

SHOW YOUR METTLE!

Portfolio advice for new Juniors, Students & those who are switching fields!

* This document *isn't* print friendly

Show Your Mettle!: Portfolio advice for new Juniors, Students & those who are switching fields!

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About

This is a document that aims to help new Juniors, Students or those who are switching fields whose goal is to work in the game development industry.

Contained within, you can find some general advice and some resources that **you** can use as a guide to better steer you in the right direction or give you some ideas.

Disclaimer

This document is based on what I've learned by asking industry professionals & asking industry recruiters. It contains **generalized** advice & **opinions** on what I *believe* is a good way to construct a decent portfolio.

At the moment, I'm by no means an industry professional or have any "proper" experience of what goes into what recruiters are looking for in a portfolio. If you *ever* get advice or feedback from someone who *is* in the industry or *is* a recruiter in the industry, **listen to them first!**

This document is mainly for individuals that consider themselves as an Artist, Designer or Programmer.

Who am I?

My name's Samuel Einheri, a System Designer who's currently living in Sweden.

Just like you, I'm also looking to break into the industry & have along the way learned a lot by asking industry professionals & forming *opinions* on how to construct a decent portfolio.

Email: samuel.einheri@gmail.com

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/samueleinheri/>

Portfolio: <https://www.samueleinheri.com/>



You can also read this document
[Read it on Google Docs!](#)

General Advice

About

I've spent some time giving feedback on various portfolios across different disciplines & I've learned a lot along the way. This section contains some general advice that I think is useful to be aware of when you create your portfolio.

You have 30 seconds

In the game development sphere, studios get a lot of applications & don't always have a lot of time to view a portfolio. Within *seconds*, a recruiter **might** look at your portfolio projects thumbnails & overall presentation in order to determine if you end up in the "I'll take a look again later" pile of applications.

So within that time, you need to make it clear to *anyone*, **who** you are & **what** you are & if you manage to do that, you will buy some extra time of attention!

That's why the first impression counts, so have a portfolio that prioritizes **quality over quantity**. Which means that you shouldn't "dump" everything you have done into your portfolio.

Your portfolio should display your skill, ambition & you should choose the pieces that best advertise what you are offering to potential employers.

Be specialized

Having a specialization helps in guiding what kind of knowledge you *should* have & understand what kind of programs/skills/tools you should be aware of.

Knowing what your specialization is, will make it *easier* for recruiters to understand who you are but it's also something you have to find out on your own.

If you're in a position where you don't really know *exactly* who you are, then I suggest doing this:

- Take a step back & reflect on what you *like* doing.
- Take a look at projects that you've done & what you enjoyed the most.
- If possible, consult with an industry friend who's more Senior for advice on direction.
 - They can help you with advice/mentor on *easier* entry paths, job opportunities, etc.
- [Game Jams](#) are one of the *easiest* ways to learn more about what you want to do.
 - It also helps build your portfolio.

If you need some ideas on finding out *what* you are, then take a look at: "[The Big List of: Video Game Development Team Roles by Rick Davidson](#)".

See if you can find this ! →



Identify weak links

If you already are aware of your specialization, take a look at your portfolio & see if you can identify your weakest piece. Be aware that when your portfolio is viewed, you *might* be judged on your weakest portfolio piece.

So if removing the weakest strengthens your portfolio & polishes it up, don't hesitate to remove it. Be aware that in doing so, you effectively create a new 'weakest portfolio piece'.

Prioritize relevance

In your portfolio, do you happen to have portfolio pieces that are just there because you enjoyed creating them?

Ask yourself if you're sure that the sentimental piece in question will help you in presenting yourself as a professional & it isn't there because you're sentimental.

Structure

Consistency is key

One of the things I've noticed when I've given feedback on various portfolios is that there were some portfolios that had portfolio pieces that have a lot of detail that breaks down the work/thought process behind it & it looked *amazing*. But I've also seen in the same portfolio, different pieces that barely have any content inside it too.

If you have a portfolio piece that has a great structure, where it really shows off your work & thought process, apply that same structure across **all** of your portfolio pieces.

Here are some portfolios that I think showcases examples of good structure in a portfolio piece

[Artist Portfolio Example](#)

[Designer Portfolio Example](#)

[Programmer Portfolio Example](#)

The consistency can change

That *depends* of course what you're presenting to the viewer but you want to be consistent in how you present your portfolio, this helps if you make it easy to navigate, easy to read & what to *expect* from your portfolio.

Worth to keep in mind

It's also worth considering that you can showcase a variety of experience in various tools, techniques & skill sets. Also, keeping your portfolio updated is crucial to showcase your current skill level.

A common rule is the **70/30** or **60/40** rule for variety, unless of course you want to market yourself as being really good at one *thing*, a "one trick pony" of sorts.

The 70/30 rule means that 70% is what you aim for while the 30% is the other stuff that you can also do, on top of the 70%. What you should *always* do is focus on quality over quantity.

Test on different platforms

Something that's also worth keeping in mind is testing your portfolio on different devices, resolutions & especially on monitors (if they're not color calibrated correctly).

The less you have to click, the better

Let's talk about ease of navigation!

If possible, avoid grouping different projects together & avoid using too many buttons to get to your portfolio. The quicker a viewer can get to your portfolio & your portfolio pieces, the better.



Speaking of Tools

In the upcoming sections, there'll be some tools/software suggested that you should be "*aware*" of. It's presented *vaguely* & while there are some tools that are considered to be "*industry-standard tools*", at the end of the day what it all boils down to is the company that you aim to work for.

Different studios have their own requirements on what kind of "tool" you should be aware of. Indie companies tend to use less expensive tools, while more established companies (such as AAA studios) might have their own entire pipelines & their own custom tools built around certain software.

The key thing is to be aware of your target. What's more important is that you can showcase your adaptability & the ability to work with different tools, styles, workflows & pipelines.



Artist

When you create your Portfolio

It's likely that you'll be using ArtStation (but I've seen Artists use other platforms too) & when you create your portfolio, I think it's worth keeping in mind to have a coherent structure.

As an Artist, one of the most important things is the ability to make a cohesive set of props or assets with the same look & quality. It's even better if you can assemble them into a set or a small environment & what would be even better than that, if you do it in-engine.

It's not a great look if every asset/prop on your portfolio looks like they're from a different game ([remember the 70/30 rule!](#)).

Check out the LinkedIn article: "[7 Tips to Create an Excellent 3D Artist Portfolio](#)".

Structure

So depending on what kind of an Artist you are & what kind of portfolio piece you're presenting, here's a suggestion on a **structure**:

- Final Render or Version.
 - If you want to work with games, use a real-time engine like UE/Unity to render your work.
 - If you have a specific company in mind, take a look at what engine they use & if possible, use it to create your render.
- Breakdown of your process with context
 - Sketches.
 - Wireframes.
 - Textures.
 - If you work in 3D, how many triangles does the final piece have?
 - What tools did you use?
 - Consider incorporating the tools into a render/screenshot.
 - Optional: Moodboard.
 - Optional: Time lapse of your work process.
 - This requires that you have some basic knowledge when it comes to video editing.

This structure is merely a suggestion & depending on the portfolio piece you're presenting, then this structure might not be applicable to that specific piece.

Some tools you *should* have an understanding of

- [Blender](#) or [Maya](#).
- [Adobe Photoshop](#).
- [ZBrush](#).
- Substance Painter.

Tools that's *nice* that you know but not always necessary

- Common Game Engines.
 - Unreal Engine/Unity.
- Scripting Languages.
 - There are Artist roles where knowing how to script or code will be needed.
- Navigating repository programs.

Designer

When you create your Portfolio

As a Designer, it's important that you can show in your portfolio, your thought process/work process & do it in a coherent manner that makes it easy to understand for the viewer. This can be done using visual elements (images, GIFs or videos) or through text but preferably both (complement the visual with text that gives context).

In your case, choosing what service to host your portfolio depends on your needs. I would recommend choosing a service that makes it *easy* for you to maintain it. What the structure for your portfolio piece is depends a lot on your role, what you're presenting & if you've been part of a game project, highlight what you were responsible for.

Structure

Here's a *suggested* structure:

- Gameplay video.
- Project summary & Name.
 - What tools did you use & was there a project size?
- Breakdown of your process.
 - Prefer using visual elements first & support those elements with text to explain what's going on.
- If you were part of a Game Project, add a link where you can download the project.

This structure depends a lot on what you're presenting, so depending on how you're marketing yourself you need to have projects that reflect your desired position. So if you're for example a Level Designer, present level sketches & level demos or if you're for example a Technical Designer, you should probably show more code related aspects.

So if you're attempting to market yourself as a Designer but you don't have a portfolio that reflects it, then it's likely that you won't be considered at all.

This structure is merely a suggestion & depending on the portfolio piece you're presenting, then this structure might not be applicable to that specific piece.

Some tools you *should* have an understanding of

- Game Engines.
 - Unreal Engine/Unity.
 - Etc.
- Scripting languages.
 - C# or C++.
 - Lua.
- Documentation.
 - Excel.
 - Google Docs or similar.

Tools that's *nice* that you know but not always necessary

- Art Programs.
 - Blender or Maya.
 - Photoshop.
- Repository programs.
 - GitHub/Git.

Programmer

When you create your Portfolio

In your case the focus of your portfolio will be the code you've written, it can be code you've written for different game projects or tools you've made.

Oftentimes, using your GitHub *should* be more than enough, but it might be worth considering creating a more "visual" portfolio where you can highlight a specific aspect of a project & explain why you're proud of it.

It's also important when you display your code, that your code is clean, understandable & well documented where any other programmer can pretty much understand what they're looking at.

If the code you've written is a mess to look at that it becomes a nightmare for other programmers to understand or even work with, it would discourage the studio. A studio will rather hire someone whose work can be used by a group, instead of a genius who's the only individual that can understand or work with their own code.

Structure

If you decide to go with a "visual" route with your portfolio, here's a suggested structure:

- Gameplay video.
- Project summary & Name.
 - What tools did you use/What programming languages did you use.
- Highlight the one aspect(s) you're the *most* proud of.
 - Show the code for it.

I encourage you to check how other Programmers have created their portfolios to get ideas or inspiration in how to create yours.

This structure is merely a suggestion & depending on the portfolio piece you're presenting, then this structure might not be applicable to that specific piece.

Some tools you *should* have an understanding of

- C++.
 - Other programming languages.
- Different programming patterns.
 - And knowing when to apply them & where.
- Having an understanding of other scripting languages.
- Different Game Engines.

Tools that's *nice* that you know but not always necessary

- Graphical programs.
 - Such as Photoshop.
- Having some understanding of Game Design.

Resumes

About

This section will go through some general advice & suggestions that you can use when you create your Resume.

Don't reveal personal information!

If you have your exact birthdate, address or phone number on your Resume, **remove it!**

The reason why you shouldn't use things like your exact address or phone number in your CV is that certain *individuals* could use your information in scams or just abuse it in general.

What you should use to contact you:

- LinkedIn.
 - You can make it look like for example: **LinkedIn: /in/FirstNameLastName**
- Email.
- Portfolio link.
- Closest major city & country.
- Your role.

 Turn this part into a link!

Try to contain your Resume on one page

This makes it easier to navigate your Resume if you have the necessary information contained within 1 page. There are cases where having your Resume across **2 pages** is okay but that depends a lot on your experience & this document should be a **PDF** file.

Your Resume should contain:

- Work/Project experience.
 - Project/Work name.
 - Time period.
 - Anything older than 10 years is unnecessary.
 - In preferably 3 sentences, highlight the most important things you did.
 - Links to projects.
- Tools/Software/Programs you know of.
 - Contain it in a Bullet point list.
- Education.
 - Anything older than 10 years is unnecessary.
- Awards, Certificates, etc.

Disclaimer

Make sure that your Resume should have a consistent "flow", where the reader can view it from top to bottom as if it's a book.

Consider not using a photo of yourself

This can be a contentious question, over time, I've asked different recruiters what their stance on using a photo of yourself is & a majority said: **don't use it**.

The reason for this is that it *can* create [age bias](#) or bias in general (gender, racial etc). A recruiter's biases doesn't necessarily reflect a company's biases, but you have to be approved by them first. A Resume pretty much *should* only reflect your experience & the tools/programs that you know.

Important

There might be instances where using a photo is needed to navigate around biases tied to assumptions based on your name, country of residence or other. While these should not by any means **exist**, the reality of things is that they do, and you should be aware of & be prepared for them.

Before a company sees your worth, you need to be sure your CV/Resume is considered during the initial sorting, rather than immediately rejected due to the aforementioned biases.

Resources

Creating Resumes

Scribus

Can pretty much be considered the free version of Adobe InDesign, it's UI can be a bit *counter intuitive* but if you want to have full control over the design of your resume, then this is an *ok* choice.

Link: <https://wiki.scribus.net/canvas/Download>

Canva

If you want something that just *works* then Canva is a very good service that offers a plethora of different templates that you can use as a foundation.

Link: <https://www.canva.com/create/resumes/>

FlowCV

If you want to create a clean Resume & not worry too much about the position of anything, then FlowCV is one of the better & easiest (it takes a little bit of time to learn the UI) Resume tools you can find.

Link: <https://flowcv.com/>

Inkscape

Pretty much the free equivalent to Adobe Illustrator, a vector based program if you want to create icons or logos. There are moments where it can be *challenging* to use it but it gets things done.

Link: <https://inkscape.org/>

Events

Games Factory Talent

A games networking event based in Finland that takes place every (usually) spring & fall. You can choose to participate online or on-site, where it costs a small fee to enter (the online fee is smaller compared to on-site but the difference is very minor).

Link: <https://gamesfactorytalents.com/>

Trojan Horse was a Unicorn

Before you ask, no it doesn't contain anything "*weird*" but "Trojan Horse was a Unicorn" (or THU) is a games networking event where you can participate online for free.

Link: <https://www.trojan-unicorn.com/>

LinkedIn

How to Simplify Your LinkedIn URL

This is an article that I recommend for “cleaning” up your LinkedIn URL!

Link: [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-simplify-your-linkedin-url-brenda-meller-zawacki-/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-simplify-your-linkedin-url-brenda-meller-zawacki/)

Amir Satvat

An amazing individual that you should follow on LinkedIn. He created something called the “**Games Job Resource**”, a resource for individuals that’re looking for work within the industry & where you can get a mentor from volunteering industry people!

Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amirsatvat/>

Chris Tran

Another amazing individual that you should follow on LinkedIn. He posts pretty frequently game development & industry related articles that’s worth reading.

Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christran/>

Portfolio creation

ArtStation

Most commonly used by anyone within the graphical field, so if you’re an Artist, this is *considered* to be an industry standard platform. While ArtStation is the more common alternative, it shouldn’t limit you in choosing a different platform if you want to.

Link: <https://www.artstation.com/>

Behance

If you’re an Artist who mainly works in 2D, then Behance is a popular alternative to ArtStation.

Link: <https://www.behance.net/>

GitHub

If you’re a Programmer, having a repository where someone can view your code is going to be necessary. In this case, I would suggest GitHub, as it’s one of the more common code repositories out there.

I’ve also seen individuals using GitHub to host their portfolio & using it to create a more “conventional” portfolio. But to do that, it requires that you have some knowledge of HTML/CSS to do it.

Link: <https://github.com/>

Square Space

If you want to create a portfolio that “just works” & don’t want to worry about the layout differences across different devices, then this is a service you should consider. On youtube, there’re always creators that have some form of deal that you can apply when you use Square Space’s services.

However, even with the Youtube deal applied, it can still be *expensive* & from my experience, it *can* be a bit inflexible when you design your portfolio.

Link: <https://www.squarespace.com/>

Wix

A pretty powerful website where you can design & create a portfolio to your liking. At the moment, this is the platform that I use to host my portfolio.

If you can imagine it, you can *probably* create it. If you want to have full control over the looks over your portfolio, then this is it, but be aware that adapting your portfolio for mobile can be a *pain*.

Link: <https://www.wix.com/>

Video Editing

DaVinci Resolve

DaVinci Resolve is a *free* video editing alternative if the only thing you want to do is creating simple trailers, gameplay videos or creating time lapse videos. It can be intimidating but there's enough tutorials out there if you ever need help with something.

Link: <https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/davinciresolve/>

Other resources

Flat UI Colors

If you want to have some simple & "flat" color palette, then "Flat UI Colors" is a pretty decent website to use.

Link: <https://flatuicolors.com/>

ProWritingAid

If you're not confident in your grammar like me, then I recommend something like "ProWritingAid". While it sometimes makes some good suggestions to change your grammar, take some of the suggestions with a grain of salt.

Link: <https://prowritingaid.com/>

Special Thanks

About

This section is dedicated to the people that helped me out & were willing to give feedback & share their expertise on how I could improve this document, this document wouldn't be possible without their help!

Vasileia Tolou

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/vasileiatolou/>

Joonas Törmänen

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/joonastormanen/>

Douglas Furén

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/douglas-furén/>

Kirill Maslov

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kirill-maslov-734880b7/>