Advising & Career Center
SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Design Portfolio Guide

How to showcase your work for optimal creative expression and visual display
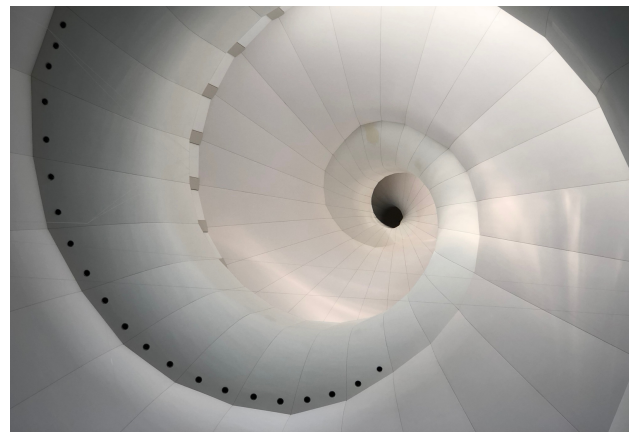
Do you need a portfolio?

Portfolios are a way to present a collection of your creative work. They give recruiters and viewers a look into your design aesthetic and what visions you have in the future of design, which is seen as high potential for success to companies.

Design format options:

Students can choose to present their work in either a PDF format or by using a website platform. PDF documents are more common and can be easier to work with, however websites can offer additional tools such as animation.

Application material:

Digital portfolios should be added to resume/cover letter header sections, with a hyperlink taking viewers directly to your PDF or website. Students can link to their portfolio in the body of a cover letter as well, if desired.

The basics (PDF style):

- Page size: 8.5x11, 11x14, 11x17 (facing pages)
- # of projects: 4-6 (by graduation)
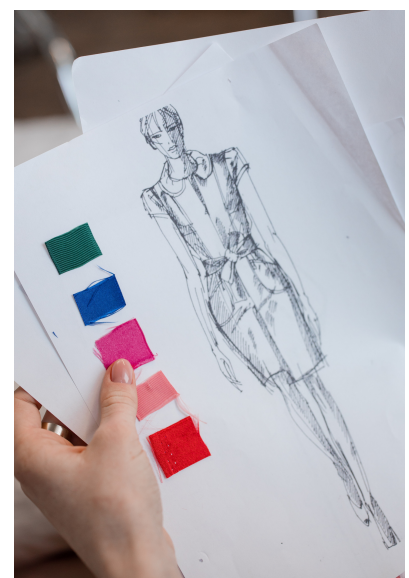- Length: 30-40 pages

Web creation platforms:

- *Behance*
- *Wix*
- *Weebly*
- *PortfolioPen*
- *Cargo*
- *Wordpress*
- *Adobe Spark*
- *Google Sites*

Tutorial videos:

- *Building an Online Portfolio*
- *Building a Portfolio wih Adobe Portfolio*

Reality check:

- Don't overthink it!
- Employers will view your portfolio only for a few seconds and reach out if they see a few designs that match what they are looking for
- Hiring managers are often too busy for details, so keep text brief

What to avoid:

- Personal branding that is unpolished or distracting
- Using low-fidelity images
- Showcasing designs that died years ago
- Not targeting your desired role or company
- A lack of personality

Interviewer insights:

- Always showcase your best and most relevant work. Do not simply show your work in chronological order.
- Find ways to highlight your creative and visionary skills
- Include conceptual work, sketches, research, and technical drawings along with finished work to help the viewer understand the full range of your skills
- Create it in an easy-to-manage size
- Keep it up to date
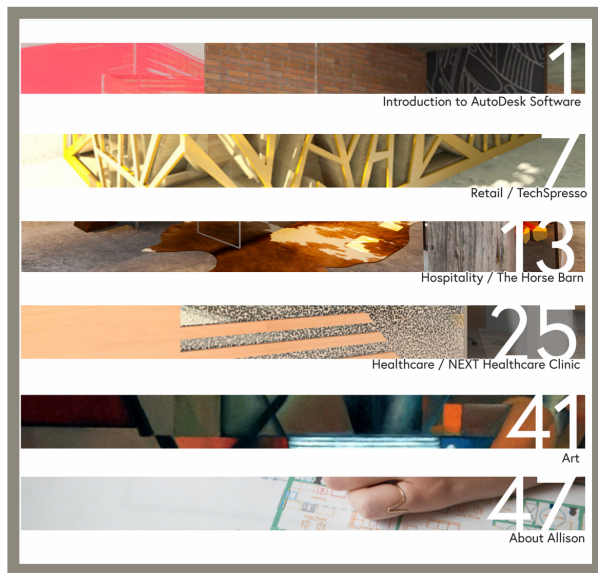- Make it discoverable through host websites, and add it to your LinkedIn profile

Success factors:

- Highlight your best work! Do not include anything of low quality
- Showcase the kind of work you want to be known or hired for
- It's not about the work you've done, it's about how you present it
- Be sure to showcase the design process, not just final designs
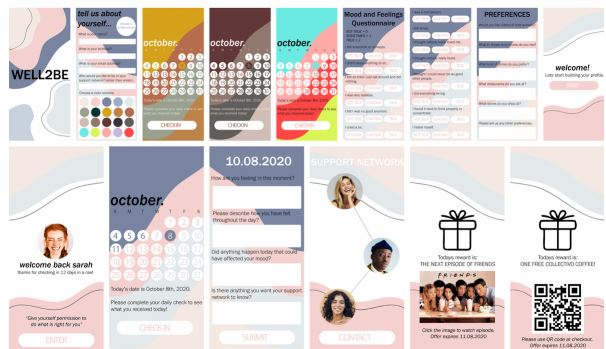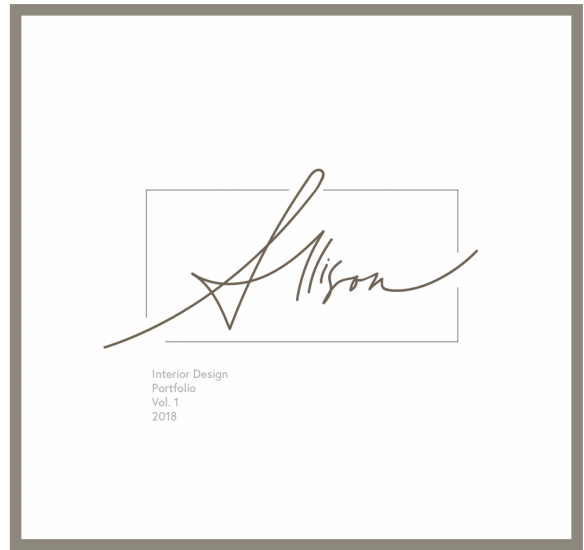- Provide a balance of both text and imagery

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Student examples:

- Check out student portfolio examples for Interior Architecture _here_ and Textiles & Fashion Design _here_ and _here!_