

# Career Portfolios: Are You Missing Out?

*It's never too early to tap into the hidden value of digital career portfolios.*

## Not just for interviews anymore.

Digital portfolios are powerful tools that help job candidates showcase their work to employers and substantiate their résumés. Suitable for almost all fields, they are a valuable part of the search process for job seekers and career explorers. Career e-portfolios have even made their way from college to pre-college classroom settings, taking on new life as versatile learning resources and career exploration aids. Here's how the process of creating, developing, and using digital portfolios offers benefits that extend well beyond traditional job search and interview applications.

## Who am I? Where am I going?

**Self-reflection.** Digital portfolios act as virtual time capsules and can be excellent tools for student self-reflection. If you're asked to create a digital portfolio at the start of the school year, chronicle your work and accomplishments and document hurdles you encounter. At the end of the term, you can review, analyze, assess, and reflect on all that you have achieved over the academic year. The process can help you better recognize your interests, strengths, and weaknesses for greater self-awareness, confidence, and ongoing growth.

**Defining new life goals.** Students and young job seekers often need assistance with career and self-identity exploration. A digital portfolio can help you focus on what you would like to do with your life. It centralizes projects and helps you see the big picture. You can then carefully cull pieces and craft a compelling body of work. This can even help narrow down career paths. For example, if you're a cosmetology student you may have a portfolio full of makeup projects, hair color, and cuts...but the makeup work is the real standout. By purposefully removing the hair work samples, you'll come to see a clear picture of your career focus.

**Building a case.** Portfolios traditionally are used as a body of evidence to support why a job seeker is qualified for a position. Now, digital portfolios can be used to showcase *any* topic that's part of a class assignment or research. A project on global warming can include uploaded photo evidence of changing

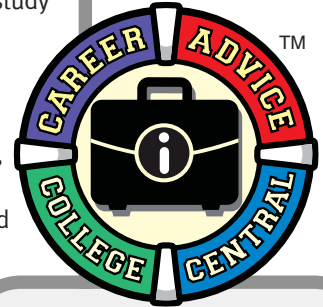
weather on neighborhoods, video of waste on beaches, statistical reports, and sounds bites from area authorities. The result: an organized case study that helps foster presentation skills.

**Special needs.** Non-traditional learners and students who struggle with conventional learning methods, such as reading and writing, can benefit from the use of e-portfolios for grading and assessment. The digital format and media such as photos and videos can help you develop oral and written skills and better communicate your thoughts.

**Sharing.** Portfolios are a great way to share information with viewers other than employers. For example, as a film major you can share the first edit, storyboard, and set design for a film project with peers or mentors for feedback and collaboration. For parents, your e-portfolio can affirm your hard work in the classroom throughout the academic year. Plus, some teachers/instructors may opt to share classroom updates via digital portfolios rather than post on public social media sites.

**Future-oriented thinking.** Research shows that classroom guidance and faculty engagement throughout the portfolio process can result in better student communication, interview, and self-promotional skills. So, work with your instructors to assess, tailor, and update your unique self-portrait. You'll be better prepared for that next opportunity, whether it be applying for internships, jobs, and training now, or seeking grants and salary increases later on.

A digital career portfolio reflects how you view yourself, how you want others to perceive you, and where you would like to head. It's your story to discover and tell: do both with intention and purpose. It's never too early.



## i n a nutshell:

Get a head start: benefits of a digital career portfolio are wide-ranging:

- **Encourage self-reflection and discovery; provide a broader perspective of skill sets and cultivation of life goals**
- **Aid in developing transferable skills for better job search outcomes**
- **Offer diverse applications; serve as alternative means of learning and communication**
- **Foster forward thinking and future self-promotion**
- **Evolve with their owners as dynamic portraits rather than static archives**

Own your story. Your classroom-sourced or college-fostered College Central career portfolio is a versatile, ever-evolving ambassador and on-going mirror of your personal growth and professional qualifications.