

Portfolio Basics: Physical

PORTFOLIO FOR INTERVIEW

Most interviews with creative agencies or in-house creative teams will expect you to bring a portfolio to your interview. You should assume that the company has already vetted your online portfolio or work samples you've submitted. This is a chance for them to see how you present your work in person and to share any additional pieces.

Format

Choose a sturdy case or a box to carry your work. Find a size that can easily fit on a desk. It's to your advantage to bring original pieces for some disciplines, such as print designers, illustrators, or printmakers. If you bring original pieces, make sure that they haven't been dinged up, are easy to handle, and are not fragile.

In all other cases, create a print portfolio of loose pages using a template that unifies the presentation. You can simply show documented work or include a title and short description for each piece in a similar fashion to your website. It's recommended in most cases that you don't bring a laptop unless your work is digital in nature. Do not show images on your phone.

How Much Work to Bring

Remember that time is limited. Select 8–10 pieces of your best work or 2–3 larger bodies of work with multiple pieces. You may not have time to show all of your work. Consider the sequence of your presentation. Share one or two of your strongest pieces first and save another strong piece for last when time starts to run out.

It's okay to bring a couple pieces that are more experimental in nature or which show off your process. Avoid bringing a raw sketchbook; find a way to collect some of your best sketches or share the process of one of your projects.

Just like your resume, your portfolio should be tailored to the organization you're interviewing with. Bring pieces that reflect your skills and that align with their work and industry.

Presentation

Allow the interviewer to handle your work. If you share your work, make sure the work faces the interviewer. Practice how to present each piece, spending no more than a minute discussing the overarching idea and approach. Point out any specific details that show off your intention or reflect your skill set. Allow room for conversation. Remember this is not a critique, so be prepared to take criticism and don't come off as defensive if feedback is given.

PORTFOLIO FOR DROP-OFF

Some studios ask for portfolios to be dropped off. If you drop off a portfolio make sure that you can get it back and never include original work. Create a portfolio of loose sheets that include a project title and short description of each piece similar to your website. Label each sheet of your portfolio with your name and contact information so it's easily recognizable, especially if a piece is separated from the portfolio.