

Preparing an Art and Design Portfolio for Interview

To get started:

- Research carefully and record the art portfolio requirements for a number of courses that interest you.
- Look at recent student art portfolio examples to gain a visual understanding of what is expected.
- Buy an A2 portfolio

What to find out:

- Application and Portfolio due date/s.
- Size and format of work required
Whether only finished pieces are expected, or whether sketchbooks, development and process work are also welcome. Some require only finished pieces, others love to see development work as well). Best bet is to construct your portfolio with clear, large pieces that can be discussed with enthusiasm.
- Whether submissions are digital, hardcopy reproductions or original artwork.
If copies of work must be sent in, find out whether these should be colour photocopies, slides or photographs etc. Find out whether there are specific criteria for time based media (animation/moving image/video/interactive website design, file size, compression, email address etc and so on).
- Whether supplementary material is needed.
For example, a personal statement or written essay (more on this soon). Art schools typically have academic requirements set by the university or college as a whole, which may require a separate application form and a different deadline. You may also be asked to submit images of work or objects that have influenced your work or teacher recommendations, testimonials or reports (only include these if specifically requested).

What to include:

- Plan your art portfolio, aiming to demonstrate a range of artistic skill and experiences, creative ideas/originality and passion/commitment
- Emphasise observational drawing
An observational drawing is a realistic representation of an object or scene that has been viewed directly in real life, as opposed to something that has been imagined or drawn from a photograph. This not as important for pure Graphic Design courses, but *essential* for illustration, fine art, graphic communication. Life drawing classes are available in Shrewsbury, otherwise draw extensively and loosely in your sketchbook.
“Create original work from direct observation. This is hands down the number one, absolutely essential thing to do that many students fail to do. Just doing this one directive will put you light years ahead of other students.” Manchester Uni Course Director
- Explore a range of subject matter – create artefacts about lots of interesting things.
It is important to include work that you have done off your own back. It proves you want to succeed.
- From your studies, choose 4 or 5 projects and include quality selections of:
Sketchbooks • sketchbooks • contact sheets • observational drawings • character and setting design and development • scamping / thumbnails • storyboards or dummies of your own ideas • page drafting • emulations • typography designs • work in progress • final pieces • sketchbooks • sketchbooks

“Do not copy your work from photographs or other sources. This means no fan art, no anime, no manga, and nothing from another artist’s work unless linked to a project. College tutors have seen hundreds, probably thousands of images from student portfolios. They are well trained to quickly spot artworks that have been copied from photographs or that have been lifted from other resources.

It is never, ever good to have fan art in any portfolio. By fan art, I mean drawings of celebrities and other characters that are not your own. That’s basically the kiss of death, and will immediately cause people to see you as nothing more than a hobbyist.” Lincoln Uni Course Tutor