Building Your Code Portfolio

What is a portfolio?

Designers, writers, and other artists commonly maintain some sort of portfolio to showcase the work they have done in the past. Your portfolio is used to prove competency when you are looking for work. In recent years, Software Developers have started building portfolios of code samples as well.

Github in particular has taken progressive steps to making it easier for developers to build and maintain code portfolios. In this course, we introduced you to Github and the concept of pushing and pulling materials from a Github repository. The beauty of a public repository on Github is that employers can view your coding style and relevant snippets without having to download, compile, and run your work.

Placing a link to your Github public repository in your cover letter or on your resume is how you make an employer aware of your portfolio.

Q: Do I have to have a portfolio?

No! A code portfolio is not necessary, and many professionals do not have them at all. A code portfolio however can give potential employers a view into what your coding style is like and some of the frameworks you are familiar with.

You will find that some employers will look at your portfolio, other will appreciate that you have one but not have enough time to go through it, and others won't care at all. We tend to see a portfolio as icing on the cake- it will not be a primary factor of your employability.

Q: What can I put in my portfolio?

Most of the code that you work on for your employers will be proprietary in nature and it often a violation of your employment contract to put code samples you did as work for hire into your portfolio. So always be sure to check with your employer before doing that. This is the main reason why many experienced professionals do not have a code portfolio.

Most code portfolios consist of snippets or sample projects that the developer has worked on in their own time or freelance/open source project work that they have permission to showcase.

If an employer looks at your portfolio it is meant to start a conversation with you about your code.

Q: Wait, you said snippets… don't I need a full working application?

Nope. Most organizations have IT security policies that prohibit staff from downloading and executing code from the internet. If you want to demonstrate working code to an employer your only good option is to set up a personal website with a live demo section for them to peruse. That however, is quite different than a code portfolio.

Q: What should I choose to put in my Guild portfolio?

For the purpose of your Guild portfolio, you should select some lab exercises or snippets (for example a repository class you wrote) that have things going on in them that you would be interested in talking about. If your goal is more of a front end programmer, choose some interesting HTML or controller code, and if you are a back end programmer pick some interesting SQL scripts or business logic code.

You have been exposed to hundreds of exercises, dozens of labs, code katas, and mastery projects in this program. Everyone will pick different things to put into their code portfolio, since the end goal is to have that conversation about your code. It is up to you to decide what things you have worked on that you want to show bits of. Some people even choose to put their entire mastery project in their portfolio!

If you are worried about whether a piece of code you want to showcase is clean and well done, speak to one of the instructors about it and they will be happy to provide feedback!