfolio says a lot about you. One of the things you want it to say is that you are an ethical person who considers others. It is important that you consider others by respecting the copyright of others and asking other's permission to include them in your portfolio. Ethics is not about “obeying the rules” so much as it is about respecting others. Here are a few guidelines to help you along the way.

Ethical Use of Media

- Consider all photos, videos, and music that you find on the internet as being protected by copyright laws even if it does not have a copyright symbol.
- You should always ask permission to use a photo that shows anyone other than yourself. If you do

teaching, coaching, or medical training, be aware that there are very tight rules about when you can and when you cannot share photos.

- There is a debate about the appropriateness of sharing charity-related photos. For example, a photo of you feeding a homeless person makes you look good, but it is questionable whether it is ethical to share photos of someone's misfortune for your self-promotion. Consider ways to tell your story that is not at the expense of others.
- You should protect the personal preferences and safety of others and get their permission before including an image of them on your portfolio. This most often comes up when thinking about study abroad photos, photos involving minors, Greek photos, volunteer activities, and class projects.
- Some businesses will not consider you as a job candidate if you include photos because it might bias the process, therefore it is important that you research your audience about their policy on this. You would never want to be excluded from a job search because of a photo.
- If you use a photo from a website or social media post (for example pulling photos from your sorority or your faith group's site), make sure you get permission to use it and that you give credit to the photographer.

Using Free Stock Photos



If you need stock photos, you can use photos from these sites. They are professional and free to use.

- [Creative Commons](#)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [Stocksnap](#)
- [Pixabay](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Reshot](#)

It is good etiquette to credit the artist even if not required to do so.

Check out the [portfolio of Kristin Morgan](#) and see how she uses stock photos.

Ethics of Personal Data: Protect the Privacy of Others

Always consider privacy and confidentiality when putting information in your portfolio. “The networked and public nature of the internet requires the capacity for thinking more abstractly about the effect of one’s actions on unknown others or at the level of community,” according to Flores and James. If you decide to open up your portfolio for public viewing, you should consider all the possible audiences and all the potential impacts. For example, the writing sample you included might be of a controversial topic could set you up for possible scrutiny and make you a target for online bullies.

Privacy is important not just for you, but for others that you may include. For example, you may have had an assignment where you visited a school, assessed a patient, or interviewed a person. If you include information about that experience, you may inadvertently disclose information that the other person does not want openly disclosed. Privacy, confidentiality, and protection of personal data must always be considered. This is especially true with health care education, counseling, and teacher education portfolios. If you describe situations, you need to anonymize the situation. If you show student work or work from a group assignment, you must get permission.

Ethical Use of Sources: Cite Your Sources

When you use material that you did not create, provide a citation. If you include your favorite quote, be sure to include the author and put a small reference for the quote at the bottom of the page.

Making Sure that Everyone Can Access Your Information: Universal Design Principles

Let’s start with an example from [Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios](#) created by the [Digital Ethics Task Force](#):

You are a student participating in an internship as part of your work-integrated learning requirement in your Hospitality Management program. Your position as sous-chef in your favorite restaurant in town gives you rich learning opportunities, and you want to document these experiences not just in text but also in multimedia content. Your internship mentor is okay with you taking photos and video of the kitchen and your work to share in your portfolio.

During one of the introductory sessions to the ePortfolio work for your internship, you learned about creating accessible content so that people with differing abilities can read your portfolio and comment on it. Therefore, when you upload photos of the dishes you created, you provide appropriate alternative text descriptions that screen readers can access. When you use video to take viewers through the process of creating a dish or reflecting on a task, you make captions, a transcript, or summary available as text that you place next to the video. While this adds work to your portfolio creation process, it also helps you think about your audience, how your portfolio is viewed, and how you can express your ideas and reflections in an effective and concise manner.

The idea of **universal design** is that you should create online materials thinking of those who might have challenges reading your materials and you should adjust your design to be accessible for as many people as possible. How would someone who is blind access your portfolio? How would someone who is colorblind *see* your headings?

For your portfolio, this will likely mean doing things so it can be read by a screen reader and being aware of the challenges of colors. The good news is that it is not hard to do. Knowing what it is and how to do it will give you an edge in the workplace. Adapting to those with differences and using effective communication with those with differences are key items sought in professional realms.

These are the most common things that you can do to use universal design for your portfolio.

- Use the formatting feature that allows you to designate things as paragraphs, headings, subheadings, etc.
 - Be consistent. Heading 1 should never be followed by Heading 3.
 - Do not use color alone to signify sections. For example, don't make the text blue to let the reader know it is a header. Instead, use the header feature.
- Do not put things in all capitals for emphasis.
- The only things that should be underlined are links to web pages.
- Give a description of a hyperlink rather than writing out the address (except in citations). Do not use ("h-t-t-p-s-colon-slash-slash-w-w-w...") or "click here" but rather say, for more information look at the [Accessibility and Inclusion Guide](#).
- When possible, avoid tables. They can pose issues for screen readers. If you do use tables, only do so for content purposes and not formatting purposes.
- When possible, avoid text boxes, they can be difficult for screen readers to interpret.
- Since someone with visual impairment can't see your image, you need to describe it for them. This is done by using the alternative text (alt-text) feature to describe your images.
- Here is a link to an [Accessibility and Inclusion Guide](#) which provides more details.

Watch this quick video to understand how alternative text works.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/eportfolio/?p=642#oembed-1>

Closing

To help you make sure your portfolio is using the best practices, use the portfolio checklist. By embracing ethical practices and universal design principles, you can help your portfolio to be a tool for personal and professional development and maximize the potential that others will hear your story and want to know more about you.

Portfolio Checklist

Text

- ☐ The heading format is used for the headings, and they follow the appropriate order (H1, H2, H3, paragraph).
- ☐ Text has a minimum size of 14 points.
- ☐ A Sans Serif (plain) font style is used.
- ☐ Words are not capitalized for emphasis (use **bold** or *italics* instead).
- ☐ PDF files should be accessible or multiple formats should be included if PDF is used.

- ☐ Font size and type are used consistently across pages.
- ☐ Color alone is not used to signify meaning. For example, a heading is coded as “heading” and not just a different color. A word that you want to be emphasized in a sentence is italicized and bolded in addition to being a different color.
- ☐ Whitespace is used to break up large sections of text.
- ☐ The page is without spelling errors.
- ☐ The page is without grammar errors.

Hyperlinks

- ☐ The only time underlining is used is to indicate a hyperlink.
- ☐ Links have a descriptive name that could stand alone to describe the linked resource to the reader (e.g., instead of “click here,” “Access a PDF version of my resume”).
- ☐ If pictures or objects are used as buttons to move from page to page, it is clear that these are navigational hyperlinks and not just decoration.

Language

- ☐ Language is inclusive towards different groups of people.
- ☐ Readers outside of your field can easily understand what you are saying.
- ☐ Specialty language (jargon or technical terms) is explained or excluded.
- ☐ Tone is friendly and professional.

Media and Graphics

- ☐ Images have been tested on different-sized screens to see if they are comfortably viewable.
- ☐ Images have “alt text,” or descriptions that tell someone who cannot see your image what they’re missing. Images that are just for decoration are marked as “decorative.”

- ☐ Videos include closed captioning or a transcript.
- ☐ If your photos include other people, you have permission from each person to use the photo.
- ☐ Photos do not violate the privacy of another individual.
- ☐ If you use stock photos, you have credited the source.
- ☐ Viewers should have to push play manually to make the video work. It is not on auto-play.

Navigation

- ☐ The average person could easily navigate to all pages of my portfolio.
- ☐ It is obvious how you move from one page to the next.
- ☐ Links to other pages are clearly marked.
- ☐ Users can navigate back to the home page easily.
- ☐ If the user accidentally starts reading, on page two or three, it is clear how they find page one.
- ☐ Hyperlinks have been tested and they go to the correct page.
- ☐ Navigation works on smartphones, tablets, and computers.

Adapted from [Making Your ePortfolio Accessibility.](#)

Key Takeaways

- Be ethical in how you use pictures and text in your portfolio.
- Use universal design principles when creating your portfolio.

Ideas for Teachers

- Have your students complete the portfolio checklist or put them in groups and have them use the checklist to do a peer review of a classmate's materials.
- Have students listen to a portfolio using a screen reader.
- Have students watch the Ted Talk, [Accessible Tech Makes Better Tech for Everyone](#) and discuss how this influences the choices they make in their portfolio.

Dig Deeper

Digital Ethics Principles in EPortfolios

The [Digital Ethics Task Force](#) created [Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios](#), to provide 10 principles to guide in the creation of ePortfolios.

- [Support](#)
- [Promote Awareness](#)
- [Practice](#)
- [Evaluation](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Decolonization \(DEIBD\)](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Technology and Usability](#)
- [Data Responsibility](#)
- [Respect for Author Rights and Re-Use Permissions](#)
- [Visibility of Labor](#)

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[Kristin Morgan](#)

PART II

EXAMPLES, ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES

Examples: These are samples of students work. These can be used as a part of classroom discussions or they can be used for inspiration.

Activities: These are solo and group activities to help spur creativity, create discussion, and provide opportunity for growth.

Resources: These are things, such as rubrics, that may be helpful for teacher and student alike.