Portfolio Websites

Overview

Purpose of a Portfolio Website

A portfolio website is a personal online space that showcases your work, skills, and professional identity. Unlike a résumé or CV, a portfolio provides a dynamic and visually engaging way to present projects, research, writing samples, and other accomplishments. It also serves as a central hub for networking, making it easier for potential employers, collaborators, or academic institutions to find and learn about you.

Why Grad Students Should Have One

For graduate students, a portfolio website can be especially valuable for:

- **Showcasing Research & Publications** — A dedicated space to share academic work, articles, or conference presentations.
- **Highlighting Projects & Skills** — Whether it's coding, design, data analysis, or writing, a portfolio helps demonstrate capabilities beyond a traditional CV.
- **Networking & Career Opportunities** — Having an online presence makes it easier for recruiters, advisors, and peers to discover and connect with you.
- **Grant & Fellowship Applications** — A professional website adds credibility and provides easy access to your work.
- **Personal Branding** — Allows you to present your work in your own style and control how you are perceived online.

Overview of Different Approaches Based on Skill Level & Budget

There are multiple ways to create a portfolio, depending on technical experience and cost considerations:

- No Coding Experience (Beginner-Friendly) — Website builders like Wix, Squarespace, or Google Sites offer easy drag-and-drop design tools. These are great for those who want a professional-looking site with minimal effort but may have limited customization.

- Some Coding Experience (Intermediate) — Platforms like WordPress.org, Webflow, and Bootstrap templates allow for greater flexibility while still offering pre-built components. These options require a bit of HTML/CSS knowledge but give more control over design and functionality.
- Comfortable with Coding (Advanced) — Self-hosted or custom-built sites using GitHub Pages, Jekyll, or frameworks like Next.js offer full creative control and scalability. These require web development skills but allow for completely custom designs and features.

Budget-wise, costs can range from free (using platforms like GitHub Pages or Google Sites) to around $10-$20 per month for hosting and premium site builders. Choosing the right approach depends on your technical comfort level, customization needs, and long-term goals.

Options to Build a Website

No Coding Experience | Beginner-Friendly Options

Free or Low-Cost Options
- **Wix** (Free with Wix branding, paid plans for custom domain)
- **WordPress.com** (Free basic sites, paid for custom domain and extra features)
- **Google Sites** (Completely free, but limited customization)

Premium Options
- **Squarespace** ($16+/month, polished templates, built-in hosting)
- **Webflow** (Free basic plan, paid for custom domain & advanced features)

Some Coding Experience | HTML/CSS Basics

Free or Low-Cost Options
- **WordPress.org** (Free, but requires hosting ~$3-$10/month)
- **Carrd** (Simple, one-page portfolios, $19/year for Pro)
- **Bootstrap-based templates** (Free, minimal customization required)

Premium Options
- **Webflow** (Advanced customization with visual coding, $12-$23/month)
- **Ghost CMS** (Self-hosted, open-source; managed hosting ~$9/month)

Comfortable with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript

Free or Low-Cost Options

- **GitHub Pages + Jekyll** (Free hosting, static site, markdown-based)
- **Netlify or Vercel** (Free hosting for static sites)
- **WordPress.org** with custom theme (Requires hosting)

Premium Options

- **Custom-built React/Next.js site** (Hosting on Vercel or Firebase)
- **Paid hosting providers** (Bluehost, SiteGround, ~$3-$10/month)

Additional Resources

Website Builders (No Coding Required)
- Wix – Drag-and-drop builder with free and paid plans
- Squarespace – Polished templates with built-in hosting
- Webflow – Visual website design with advanced customization
- WordPress.com – Hosted WordPress solution with limited customization

Hosting Services
Free Hosting for Static Sites
- GitHub Pages – Best for developers using Jekyll or HTML/CSS
- Netlify – Great for hosting static sites and JAMstack apps
- Vercel – Optimized for Next.js and React apps
Paid Hosting (For More Control & Features)
- SiteGround – Great for WordPress hosting (~$3.99+/mo)
- Bluehost – Affordable and beginner-friendly (~$2.95+/mo)
- Namecheap Hosting – Budget-friendly hosting options

Learning & Tutorials
- freeCodeCamp – Web development tutorials
- MDN Web Docs – HTML, CSS, and JavaScript documentation
- CSS-Tricks – Web design and frontend development tips

Templates & Themes
Bootstrap Templates (For Basic Coding Knowledge)
- Start Bootstrap – Free & premium templates
- BootstrapMade – Responsive portfolio themes
- Creative Tim – Modern UI kits and templates
WordPress Themes (For WordPress.org Users)
- Astra – Lightweight and customizable theme
- OceanWP – Free theme with pro add-ons
- Envato ThemeForest – Premium WordPress themes

Domain Name Registration
- Namecheap – Affordable domain registration
- Google Domains via Squarespace
- Hover – Simple domain management with email forwarding