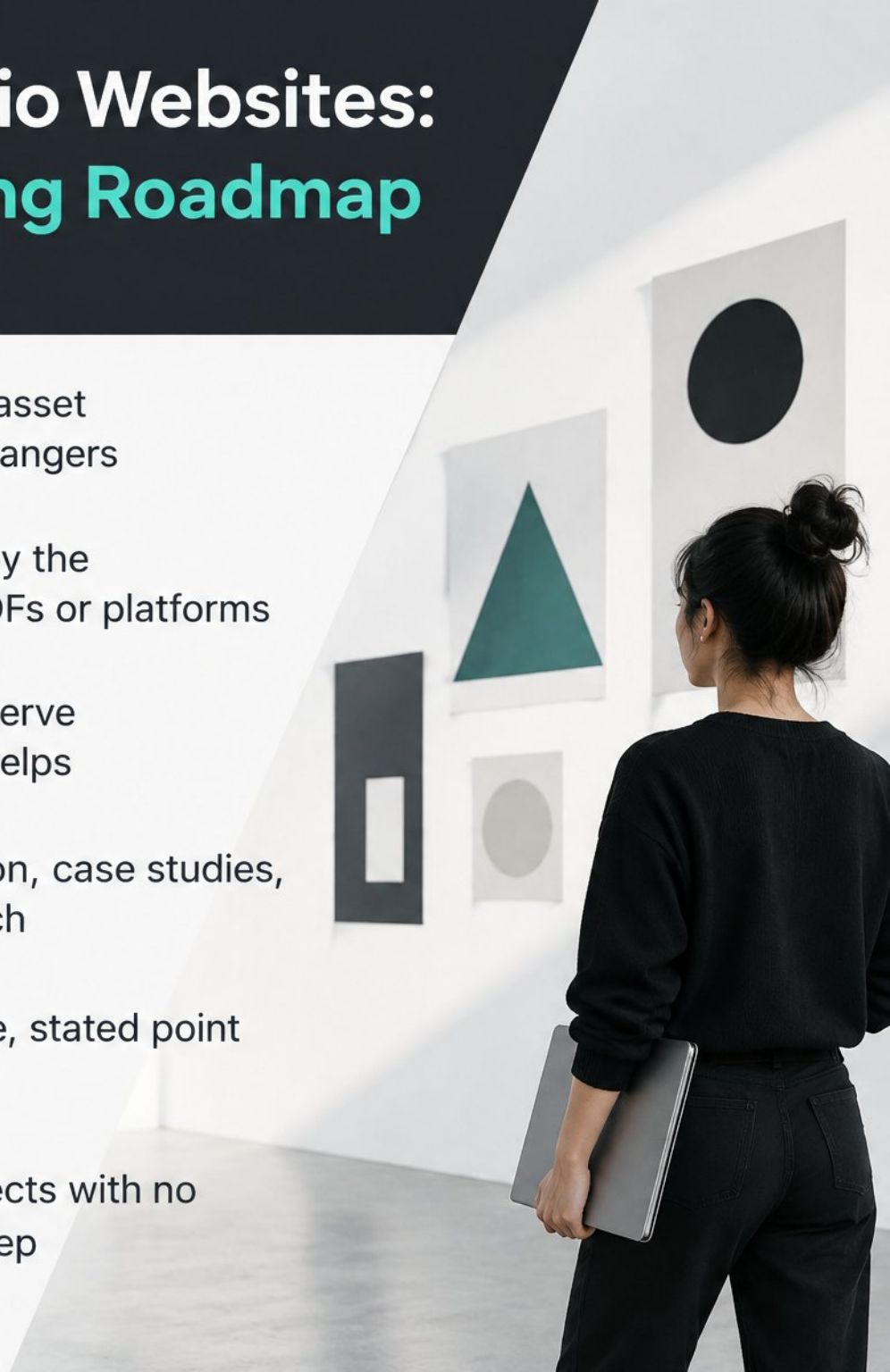
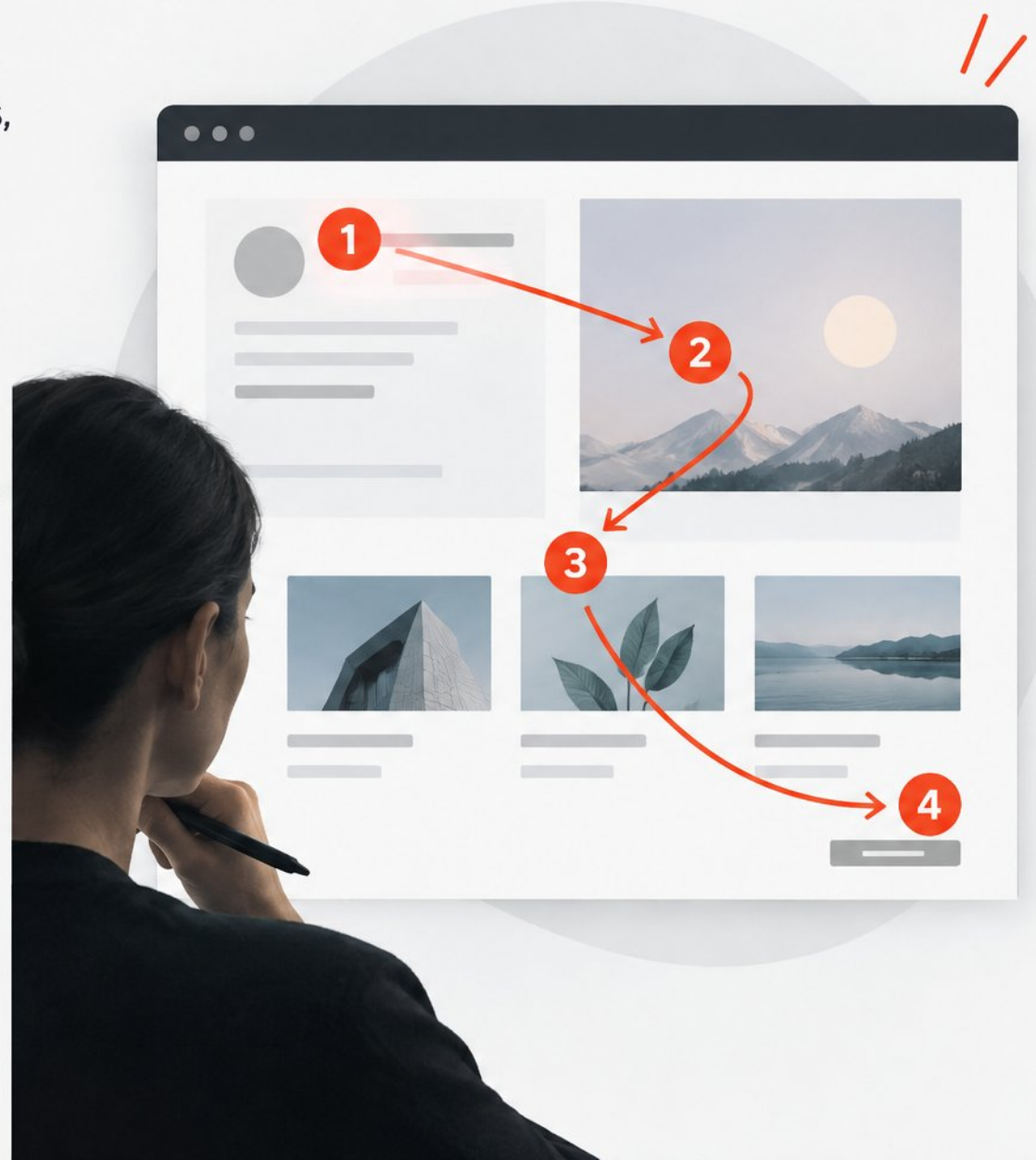
Graphic Design Portfolio Websites:
Introduction and Learning Roadmap

- Owned portfolio site is the core career asset for students, freelancers, and career changers
- 2026 data: 78% of reviewers judge fit by the portfolio; 72% prefer a website over PDFs or platforms
- Owned site, social galleries, and PDFs serve different purposes—know when each helps
- Roadmap: positioning, platform, curation, case studies, architecture, design, writing, SEO, launch
- Outcome: a live site with clear audience, stated point of view, one visible call to action
- Common pitfalls: unfinished sites, projects with no context, generic positioning, no next step



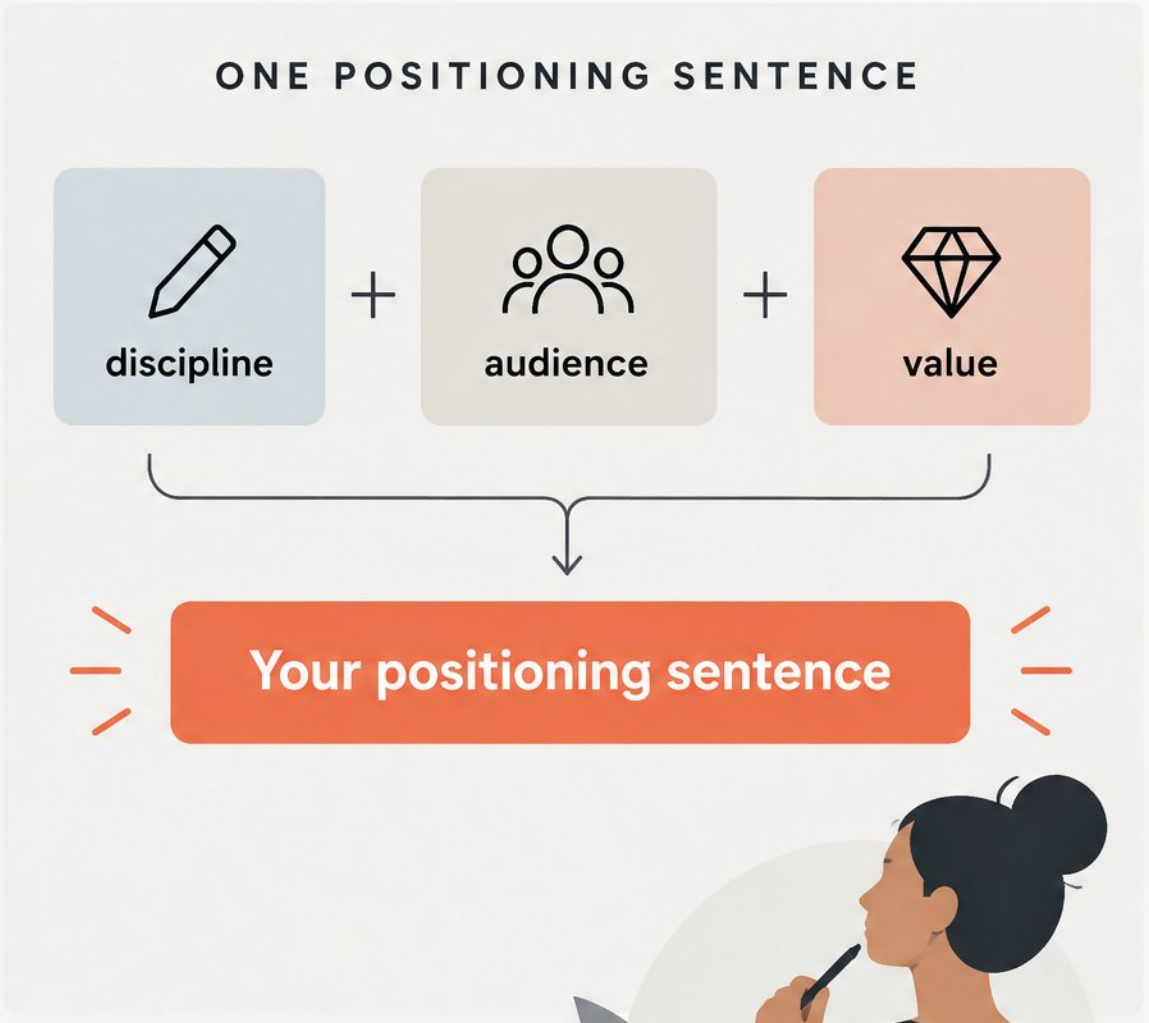
What Reviewers Actually Judge—and How Fast

- Reviewers scan under time pressure—if projects aren't findable in 30 seconds, some reject immediately
- They check four things: who you are, strongest project, your contribution, next step
- Recruiters and clients want clarity; art directors look for craft and process
- Fewer, deeper case studies beat broad, shallow archives
- Format doesn't rescue weak content: four honest case studies beat four unlabeled screenshots
- Password-protected sites and large downloads create friction—use a PDF or unlisted link instead



Define Your Audience, Goal, and Positioning

- Name the primary audience: in-house team, agency director, freelance client, or program
- Start from real job descriptions and client briefs; note repeated expectations
- Map goal to evidence: employment, freelance, graduate school, or teaching
- Draft one positioning sentence: discipline, audience, value
- Adapt a tagline formula and track success via inquiries, interviews, referrals



Choose a Platform, Domain, and Professional Email

General Builders



Design-Focused Platforms



Custom-Coded Sites



- Three routes: general builders, design-focused platforms, or custom-coded sites
- 2026 snapshot: Squarespace ~$19/mo, Cargo ~$14/mo, Framer ~$10/mo, Webflow ~$25/mo
- Adobe Portfolio is free with Creative Cloud; match tool to your work type
- Weigh cost, design freedom, typography control, SEO, speed, and maintenance
- yourname.com with hosting, SSL, and matching email is the baseline expectation
- Behance and Dribbble are discovery layers pointing back to your owned site
- Mobile responsiveness and page speed: test before reviewers see a slow phone view

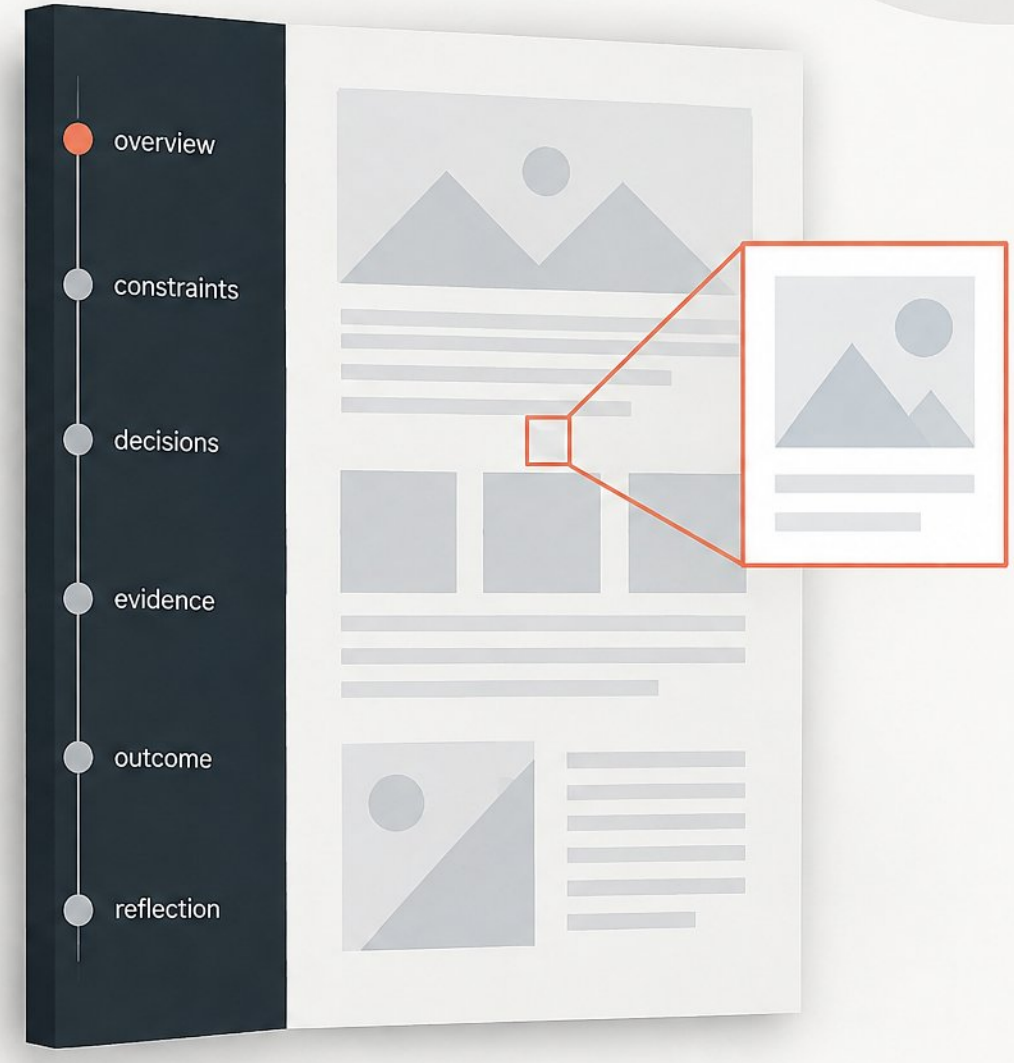
Select and Curate the Work

- Choose the fewest projects that prove the claims your audience cares about
- Six to ten strong pieces for design roles; if you only have three, ship three
- Range helps only when it fits the role—unrelated styles aren't more convincing
- Label work honestly: shipped, student, speculative, or confidential
- For NDA work, write the constraint and approach, skip screenshots, offer details on a call
- Credit collaborators, studios, and typefaces; get permission for logos and testimonials



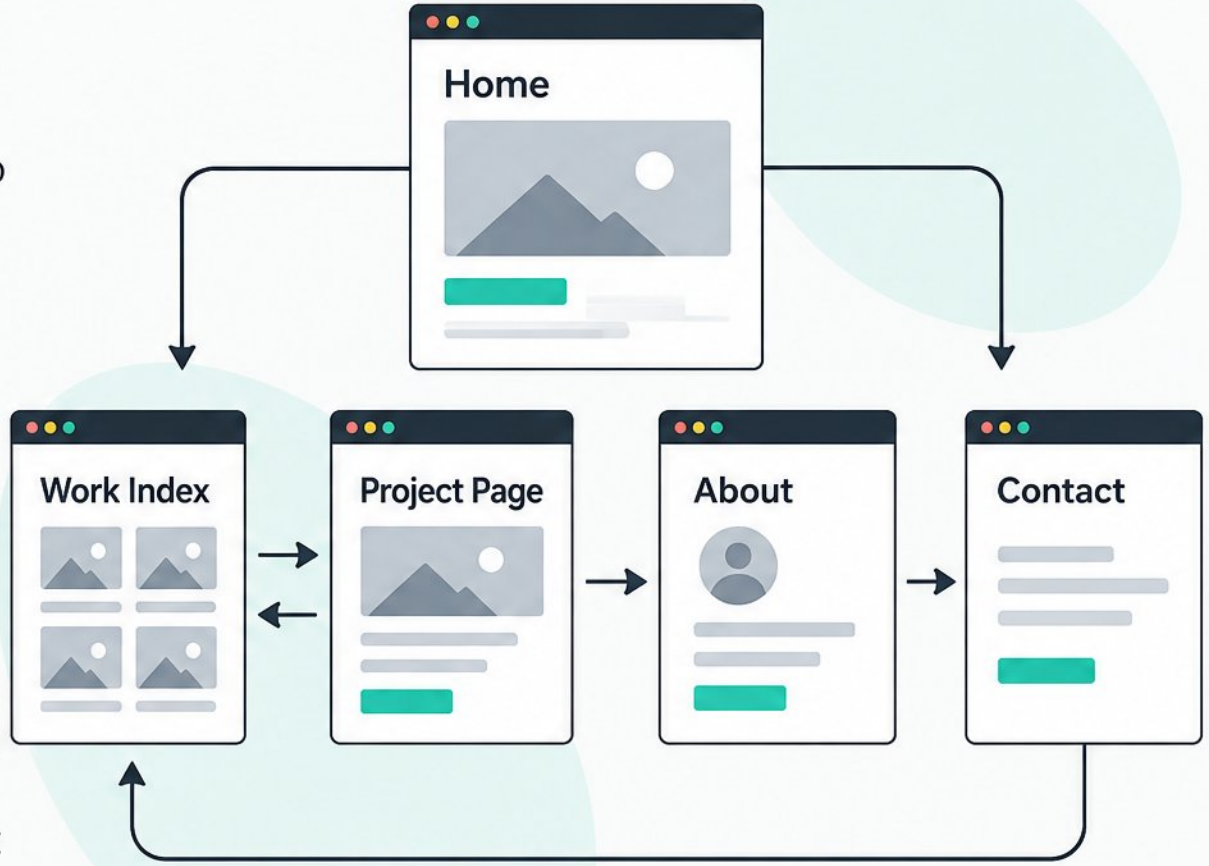
Structure Case Studies That Show Thinking

- Open with a one-screen overview: problem, audience, your role, outcome
- Show only process that explains a decision—alternatives, tradeoffs, iterations
- Pair each claim with proof: before/after, annotated details, named results
- Name outcomes honestly: separate measured results, observed behavior, untested
- Target 400–800 words; four considered images beat fourteen
- Alternate text-heavy thinking sections with large visual showcases



Site Architecture, Navigation, and Browsing UX

- Core pages: home, work index, project pages, about, contact — each with a stable, descriptive URL
- Familiar labels and one clear route into the work; easy return from a project to the index
- Homepage shell states your role and strongest relevant projects, not a generic claim
- Test primary paths on a phone, a keyboard, a slow connection, and a fresh browser
- Accessibility baseline: keyboard access, visible focus, 4.5:1 contrast, semantic headings, real links, meaningful alt text
- Images: responsive sizes, WebP or AVIF, reserved dimensions, lazy loading below the fold



Performance and Accessibility Essentials

- Core Web Vitals targets: LCP under 2.5s, CLS under 0.1, INP under 200ms
- Use WebP or AVIF; hero images 200–400 KB, thumbnails under 80 KB
- Set explicit width and height to prevent layout shift
- Alt text: short, purposeful, no "image of"; empty alt for decorative images
- WCAG 2.2: 200% zoom reflow, 24×24px targets, visible focus, reduced motion
- Test with axe or Lighthouse, then keyboard and screen-reader passes
- Keep essential case-study copy as live text, not baked into images



Visual Design and Typography for the Portfolio Itself

- Choose deliberately: neutral frame that lets work lead, or expressive personal identity
- Build type by content role: project title, section heading, body, caption, metadata
- Test with the longest title, smallest caption, and a dense page on a narrow screen
- Consistency differentiates: disciplined palette, one grid, thumbnails that read as a family
- Borrow 2026 trends carefully: minimalism, typographic heroes, near-black dark mode—avoid default-looking portfolios
- Keep interface color and type quiet so the work stays loud

TYPE ROLES

PROJECT TITLE

Project Title

SECTION HEADING

Section Heading

BODY

Body text sets the tone, supports readability, and gives context to showcase the work.

CAPTION

Caption text adds helpful detail without competing for attention.

METADATA

Metadata provides supporting information in a subtle way.



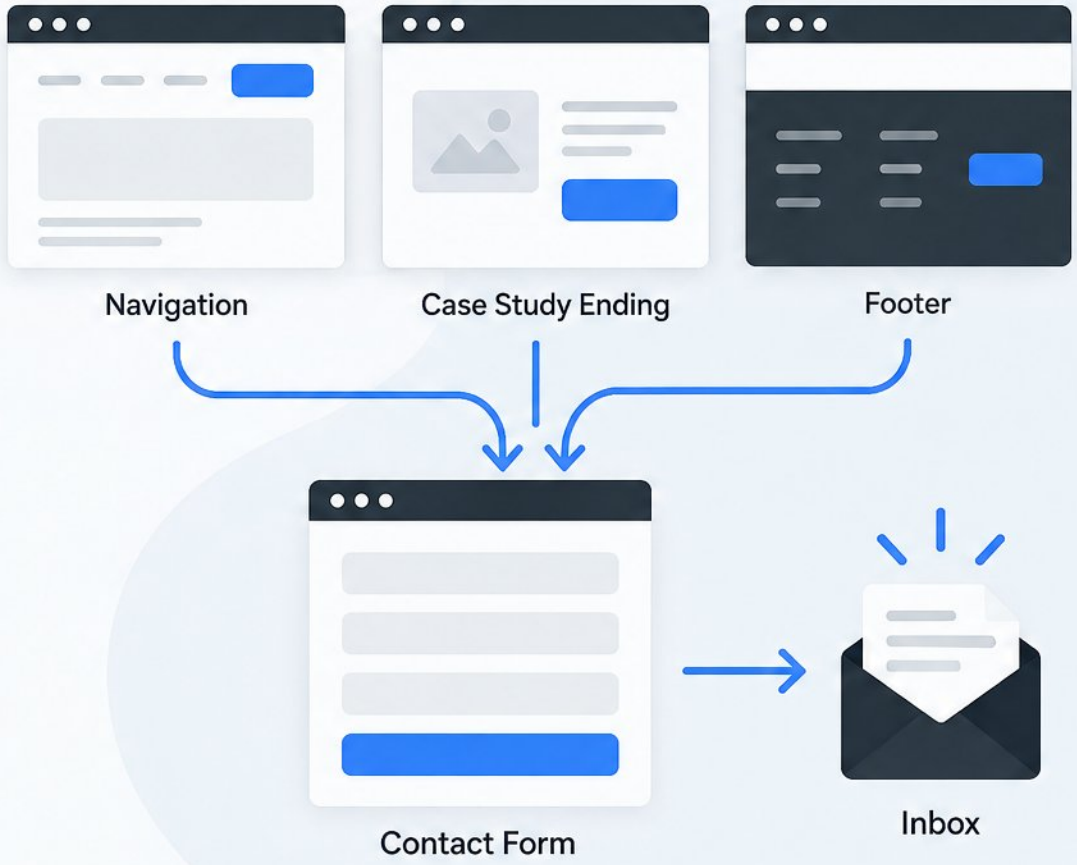
Writing the Homepage, About Page, and Project Copy

- Homepage headline: state what you do and who for, in plain language
- About page: three to six first-person sentences—who, who for, how you work
- Add two or three trust facts, one human detail, and a clear next step
- Project titles carry context in seconds: “Brand refresh — GreenLeaf Interiors”
- Replace “passionate about design” with specific, concrete statements
- Plain, inclusive tone; no home address, birth date, or oversharing
- Read everything aloud before publishing



Contact Paths and Clear Calls to Action

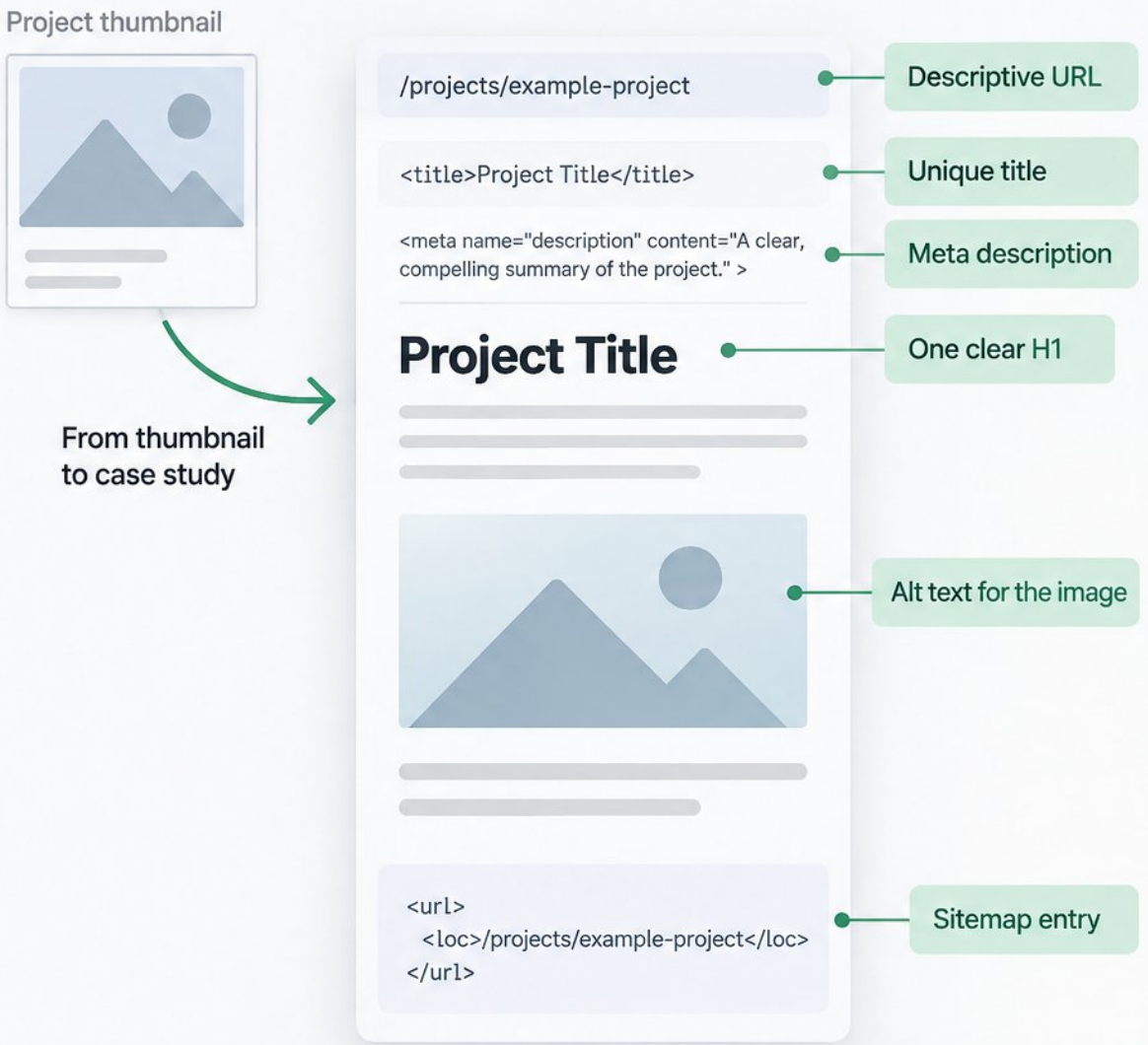
- Contact findable in under two seconds: navigation, footer, and case-study endings
- Choose channels by audience: email, form, or scheduling link
- Test the form end to end on mobile—confirm emails arrive where you check daily
- Give each reader one next step: hire me, see the full case, download resume
- Contextual case-study CTAs beat generic "learn more" links



SEO, Metadata, and Discoverability

BUILD
SHARE
BE FOUND

- Give each project its own page: descriptive URL, unique title, one clear H1
- Write real case-study text—search engines can't read images alone
- Descriptive filenames and useful alt text; never keyword-stuff
- Technical basics: HTTPS, sitemap.xml, robots rules, canonical URLs, Search Console, custom 404
- Optional schema: Person with sameAs links; CreativeWork on project pages
- Analytics: one conversion event, minimal data, follow consent rules



Launch, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement

REVIEW
REFINE
REPEAT

- **Pre-launch sweep:** check placeholders, broken links, contact form, mobile views, custom 404
- **Comprehension stress test:** a fresh reader must name you, your strongest project, your contribution, and the next step
- **Soft-launch** with two or three trusted people; ask specific questions, not "what do you think?"
- **Critique habits:** describe the problem, not the fix; attach a severity; write it down
- **Keep a short blocking** list; let preferences stay off it
- **Refresh cadence:** retire stale projects, fix credits and dates, recheck redirects

FEEDBACK FUELS PROGRESS



BETTER WORK OVER TIME

Your Action Plan, Rubric, and Common Pitfalls

Four-week build: positioning, case-study writing, design and build, testing and launch

Adapt by learner type: students label coursework honestly; freelancers show client proof

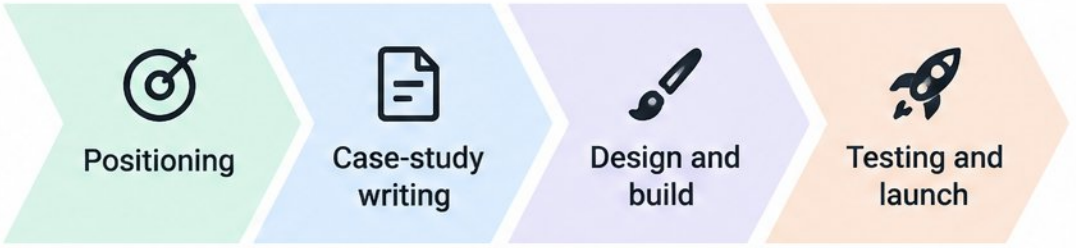
Ten common failures: too many projects, no context, missing role, vague headline, invisible contact

Also watch: broken form, neglected mobile view, heavy images, low contrast, unfinished site

Self-audit: positioning, project depth, credits, navigation, accessibility, performance, contact, honest outcomes

Pick one reviewer, one deadline, one conversion event: peer review with severity-ranked findings

Four-Week Build



Self-Audit Rubric

- Positioning
- Project depth
- Credits
- Navigation
- Accessibility
- Performance
- Contact
- Honest outcomes

Peer Review



Peer review with severity-ranked findings

PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform



Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/fab0829b/public