

Fashion & Design Portfolio Tips

Planning & Structure

DO:

- Categorize your work: Organize your projects into sections for intuitive navigation.
- Prioritize key work: Feature your most impressive projects on the homepage to capture attention immediately.
- Show your design process: include process work from inspiration and sketches to prototypes and final products.

DON'T:

- Don't overload with text: Avoid lengthy paragraphs or an excess of written content that could distract from the visuals.
- Avoid irrelevant content: Don't include photos or information that doesn't contribute to the overall message or narrative of your portfolio.

Design & Layout

DO:

- Develop a personal brand: develop an instantaneous visual cue that identifies your work as your own, such as an accent color.
- Balance space: use positive and negative space to avoid clutter and let your work stand out.
- Emphasize key information: use variations in color and font to highlight important details without overwhelming the viewer.
- Maintain a consistent design style: Keep fonts, colors, and layout choices consistent throughout your portfolio for a cohesive look.

DON'T:

- Distract with background images: Avoid busy or eye-catching background photos that take focus away from your work.
- Use hard-to-read fonts/colors, as it could strain readability.

Refining Content

DO:

- Be concise: Choose only content that adds value and enhances the overall message—every image and description should serve a clear purpose.
- Communicate with visuals and words: Use a combination of text and imagery to convey your style and process clearly.
- Make your contact info easily accessible: Ensure your contact details are easy to find, ideally on every page or in a dedicated section.
- Polish everything: Review your portfolio thoroughly to ensure it's in its best possible form, with no errors or loose ends. Find a professor, friend, or come to the CEC for a portfolio review.

DON'T:

- Include clichés: Avoid showcasing generic or overused elements of the design process (e.g., sticky notes, brainstorming photos).
- Publish without proofreading: Always check for typos, mistakes, or inconsistencies before making your portfolio public.



Additional Portfolio Tips

Creating a Business Card Title

One way to begin developing your personal brand is by identifying the type of work you do, as you would clarify it on a business card. Are you a fashion designer? Colorist? Textile Artist? Childrenswear designer? You can develop any career focus or interest you have into a descriptive title. Once you have this title, you can use it to develop your physical business card. In doing so you will be forced to come to terms with the role you wish to play in the industry as well as to identify some basic layout, font, and color styles that also express this career focus.

Documenting Your Design Process

It's crucial to document every part of the design process: initial inspiration, sketches, and photographs of your patterns and muslins. While these beginning stages of the design process may not be pretty or clean, they add validity to your portfolio later on because employers want to see how you navigate the design process. This allows them to better understand how you think and how your work develops over time. Take lots of pictures, save your sketches, and be prepared to include the processes that lead to your final product in your portfolio.

Categorizing Your Work

Categorizing work makes it much easier for others to navigate and understand your portfolio. Work can be categorized in many ways, such as: medium (garments, paintings/drawings, CAD), stage in the design process (inspiration/mood boards, sketches, muslins, samples, final products), and nature of the project (personal, course-related, research). Choose the way you want to categorize and keep it consistent throughout your portfolio.

Phasing Out Old Work

Designers usually pick their best, most recent works to be featured in their portfolios to most accurately showcase their current talents and skill level. It is better to have fewer strong pieces than to have many pieces that are all average. As you create more professional, college-level work, start phasing out less impressive work and pieces from high school. If you have work from earlier stages that you would still like to include, you can create a section labeled "personal". This signals to viewers that the work in this section does not represent your professional projects, even if it further explains your development as a designer.

Photography Tips

Image quality is extremely important in curating a successful portfolio. Here are guidelines to follow to make your portfolio as impressive as possible:

- Do not use your cell phone to take photos as it tends to result in worse image quality and stretched edges. Mann and Olin Libraries have cameras available to check out.
- White backgrounds are commonly used for fashion photos. If you choose to use alternative backgrounds, this must be an artistic choice that furthers your design/theme and does not distract from your work.
- Make sure you take various shots from different angles. Fashion work is typically shown from the front, back, and side, accompanied by detail shots (surface details, trims, interesting closures, etc.).

