

YOUR PORTFOLIO

Over the next four to five years, you will participate in many learning experiences, take all kinds of classes and make many new friendships. During those years, you will have opportunities to record those experiences in several formats: classroom assignments, journals, maybe even your name in the newspaper. All of these documents will become more and more important to you as you apply for that first job or admission to college.

Some students keep their experience records in a shoebox. Some make scrapbooks. Some develop filing systems. Some display their records proudly on the refrigerator door (for years). Others remember seeing them once in the bottom of their locker, and it's entirely possible that the dog really did eat it!

Let's get organized . . . now! You may think it's too early, but all you've done to get ready and get set are important as you get going. You may already have a system you like or perhaps one of your classes requires you to keep a notebook. We're suggesting a portfolio. A portfolio is an organized collection of photographs, documents and records of your experiences.

There is no single, magic formula for the perfect portfolio. The most important thing is that you keep one! Actually, the design can be up to you. Many students use a three-ring binder with dividers. Others use file folders. Some may even use the Internet to log their experiences. But trust us, the refrigerator door just won't cut it!

PORTFOLIO TOP 10 REALLY GOOD IDEAS

There are no hard and fast rules for building and keeping a portfolio; however, this top ten list of really good ideas for portfolios might help.

10. It's YOUR portfolio (Translation: you are in charge of putting the thing together.)
9. Rubber cement is better than tape or glue if you need to attach something.
8. We like clear, plastic sheet protectors, especially if you are using a three-ring binder. (Please do not poke holes in your documents!)
7. Put a date and a source on every document.
6. Keep it flexible. Design your system to that you can easily pull out one page or one section as needed.
5. Update your portfolio regularly. As soon as you get a new document or photograph, put it in the appropriate section.
4. Review your portfolio once a year. Use your birthday; it will be easy to remember.
3. Add a Table of Contents to your portfolio. A Table of Contents makes it easier to find out what you need.
2. Keep your portfolio in a safe place. (The back of the car or the bottom of your locker are NOT safe places.)

And the #1 portfolio tip . . .

1. Show off your portfolio! Be sure teachers, parents and friends are aware of your work.

Patting Your Portfolio Together

The purpose of your portfolio is to showcase your experiences. You want others to look at your portfolio and get a picture of who you are, what you have done and what you can do. Your portfolio can be as creative as you want it to be. It just needs to work for you.

If you are just beginning your portfolio, you may want to set it up like this.

Title Page: Personal Identification Page

You know the drill here. List your name, address, etc.

Section I: Cover Letter

Write a letter of introduction that tells a teacher or counselor about you. What are your interests? What are your long-term goals? What kinds of hobbies do you have?

Section II: Academics

This section outlines your academic experiences. List all the courses you are taking and include your report cards. We're not kidding! This would be a good place to keep TAAS scores or other test scores, some writing that you are proud of and any certificates that indicate honor roll, spelling or geography bee winner, citizenship award, readathon, math awards. You get the picture.

Section III: Career

Keep any career information that interests you here. Have you done any career "shadowing" (observing at a work site)? Have you taken any career field trips? Have you taken any career interest tests? Any information that you collect related to careers after high school or college goes in this section. You may want to put your career concentration choice here.

Section IV: Community Service

Community service includes all the things that you volunteer to do to help the community. Have you ever volunteered to pick up trash at a local park, to mow the city baseball diamond or to reshelve books at the community library? These are all examples of community service. You might also want to keep any letters of appreciation from community leaders in this section.

Section V: Extra Curricular

Keep all your records and certificates from music, sports and academic competitions in this section. If you are in Scouting or 4-H (or similar organization), this is a good place to keep a record of your awards and projects. Remember, photographs work well in a portfolio.

Section VI: After High School

You already may be thinking about a certain college or branch of military service. You may be considering that first job. Information you collect about any of these choices is stored in this section. Be sure to update this section regularly.

Section VII: References

Although it's much too early for you to begin collecting formal letters of reference, you do need to keep notes and letters from teachers, coaches, or any others who are familiar with you and what you can do.

Section VIII: Miscellaneous

This may be your favorite section! Use the miscellaneous section to keep photos, documents, addresses, phone numbers, business cards . . . basically anything that is important to you.