

Instructional Design Portfolio Toolkit



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Portfolio FAQs & Resources

Do I really need a portfolio?

If your job (or ideal position) involves designing and developing learning experiences, you probably need a portfolio. See these resources for more information:

- [7 Reasons You Need an Instructional Design Portfolio](#) by Christopher Pappas (blog)
- [Are Instructional Design Portfolios Becoming Essential?](#) by Luke Hobson (blog)
- [Do You Really Need an Instructional Design Portfolio?](#) with Tim Slade (video)

What should my portfolio include?

Focus on highlighting the types of projects you want to do more of, rather than trying to showcase everything you've done. Think, "quality over quantity." See these resources for more advice:

- [5 Things to Include in Your E-Learning Portfolio](#) by E-Learning Heroes (blog)
- [30+ Ideas for eLearning Portfolio Samples](#) by Christy Tucker (blog)
- [What to Include in your eLearning Portfolio](#) with Tim Slade (video)

How do I structure my portfolio?

Check out these resources for general portfolio building advice and refer to the [Design Worksheets](#) included in this toolkit.

- [How to Build an Instructional Design Portfolio](#) by Connie Malamed (blog)
- [How to Write Instructional Design Case Studies for Your Portfolio](#) by Connie Malamed (blog)
- [How to Build an eLearning Portfolio](#) by Tim Slade (blog)
- [Instructional Design Portfolio Resources](#) by Christy Tucker (blog)

Where can I go for design inspiration?

Check out these portfolio examples:

- [Tim Slade's Must-See eLearning Portfolio Examples](#)
- [eLearningArt eLearning and Instructional Design Portfolio Examples](#)
- [AIDA Student Examples](#)
- [IDOL Academy Student Examples](#)
- [Devlin Peck's Portfolio Showcase](#)

What if I don't have ID experience?

No worries! You can still develop an amazing portfolio. See this advice:

- [How to Get Instructional Design Experience to Build Your Portfolio](#) by Kayleen Holt (blog)
- [Instructional Design Experience Before Your First Job](#) by Christy Tucker (blog)
- [How to Get an Instructional Design Job with No Experience](#) with Devlin Peck (video)
- [Volunteering: ID Experience Through Non-profits](#) from IDOL Courses (blog)

Where to find volunteer opportunities:

- [Designers for Learning](#)
- [Idealist](#)
- [Rumie](#)
- [Volunteer Match](#)

What if I can't share my work publicly?

See if you are allowed to share the work if you remove the organization's branding. If not, create something new using these challenges and ideas:

- [Articulate e-Learning Heroes Community](#)
- [Tim Slade's eLearning Designers Academy Challenges](#)
- [Freelance Instructional Designers, eLearning Developers, & LXDs Facebook Group](#) (Go to Guides > Portfolio Challenges)
- [Go Design Something](#)

What tools should I use to create my work samples?

Start by determining what kind of job you want, and then read job descriptions and make note of any specific tools they require.

The most commonly used tools might be cost-prohibitive for you to purchase, but they offer free trials:

- [Articulate 360](#) (Storyline/Rise—eLearning authoring)
- [Captivate](#) (eLearning authoring)
- [Camtasia](#) (video creation/editing)
- [Vyond](#) (animated video creation)

In addition, you could explore free tools such as these:

- [7Taps](#)
- [Adapt](#)
- [H5P](#)
- [iSpring Free](#)
- [SC Training's Creator Tool](#) (formerly EdApp)
- [Twine](#) (interactive branching stories)
- [Udutu](#)

What tools can I use to build my portfolio?

You can use any tool that lets you present a collection of work samples—for example, a PDF, PowerPoint, Google Doc, or Articulate Rise course.

If you want to build a website, refer to the [Portfolio Website Builder Tools](#) table in this toolkit. Here are some additional resources that focus on a variety of tools:

- [How to Pick the Right Website Tool to Build Your eLearning Portfolio](#) with Tim Slade (video)
- [How to Build Your eLearning & Instructional Design Portfolio in Google Sites](#) with Tim Slade (video)
- [Building Your Instructional Design Portfolio? Watch This First!](#) with Kimberly Goh (video)
- [Create an Amazon S3 Account to Share Courses for Free](#) by Tom Kuhlman (blog)
- [Why You Need an Instructional Design Portfolio and How to Develop One](#) by Dianne Hope (blog) – focuses on Wordpress development
- [How to Share eLearning Courses Outside an LMS](#) with Learning Dojo (video)
- [A Guide to Creating Your PDF Portfolio](#) from Creative Lives in Progress

How can I make a good impression with my portfolio?

Avoid these common portfolio mistakes:

- [Are You Making These Portfolio Mistakes?](#) by Kayleen Holt (blog)
- [eLearning Portfolio Mistakes to Avoid](#) with Tim Slade (video)
- [Mistakes to Avoid in Your Instructional Design Portfolio](#) with Vanessa Alzate (blog)
- [Red Flags and Not-So-Obvious Tips on Creating an Instructional Design Portfolio](#) by Eugene Bloom (blog)
- [Top 5 Instructional Design Portfolio Mistakes](#) with Devlin Peck (video)

How can I get feedback on my portfolio?

Join a supportive community and ask for feedback. Here are some groups to get you started:

- [The eLearning Designer's Community](#)
- [Teaching: A Path to L&D Community](#)
- [eLearning Industry's Instructional Designer Facebook Group](#)
- [The Training, Learning, and Development Community Slack Group](#)
- [Devlin Peck's ID Community](#)
- [Inclusive Learning Experience Design Facebook Group](#)

How often should I update my portfolio?

There's no one-size-fits-all answer to this one. The short answer is, "as often as necessary." Ensure that it's not outdated and it represents the work you want to be doing more of in the future.

Here is some additional advice:

[Revamp Your eLearning Portfolio: Points to Consider](#) by Satyabrata Das

Where can I learn more?

- [Building Your eLearning & Instructional Design Portfolio](#) with Tim Slade (video)
- [How to Design Instructional Design Portfolios](#) with Luke Hobson (podcast)
- [Instructional Design Portfolio Resources](#) by Christy Tucker (blog)

Design Worksheets

These worksheets will help you design your portfolio, walking you through the process step by step.

Step 1: Visualize your dream job.

What kind of organization do you want to work for? Choose as many as you like.

- Private sector company
- Nonprofit organization
- Higher education institution
- Primary/secondary school system
- eLearning/training development agency
- Freelance/self
- Other: _____

What type(s) of work do you want to continue or start doing?

- eLearning development
- Instructor-led training development
- Graphic design
- Video production/editing
- LMS administration
- Other: _____

Review at least five job descriptions that match your dream job (at least in part).

What tools are mentioned?

What design/development tasks and skills are mentioned?

Step 2: Select (or create) your sample projects.

What projects are you most proud of and would like to do more of?

Which projects most closely match your dream job's required tools, tasks, and skills?

What gaps can you identify? What might you need to create for your dream job?

Choose three to five samples to include. (You can include more if you like.)

Which parts of each sample do you want to highlight? (You don't have to include the entire course.)

Step 3: Plan your design.

Review portfolios for design inspiration. (Refer to the [FAQs](#) section for links.) Take notes about what you like and might want to include in yours.

Sketch or storyboard what you want your portfolio to look like. Use a separate page, whiteboard, or software tool.

How will you organize the information?

- Outline
- Story/case studies
- Other: _____

Complete the following worksheets for each work sample to begin generating the copy for your portfolio.

If you need to create work samples, do that before proceeding to step 4.

Note: For the following worksheets, if you are creating samples for a fictitious client as part of a portfolio challenge, don't list a client name. This could give a false impression. Simply describe the challenge or problem (the brief) and how you approached it.

Sample 1

Project name: _____

Client: _____

What was the challenge or problem?

How did you solve the problem?

What process did you use to come to this solution?

What tools did you use?

What strategies did you use?

Sample 2

Project name: _____

Client: _____

What was the challenge or problem?

How did you solve the problem?

What process did you use to come to this solution?

What tools did you use?

What strategies did you use?

Sample 3

Project name: _____

Client: _____

What was the challenge or problem?

How did you solve the problem?

What process did you use to come to this solution?

What tools did you use?

What strategies did you use?

Sample 4

Project name: _____

Client: _____

What was the challenge or problem?

How did you solve the problem?

What process did you use to come to this solution?

What tools did you use?

What strategies did you use?

Sample 5

Project name: _____

Client: _____

What was the challenge or problem?

How did you solve the problem?

What process did you use to come to this solution?

What tools did you use?

What strategies did you use?

Step 4: Choose a tool.

Determine whether you need a website or want to develop your portfolio using an alternate tool.

- Website
- PDF
- PowerPoint (or similar)
- Other: _____

Not sure? Consider these questions:

- Which skills are most valued in your dream job? Web development? Proficiency with Adobe Acrobat? Microsoft Office? Articulate Rise?
- Are you, or do you want to be, a freelancer? (If so, you need a website.)
- If you do not develop a website, how will you share your portfolio? (Email? Google Drive? Dropbox? Other?)

If you want to build a website, review the [Portfolio Website Builder Tools](#) table in this toolkit to help you choose a site building tool (although you are not limited to these). Consider your priorities:

- Do you need a free tool?
- Do you need a tool that's easy to use?
- Do you need a tool with robust capabilities?
- What will you need to accomplish with your website? Will you need additional pages and features beyond your portfolio? (e.g., blog, forms, shop)

After reviewing the table, list a few tools you'd like to explore further.

It's a good idea to read some reviews and watch a few tutorials before making your final decision. Also see the [FAQs section](#) of this toolkit.

When you've chosen your tool, list it here:

Step 5: Build it!

Now that you've selected your samples, created your design, and chosen a tool, it's time to build your portfolio! Here's a checklist of components to include.

- Headline/tag line
- Photo of yourself (optional)*
- "About Me" section
- Resume or summary of skills and experience (can be in "About Me")
- Contact information or form**
- LinkedIn and/or other social media links
- 3 to 5 work samples
- Narrative to accompany the work samples
- Other information if needed (certifications, awards, publications, etc.)
- Testimonials, clients, or references (optional)

*Many employers find a photo to be helpful for building a personal connection with a candidate. However, candidates from systemically excluded/marginalized populations sometimes choose not to include a photo due to concerns about potential discrimination.

**Use caution when posting your personal information online. If you'd like, you can get a free [Google Voice](#) number. Or you can send your contact details via email or another method rather than posting them publicly.

Accessibility Tips

- Include alternative text for images.
- Use colors with [sufficient contrast](#).
- Add captions to any videos.
- Use headings (H1, H2, etc.) to create a hierarchy.
- Do not autoplay audio or video (or provide a way for users to pause it).

Step 6: Test it.

After you build your portfolio, try it out as a user.

- Do all links work as expected?
- Is the portfolio easy to navigate?
- Is the portfolio free of typos or other errors? Be sure to proofread your work samples!
- Are the images high quality, not stretched or pixelated?
- Do the images load quickly?
- Will your project descriptions make sense to others? Do they clearly show how you used sound instructional design theory and processes to solve a problem?
- Does the portfolio display properly on a mobile phone and tablet?

After doing this initial review, ask others for feedback! See the [FAQs section](#) of this document for supportive communities you can ask.

Portfolio Website Builder Tools

Tool	Price	Pros	Cons
<u>Canva</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Pro: \$120/year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free version • Very easy to use • Templates available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to one page • Must upgrade to use a custom domain
<u>Carrd</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Pro Lite: \$9/year • Pro Standard: \$19/year • Pro Plus: \$49/year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and low-cost plans • Very easy to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to one page • Limited features with the free and Pro Lite plans • Must upgrade to use a custom domain
<u>Duda</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic: \$19/month • Team: \$29/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use • Unlimited storage, bandwidth, and form submissions • Up to 1000 pages • AWS hosting included • Templates available • Blogging capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited customization • Blogging features are limited
<u>Google Sites</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Very easy to use • Templates available • Can connect a custom domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not well suited for shopping or membership sites • Limited free templates • Limited customization
<u>Squarespace</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal: \$16/month • Business: \$23/month • Commerce: \$28/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use • Free domain for one year • Templates available • App for mobile edits • Free logo maker • Blogging capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No free version (but a free trial is available)
<u>Webflow</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Basic: \$14/month • CMS: \$23/month • Business: \$39/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customizable • Includes forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan limited to 2 pages • Form submissions and traffic are limited • Must upgrade to use a custom domain

Tool	Price	Pros	Cons
Weebly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Personal: \$10/month • Professional: \$12/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use • Templates available • All plans include eCommerce features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must upgrade to use a custom domain • Free & personal plans contain ads
Wix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Light: \$17/month • Core: \$29/month • Business: \$36/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use • Templates available • Free domain for one year with any paid plan • Blogging capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must upgrade to use a custom domain and remove Wix ads • Limited storage space (2 GB in cheapest plan) • Limited customization
Wordpress.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Starter: \$4/month • Explorer: \$8/month • Creator: \$25/month • Entrepreneur: \$45/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customizable • Robust capabilities • Unlimited bandwidth • Plugins available for easier building and other capabilities (with paid plans) • Blogging capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some learning curve • Free, Starter, and Explorer plans require separate hosting • Storage with free plan is limited to 1 GB • Must upgrade to use a custom domain
Wordpress.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above but some features are dependent on the host provider • Offers full control and advanced customization and scalability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires separate hosting • Technical skills needed
Yola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Bronze: \$6/month • Silver: \$14/month • Gold: \$26/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use • Templates available • Includes automatic site backups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan limited to 2 pages • Limited storage unless you upgrade to Gold • Contains ads • Must upgrade to use a custom domain

Disclaimers:

- Most plans with “monthly” prices listed are billed annually
- A custom domain, if desired, is an extra cost with any of these tools. Some tools offer free hosting with a branded domain (e.g., my.canva.site or webflow.io).
- This list is not all-inclusive; some tools may have features not listed here. The information is correct as of June 5, 2024.