

# Creating a Professional Portfolio

## Traditional, online, or both?

- **Traditional** portfolios contain hard copies of your samples.
- **Online** portfolios contain electronic copies of your samples (HTML files, Windows help files, PDF files, etc.). They can be delivered via CD-ROM, Web site, laptop, email, etc.
- You can use either one or both in an interview, depending on the formats of your samples, the job you are applying for, the industry you plan to work in, and your personal preference.

## Portfolio styles

- **Comprehensive** portfolio— Contains a representative sampling of your work. Shows how wide your experience is.
- **Targeted** portfolio — Contains samples that focus on a particular subject or application (such as software documentation, web site design, or medical writing). Shows the depth of your experience in that area.
- **“Send ahead”** or **“Leave behind”** portfolios — Contain copies of your samples that can be sent ahead of your interview or left behind afterwards if your interviewer requests copies of your work. (Do not send your originals — you might not get them back!) It’s a good idea to take one of these to an interview even if samples weren’t specifically requested. Can be customized.

## Creating and updating your portfolio

- Constantly evaluate your work — is this a good sample for my portfolio?
- Save copies of your work as it’s completed — both hard copy and online (to avoid “cobwebs”).
- Ask your manager or client’s permission to include samples in your professional portfolio.
- Decide which kinds of portfolios to maintain.

## Appearance

- Traditional — Attractive, high-quality binder; sheet lifters; tabs; cover page for each sample.
- CD-ROM — Labels, jewel case. Test the autorun file on several systems to make sure it works. Check all files and links!
- Web site — Clean, easy to read, and logically organized. Check links!
- “Send ahead” or “leave behind” — Folder, resume/contact information, CD-ROM and/or high-quality photocopies

## Presenting your portfolio

- Control how your portfolio is presented during an interview. Focus on samples that are best suited for the position.
- Annotate your items. Include a cover page with a short explanation of each sample to guide you and your interviewer.

## Things to include in a portfolio

- Resume
- Business card
- Sample chapters and appendices
- Online help files
- Web pages (URLs, links, or actual HTML files)
- Online documents (PDF files)
- Help sheets
- Short books. (Always use excerpts from long books.)
- Reports
- Brochures
- Design documents
- “Before and after” samples (chapter, table of contents, web sites, etc.)
- Newsletters
- Articles
- Technical drawings
- Graphic design samples
- Index
- Picture of documentation set (especially if you were involved in its design)
- Use your imagination!

## What if I don't have samples?

- Use “before and after” samples if you have been updating the work of others.
- Use school papers, reports, etc. if appropriate.
- Volunteer to create a web site, newsletter, or brochure for a group you are involved with — church, hobby, STC, etc.
- Write newsletter articles. (Blue Pencil is always on the lookout!)
- Create your own web site.
- Document something (freeware or open source applications, help sheets).

## What if I can't get permission?

- Negotiate. Ask about alternative samples — perhaps something else you wrote can be used instead. If confidential or proprietary material is involved, find out whether you can change or remove the details.
- Don't include anything that you have been denied permission to use.
- Create a mock sample similar to the ones you aren't allowed to use. (Tell interviewers that you didn't have permission to use the real thing.)
- See “What if I don't have samples?” for more ideas.