

What is an Art Portfolio?

Many colleges and universities encourage students to submit an art portfolio as part of their application process. Art portfolios can focus on music, theater, dance, film or the visual arts. The portfolio is a way of sharing more of your work with the admissions committee. For the Common Application there is a specific art portfolio submission form, which you should use to complete the process for all Common Application schools, which asks you to set up a specific type of website. Some non-common application schools use their own forms which include an optional art portfolio section. If a school does not have a specific way to submit your portfolio, you can always include the information about your art portfolio in the section for “additional information.”

Who should complete an Art Portfolio?

Anyone who is specifically applying to college to major in the arts should absolutely complete the art portfolio – in his/her area of intended study. However, students who do not intend to major in an art-related field should also consider submitting an art portfolio. The time, energy, years and countless hours spent on artistic work, especially if a high level of competence has been reached, communicates a great deal about a student’s work ethic and perseverance to the admissions staff and can strengthen an application to a non-arts related field.

What exactly goes into an Art Portfolio?

Students should include photographs and video clips of their work. Ideally you include your best work with a wide enough variety that the admissions department can get a sense of your work. For instance, for a drama portfolio you might include video clips from a school performance, a community performance and one to two pieces performed specifically for the portfolio. Some students include multiple arts in their portfolio, but this is only recommended if the student is not applying for a specific art-focused major. For instance, a student hoping to major in music should create a detailed and complete music portfolio and not spend a great deal of time including artwork and acting. However, a student who is applying for the life sciences and using the art portfolio just to add to their complete picture that the admissions department sees could include visual art, music and performance material.

How do I format my Art Portfolio?

More universities now expect the art portfolio as a website, although a few will still accept a CD, or even the actual physical work. The website is usually the best option for a number of reasons: first, it is most easily accessible by the admissions team; second, it can be updated or changed as the admissions season moves on (whereas a mailed in CD cannot be and any typo is in it forever), and third, it’s actually easier to do because of available tools. Also, with almost all college applications being submitted electronically, a separately mailed in CD can easily be lost and never considered.

If you are submitting to the Common Application you will need to use the tools that they provide. If you are submitting to other schools you will need to choose an easy-to-use “Build Your Own Website” provider. Some of these providers are free, but you will have the most control (including no ads) if you pay a small amount to control the space. Some examples of providers that students have recently worked with include: <http://virb.com/>, <http://www.weebly.com/#home>, and <http://www.wix.com/>. These website providers include templates that you

can use to help you format your website. You should consider ease of navigation as the primary concern; the admissions representatives need to be able to find things quickly.

Many students include a pdf of their résumé on their site as well. The résumé for a student applying for an arts major will list all of their work in that field, and for someone applying more generally may also include no art related activities and work, just be a general resume.

When you include your website link in your application make sure to include the full website name, not a shortened version. The shortened versions provided by bitly.com or tinyURL are time limited and may not link to your portfolio by the time the admissions representatives get around to looking at it.

Once your website is up, you should link to it at least weekly to ensure that it is still working well and doesn't need any maintenance. Also, make sure that you pay to cover it through the full college application time period so that admissions reps do not find a dead website.

Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about the art portfolio, please speak with Siân Owen-Cruise, sowen-cruise@steinerschool.org.