

CREATIVE APPLICATION GUIDE

A step-by-step guide to help you create a great CV and portfolio for creative roles

WHERE TO FIND US

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Creative Application Guide

This guide aims to support you in developing creative CV and portfolio. Whether this is your first time putting together an application for the creative industries or whether you simply need some inspiration, this guide is for you. You can also book a careers or placement appointment to discuss your CV, cover letter or portfolio. Find out more about the types of appointments and how to book on [MyNapier](#).

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Creative CV Guide

What is a creative CV?

- A creative CV contains similar information to a traditional CV but can enable you to illustrate your creative skills within the CV design.
- Creative CVs can be used in various industries, such as Interior or Graphic Design, VFX, Web Design, Publishing, Marketing, and Screen Industries.



Should I use a Creative CV?

- Conduct research into the industry and organisation you're applying to first, as not all employers will welcome a creative application.
- Focus on getting the content right and tailored to the role before moving to the creative design elements.
- Keep your design simple to ensure it does not detract from your skills and experience.
- Some employers use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) which check your CV against the job advert. Some ATS may reject a creative CV for formatting reasons, including the use of columns. Our main CV guide provides more details on ATS [here](#).
- This guide will help you develop the basic elements of your CV and provide tips to develop a more creative approach.

CV Length

Creative CVs are usually one page. If using two pages, ensure the most important information is on the top half of page one.

Structuring your CV

- A CV is unique to each individual and the structure will depend on your experience. If you are applying for an advertised vacancy, use the job description to identify the knowledge, skills and experience required.
- Decide what information will be most relevant to the employer and include these sections first.

Creative CV Guide

CV Sections

The main sections in a typical CV are:

1. Contact Details
2. Personal Profile
3. Education/Qualifications
4. Skills
5. Relevant Experience
6. Additional Experience
7. Interests



This guide will focus on the sections 1-5 above.

Contact Details

Contact details should be near the top of your CV. Include: name, mobile, email address, external links to your work.

External Links

Including links to a portfolio or website in your CV is a great way to direct potential placement hosts or employers to examples of your work and to demonstrate your skill set.

You can include links under your contact details or they can be added as individual projects as part of your work history or employment e.g.,

Freelance Photographer, [Project Title](#) (dates)
Description of Content

Creative CV Guide

External Links

A portfolio doesn't just have to be in the form of a website. You can use alternative or additional ways of demonstrating your work:



Personal Blog

A personal blog can be a good approach for Journalism or Publishing students to demonstrate writing style and interests without needing to have work professionally published.

Social Media

Platforms including **Instagram** and **X** (formerly **Twitter**) are useful ways to craft brief, engaging posts of your creative work. Ensure you set up a professional account so potential employers are viewing appropriate content.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn can help you connect with other creative professionals or alumni, engage with industry groups, and share your projects via images, videos or other content.

Video Hosting Platforms

Vimeo or **YouTube** are accessible options for hosting content for Film, TV and Photography students as well as those interested in motion graphics.

Creative CV Guide

Personal Profile

This can also be called "About Me" or "Professional Summary".

It is not mandatory, but an engaging introduction can encourage the employer to read more. Highlight one or two key skills relevant to the role and your career aspirations.



Example:

BA Hons Film graduate with a passion for post-production and visual storytelling. Skilled in Adobe Premiere Pro and DaVinci Resolve, with hands-on editing experience from an internship at ABC Productions, contributing to short-form content and promotional videos. Seeking assistant editing position in documentary film industry.

Education

Add this in reverse chronological history. Include course, institution and dates. Show relevant modules and projects. If you are short on space, do not include high school subjects. Example:

BDes (Hons) Product Design, Edinburgh Napier University, 2021 - 2025
Award 2:1

Key modules include: Module A, Module B, Module C

- Final project details

Granton High School
3 x Highers (A,B, B)

2015 - 2021

Creative CV Guide

Skills

Most creative industries require a prominent skills section. If you have limited relevant industry experience, you can still include the skills you have developed in your degree or elsewhere.



Separating your skills into three separate categories can be a good way of presenting this:

Technical skills: Add specialist skills developed as part of your degree work. These could highlight industry software, knowledge of practical skills, or use of specialist equipment.

Creative skills: Event planning, copywriting and brand development are all examples of more general skills that are desirable in a creative field.

Transferable skills: These are things like team work, communication and time management and are valued by employers in any industry. Provide evidence on your CV on where or how you developed these transferable skills

Creative CV Guide

Relevant Experience

- Include paid and voluntary experience related to your industry. Any relevant work experience should be in a prominent position on your CV.
- Use the job description or brief for your placement or job role to see what skills to evidence.
- If you don't have experience working in the field your degree is based in, consider any other areas in which you've used the creative skills from your degree, such as for university projects, clubs or societies, or self-initiated projects.
- Interested in gaining relevant experience? Find out if your programme has a placement on your course page [here](#)



Other Work Experience

This can include previous part or full-time roles or volunteering that are outside of the creative industries. Focus on the transferable skills developed rather than the duties or details of the role.

For example, you might have a part-time role in retail or hospitality that demonstrates your communication, teamwork and time management skills.

If you have worked in lots of similar roles, for example summer jobs, it can be useful to group them together to save space. E.g.:

Various temporary summer bar tender positions (June–Aug, 2022–2024)

- Developed skills in x,y,z

Creative CV Guide

Design

Creative CVs can often include more design elements than a standard CV. This is a valuable way of showcasing your creative skills as well as your experience.

Any design elements should be a reflection of your creativity and skills, but your CV still needs to be professional and appropriate for the position you're applying for. Research industry standards or CV examples from people in positions and organisations you're applying for. Consider the following elements when you are designing the visual content of your CV.

Colour - stick to 2 or 3 complementary colours and check what your CV looks like printed in black and white, and when viewed on a phone and computer screen.

Graphics - keep to a minimum and ensure they don't detract from the key sections in your CV.

Font - use a minimum of 11pt in a simple easy-to-read style. Avoid using a light-coloured font on light backgrounds.

Consistency: Aim for a consistent design across your CV, cover letter and portfolio - this looks professional and highlights your own personal branding.

Format: Save and share your CV and portfolio as a PDF file to ensure design features will not be altered. Ensure the file size is large enough that any images are high quality and all text is readable and sharp, but not so large that you have issues sending the document.

The following 4 pages contain some creative CV examples.

Gemma Adams

07432 123 123

g_adams@email.com | linkedin.com/in/gemmadams|

Profile

MSc Publishing student with experience working in a bookshop and supporting engagement with children's books. Developed strong communication and organisation skills through roles as an office administrator and a voluntary Scout leader. Detail-focused, keen to learn in an editorial environment, seeking an internship with a children's book publisher

Skills

- Proofreading & Copy Editing
- Social Media & Marketing
- Adobe InDesign & Photoshop, WordPress & SEO

Education

MSc Publishing, Edinburgh Napier University, 2023–2024 Distinction

- Dissertation: "The Evolution of Independent Publishing in the UK"
- Production Editor for student literary journal Ink & Fold

BA Hons English & Film Edinburgh Napier University, 2021–2024 First Class

Dissertation: "Representation of Women in Literary Adaptations from Page to Screen"

Relevant Experience

Editorial Assistant (Internship) Canongate Books | Summer 2023

- Supported editorial team with manuscript reviews and author correspondence
- Proofread and formatted content for print and e-book editions
- Assisted with marketing copy and social media scheduling

Freelance Proofreader/Copy Editor Self-employed | 2022–Present

- Edited academic essays, short stories, and blog content
- Worked with independent authors and small publishers

Other Employment

Barista – Caffè Nero | 2021–2023

- Delivered high-quality customer service in a fast-paced environment
- Trained new staff and managed stock and daily operations
- Developed strong communication and multitasking skills

Waiting Staff, The Dome Edinburgh | 2022-present

Provided attentive service in a busy, high-end restaurant Handled bookings, customer queries, and team coordination Strengthened interpersonal and time management abilities

Interests

Treasurer and flute playing in young person's musical theatre group

Curating Instagram posts for children's fiction

Danielle Orr

Graphic Designer

danielleorr.website.co.uk

Contact Details

danielleorr@email.co.uk

07700 900123

daniell_orr_linkedin_profile

Skills

- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe InDesign
- Figma

Education

Edinburgh Napier University 2021 - 2025

Graphic Design (BDes) 2:1

Key Modules:

- Branding
- Experiential Design
- International & Intercultural Design

Edinburgh College 2019-2020

Art & Design HND

- Included 2&3D modelling
- Design principles and branding

Interests

- Crafting and making own clothes
- Volunteer at river cleaning project in Edinburgh

Professional Summary

Graphic Design graduate with a passion for creating visual communications to support sustainable initiatives and brands. Previous work placement experience designing campaign for not-for-profit organization and strong skills in Adobe Creative Suite. Committed to using design as a tool for positive change.

Relevant Experience

Intern, Edinburgh Re-Wear, Jan - June 2024

- Worked on 2 brand campaigns for sustainable fashion
- Developed assets using Adobe software and Canva
- Attended client meetings, observing creative project process

Live Project, Studio M, - Jan - June 2024

- Applied creative problem-solving to interpret real client brief
- Worked in a team using Figma to develop website mock up
- Developed communication skills through iterative design reviews and collaborative workflows.

Other Work Experience

Barista, Costa Coffee 2022- Present

- Provided high quality customer service in a fast paced environment
- Learned to manage time effectively while juggling tasks such as cleaning, full filling orders and re-stocking
- Gained teamwork experience working with colleagues to keep things running smoothly during busy shifts

JOHN GREY

077456 345 123

johngreyfilms@gmail.com
linkedin.com/johngreyfilms
@johngreyfilminstagram

About Me

Enthusiastic BA Hons Film graduate with a strong passion for documentary storytelling. Skilled in research, production coordination, and post-production. Experienced in working on short-form documentaries and student-led productions, with a keen interest in social justice and human-interest stories. Seeking entry-level production roles to contribute to impactful documentary projects.

Skills

Technical:

Adobe Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, DaVinci Resolve, Audacity

Production:

Scheduling, Research, Interviewing, Location Scouting

Education

BA (Hons) Film Studies

Edinburgh Napier University | 2022 – 2025
(Grade 2:1)

Modules: Documentary Practice, Visual Anthropology, Editing & Post-Production, Cinematography

Final Project: "Voices of the Clyde" – a short documentary exploring community activism in Glasgow

Drumbrae Highschool, 2017 - 2022

Highers (English A, History B, Modern Studies B, Maths C)

Film Experience

Production Assistant – Glasgow Green Film Festival

Feb 2025

Supported logistics for screenings
Managed scheduling

Assistant Editor – Student Documentary: "Threads of Identity"

Oct 2024 – Jan 2025

Organized footage and assisted with rough cuts
Used Adobe Premier Pro

Camera Operator & Researcher – University Project: "Hidden Histories"

Mar 2024

Conducted interviews and location scouting
Operated cameras

Additional Experience

Volunteer – Edinburgh International Film Festival
Aug 2023

Assisted with guest coordination

Freelance Videographer 2023 – Present

Create short promotional videos for local businesses

Interests

Hill walking in the Scottish Munros
Running - member of Drumbrae Running Club - maintain club's instagram content for the club events.

KAYLA HAYS

PHOTOGRAPHER

K_H_PHOTOGRAPHY.COM
K_H@GMAIL.COM 07777 123 123
K_H_PHOTO@LINKEDIN.URL



ABOUT ME

3rd Year BA (Hons) Photography student passionate about travel and lifestyle photography. Strong communication skills from working in hospitality and with clients as a freelance photographer. Creative with strong editing skills. Looking for hands-on experience in a dynamic and fast-paced environment, contributing to a team while expanding my skills in photography, photo editing, and media production.

SKILLS

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Illustrator
- Camera ABC

EDUCATION

- BA (Hons) Photography, Edinburgh Napier University** 2022 - present
Key Modules: Photography, Digital Media, Visual Arts, Graphic Design
- Broughton High School, Edinburgh** 2016 - 2022
4 x Highers (Photography, Art & Design, English, Biology)

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Freelance Photographer, K_H_Photography.com** 2023 – present
- Captured and edited high-quality images for various events including weddings and school graduation prom dances and lifestyle shots for the café
 - I work in part-time
 - Edited and retouched photos in Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom, ensuring professional-grade quality.
 - Collaborated with clients to deliver work that aligns with their needs
- Part-time Barista, Cute Coffee, Leith** 2023- present
- Developing strong communication skills serving customers in busy café
 - Created and maintain Instagram and Tik Tok account for the coffee shop
 - Create and edit high quality food and drink shots to post on social media

Portfolio Guide

Introduction

Constructing a portfolio of your work can be an important component of applying for placement positions and graduate roles. A strong, well-structured portfolio can help to demonstrate your skills as a creative and show your personality to a potential employer or placement host.

Order

- Your portfolio can be in non-chronological order. It's important to both start and end with strong images, to create a lasting impression with whoever views it.
- Whether sending your portfolio online or presenting it in person, it needs to be ordered in a way which makes sense to the viewer. This could be demonstrating the progression of a project or a collection of images which show a body of work. However, make sure there is a clear narrative through each project.
- You might find it useful to talk through your portfolio with someone, to create an order which is logical and effective.

Storytelling

- When presenting your portfolio in person, the order becomes especially important.
- Being able to tell a story about how you solved a problem, developed a concept, adapted your designs, and arrived at a final outcome will make your presentation more engaging and bring your work to life.

Tailoring your portfolio

This guide acts as a general overview of how to put together a sample of your work and it's important to be aware of the nuances of your discipline. For example, a **photography** portfolio would focus more on single shots and collections of work; showreels are the standard for **film and TV**; and **mass communications** might demonstrate creating a campaign and the impact.

Portfolio Guide

Images

- Make sure that work is well photographed, placed and sized.
- Online portfolios shown via a website or social media will allow you to use larger-sized images. Be aware that some free sites may have restrictions on image size.
- Some application processes may require you to bring in a printed portfolio. If this is the case, ensure your work is presented well and images are sharp and clear.
- Digital documents are also be a common method of sending a potential host or client a sample of work. Ensure that documents are sent in an easily accessed format, such as PDFs, so formatting cannot be altered.
- Job descriptions might give restrictions to file size, format or the number of images to include, so make sure to check this when tailoring a portfolio.

Projects

Showcasing the process of a project can be just as important and impactful as showing the final images:

- Including the development of an outcome or idea may give you the opportunity to talk through your decision-making process or how you adapted to feedback in an interview.
- It might also be an opportunity to show the different styles of work that you're capable of producing, or software that you're able to work with competently.
- If presenting your work through an online portfolio, think about the images you use for the thumbnails for each project. Not only should they be a good representation of the project, but also be eye-catching and bold.

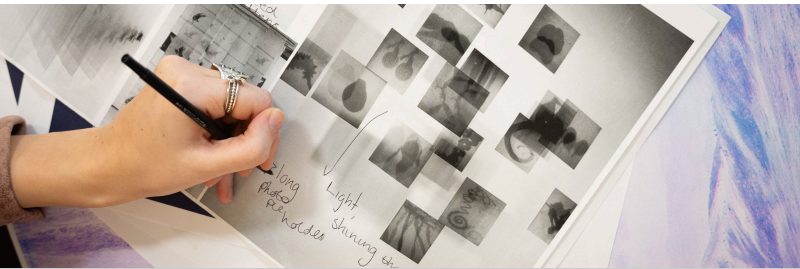
Remember, it doesn't have to be just projects created for assessment or as paid work; including self-initiated projects can be just as valuable to show your skills and interests.


Portfolio Guide

Length

How long your portfolio should be depends on your audience, the role you're applying to and how you'll be presenting it:

- When sending a speculative application or sample of work, you'll want to showcase a smaller, more concise selection which focuses more on outcomes rather than processes.
- If you're applying to a placement or graduate role, be sure to tailor your portfolio in the same way you would your CV and cover letter. Read the job description and make sure that you select work that demonstrates the skills they are looking for. You might be able to select projects that align with the organisation's house-style, mission statement or their specialism.
- Presenting your portfolio in-person at interview means you'll have an opportunity to talk through your projects and process. This portfolio should be longer, allowing you to showcase your work through storytelling and demonstrate your skills as a designer.



- 
- There's no one-size-fits-all for the length of your portfolio, but when starting to put together your first portfolio selecting 4-6 projects and expanding two of them into case studies to show process or development is a good place to start. Also include some projects that show variety and examples that showcase your unique personal brand or point of view as designer.

Portfolio Guide

Captions

Informative and concise captions are essential for providing context to work and for a potential employer or placement host to understand your role in creating work. This is especially important for group projects or collaborations.

Using a standard structure throughout your portfolio will make information clear and easy to access for viewers. For example:

[Project Title] Date, **[Client Name (Or self-initiated project etc)]**: Brief

Remember, captions should be short. Let your work do the talking.

Design

As well as the work itself, the design and look of your portfolio demonstrates your skills as a designer. The design of your portfolio might be linked to the types of role, industry or organisation you're applying to, however, regardless of the specifics of your design you should consider:

- **Function:** Make sure your portfolio is functional as a document, by captioning and ordering work clearly. The design shouldn't be busy or confusing but should guide the viewer through each page.
- **Quality over quantity:** You don't need to include everything from every project. Select specific pieces of work and projects to demonstrate your skills.
- **Full bleed images:** Having your best images or pieces as full-page spreads will maximise their impact.
- **Variety:** Be sure to show a variety of work and skills to demonstrate the breadth of your abilities; especially for work placements or graduates.

Portfolio Examples



YOUR NAME
[Your Programme]

Cover Page:
Name/Programme/
Full-bleed Image



Contents:

2-3 Project 1

4-6 Project 2

7-8 Project 3

9-10 Project 4

11-12 Project 5

13 Contact & CV

Contents:
Page numbers/
Project Titles

Portfolio Examples

Project 1

Project brief, [Client Name if needed], date

Short Project:
Brief/Final images/
Relevant links

CV & Contact

Profile

Relevant Experience

Education

Skills

Website
Email
Phone
Social Media

Final Page:
Condensed CV/
Contact details

Portfolio Examples

Project 2

Project brief, [Client Name if needed], date

Research

[Brief overview]

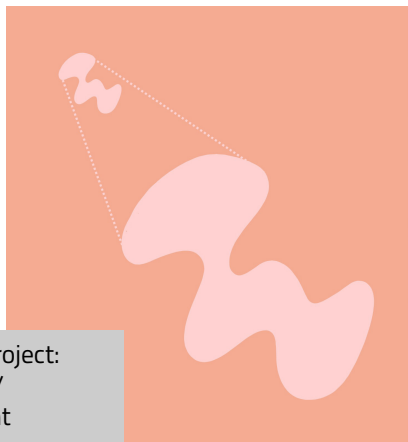
Expanded Project:
Brief/Research

Expanded Project:
Ideation/Sketches/
Initial ideas

Ideation

[Brief overview]

Portfolio Examples



Prototyping

[Brief overview]

Expanded Project:
Prototyping/
Development

Final Design

[Brief overview]



Expanded Project:
Final outcome

Portfolio Guide

Feedback

Standards for portfolios can vary between industries and even from organisation to organisation; what one individual looks for in a portfolio might be quite different to another! It may take a few tries to work out what works for you and the industry area you want to work in, so keep asking for feedback and looking at your colleagues' and mentors' portfolios.

Presentation

When attending an interview that requires you to present your portfolio, you should always consider the practicalities of how you'll physically bring and show your work.

Digital: When presenting your work digitally, check for any specific instructions. For example: do you need to send it ahead of time via a particular site or in a specific file type? Always ensure you have a means to present your work if this isn't the case and make sure you have a charged laptop or tablet with you – don't just bring a USB stick!

Print: Bringing along a printed version of your portfolio is more straightforward to present and transport, but make sure your printing is high quality and clear. A con of this is the cost of printing, so this may be something you decide to invest in later in your graduate career search.

Social Media

Using social media sites to display your work is a good method to keep in touch with clients, connect with other practitioners and provide regular updates on projects and work. Sites like Instagram unfortunately lack the capability to re-order work, to easily update images and add your own personal branding to the display of work, making them not ideal as a main portfolio. However, using social media can drive potential clients and organisations to your portfolio.

Sending Applications

CV, cover letter and portfolio

Some employers will specify how they want you to send your documents. Check the job advert or instructions carefully. If you are not given specific instructions or applying speculatively, follow this advice:

- Label your documents appropriately: e.g. "John Moss CV, Junior Designer, ABC Designs".
- Save your CV and cover letter as PDF documents to preserve your formatting.
- If attaching a portfolio, save as a PDF or:
- Share a link to your portfolio and check the link works correctly.

Applying via email

- Keep it brief: one or two short paragraphs and use professional language.
- For advertised roles, state who you are and the job you are applying for and which documents you have attached.
- For speculative applications include a short paragraph explaining the type of role you are looking for and why.
- Address to a named person or "Dear Hiring Manager".
- Include a subject line. Emails sent with attachment and no subject line or text are often marked as spam.

Example email

To

Cc

Junior Graphic Designer Role

Dear Ms Hargreaves,

I am applying for the role of Junior Graphic Designer at ABC Designs as advertised on Design Weekly.

I have attached my CV, cover letter and portfolio for your consideration. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards

Jennifer Moss (07749 456 770)



Resources

Need support with cover letters, using AI in your application or references? Check out our **CV and Cover Letter Guide**

Other Links:

General

[Creative Lives in Progress: Guides](#)

[It's Nice That: Wise Guides](#)

[Prospects: How to get a creative job](#)

[Prospects: Creative CVs](#)

[Creative CV Guide by Jan Cole](#)

Photography

[Canon: Creating the perfect photography portfolio](#)

Film and TV

[Screen Skills: How to make a showreel for film or TV](#)

Mass Communications

[Flo-create: Free Portfolio & Marketing Resources](#)

Publishing

[Publishers Association: Write the perfect CV and cover letter](#)

WHERE TO FIND US

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