

*Building a
Personal
and
Career
Portfolio*

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Introduction

Building a Personal and Career Portfolio is a support for teachers and a guide for students in the development and maintenance of a portfolio. The ideas in this resource have been designed primarily for use by teachers of Career Studies courses, but are useful to all teachers who wish to use student-developed portfolios in their programs.

The materials consist of a series of steps that can be used as a guide for teachers and students in the collection and organization of materials for individual student portfolios. Evidence of accomplishments is organized and inserted into a binder to become part of an up-to-date portfolio. This evidence can provide a focus for parents, teacher advisors, and guidance counsellors when discussing with students the preparation and revision of their Annual Education Plan (AEP). Portfolios may also be useful for students when applying for admission to a college or university program, applying for a scholarship or bursary, or for developing a resume when seeking employment.

The resource supports students by answering 2 key questions:

1. What is a Personal and Career Portfolio?
2. What are the Steps to Developing a Personal and Career Portfolio?

Steps to Developing a Portfolio

- A. *Gather Your Evidence*
- B. *Organize Your Portfolio*
- C. *Assemble Your Portfolio*
- D. *A Final Check*

For the Teacher

This resource provides a structure and suggestions for the creation of a student's career and personal portfolio, but there are many variations that are possible based on how and why you want students to create their portfolio.

Suggestions for using this resource:

- Be clear with the students on the purpose for the portfolio.
“Is it to support a résumé when applying for employment, or an application to a college or university, or both?”
- Be clear on the quality of the portfolio expected.
“Is it a portfolio that students will use after the course is over, or is it just a simulation of a process and the portfolio is not expected to be added to or used after the course?”
- Monitor the student's work on the portfolio throughout the process.
- Assess the portfolio at different stages of its development and provide the student with formative feedback on how to improve the portfolio.
- Organize the contents into categories that match the purpose of the portfolio.
Suggested categories are Educational Accomplishments, Work, School Activities, and Community Participation. There are many other categories that may be used based on the age of the students and the purpose of the portfolio.
- Emphasize with students that a portfolio can be used to ‘sell’ themselves to others. A portfolio can be a personal marketing tool. Students should understand that how they organize and present their accomplishments is just as important as what accomplishments they select.
- Provide samples of effective portfolios and appropriate evidence to show students what is expected. Lead discussions and brainstorming sessions so that students understand the range of evidence that they can include. Make lists with the class of how a portfolio could be used or how a portfolio could be assembled.
- Show how portfolios are used “beyond the classroom.” Brainstorm with students where they know or have seen people use a portfolio (e.g., an artist to sell their paintings, a model or an actor to get a job, or an architect or contractor bidding on a job).

Evaluating a Student's Portfolio

There are many strategies that can be used when evaluating a student's portfolio. One method is to select pieces from the portfolio and to evaluate each piece individually to determine an overall score.

A preferred method is to score the portfolio holistically. Sample criteria that may be used for scoring a student's portfolio:

- completeness
- presentation of ideas and visual appeal
- diversity and quality of selections/evidence
- evidence of understanding the process of developing a portfolio
- appropriateness for the intended purpose of the portfolio
- clarity of the message for the intended audience

For Students

1. What is a Personal and Career Portfolio?

A Personal and Career Portfolio is an organized collection of evidence that shows your accomplishments both in and out of school.

A portfolio contains samples of your work that exhibit and reveal the quality and variety of your learning, your accomplishments, your skills, and your experiences.

Is a portfolio the same as a résumé?

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

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

2. What Are the Steps to Developing a Personal and Career Portfolio?

A. Gather Your Evidence

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

B. Organize Your Portfolio

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

C. Assemble Your Portfolio

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

D. A Final Check

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

A. Gather Your Evidence

What evidence can be placed in a portfolio?

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

Items for Your Portfolio

Items can include:

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

B. Organize Your Portfolio

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

Consider each of the following four categories to help you organize your evidence:

1. Educational Accomplishments

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

Items to include:

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

2. School Activities

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

Items to include:

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

3. Work

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

Items to include:

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

4. Community Participation

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

Consider your involvement in:

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

Items to include:

- ✓ your completed "Record of Community Involvement Activities"
- ✓ a written summary of your experiences, e.g., a personal story
- ✓ personal references
- ✓ photos
- ✓ any other evidence unique to your participation in community activities

C. Assemble Your Portfolio

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

Tips for assembling your portfolio:

- **Does my portfolio show a wide-range of my accomplishments?**

The strength of a portfolio is in the variety of what you show. Examples you include should show many of your accomplishments rather than many examples of one accomplishment.

- **Are my most important accomplishments clearly evident?**

Not everything you do will have equal value. The portfolio should show the best examples of your talents and abilities. Make sure that those things that you are most proud of are highlighted in your portfolio.

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

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

- **Do I have a Cover Page for my portfolio?**

This page should include:

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

- **Do I have a Table of Contents for my portfolio?**

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

D. A Final Check

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

A Final Checklist:

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

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