

Building a Graphic Design Portfolio

- Your portfolio is your single most important career asset in 2026
- Typical goals: first job, freelance clients, admission, or career change
- Formats vary by audience: personal site, PDF, Behance, Dribbble, or hybrid
- Strong portfolios show decisions and outcomes, not just polished visuals
- You don't need a huge body of work; 2-5 focused projects is enough
- Start now: waiting until you feel ready holds you back



What Hiring Managers and Clients Actually Look For

- 6-8 second initial scan, then 2-3 minute deeper review
- 3-5 deep case studies beat twelve shallow thumbnails
- Decision-making, constraints, and outcomes outweigh polish
- Apply the replaceability test to every project page
- Show your thinking, not just your process



Curating Projects That Show Your Best Thinking



- Choose projects that show range without diluting your focus



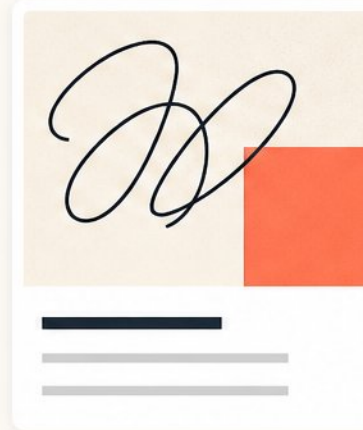
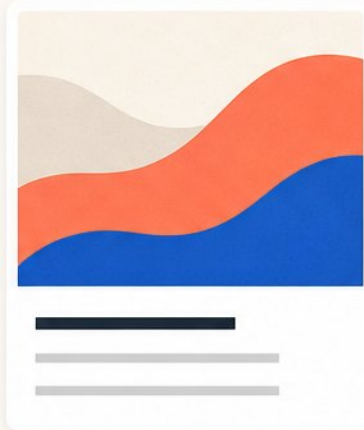
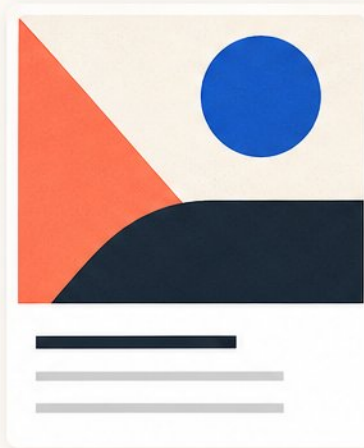
- Make student, volunteer, and spec work credible with real briefs



- Lead with work that reflects the role you want next



- Handle NDA work through redaction, rule sheets, and process notes



The Case Study Structure That Works



Repeatable framework:
context, challenge,
approach, solution,
results, reflection



Lead with the outcome,
not the process



Keep case studies
under 800 words
unless flagship



Use consistent structure
so visitors can compare
projects



Showing Process Without Burying the Work

- Process builds trust: prove you can repeat results
- Document research, sketches, iterations, critique, and revisions
- Show constraint line, killed direction, rule sheet, handoff proof
- Skip every step; keep the final design dominant



Designing a Personal Brand That Supports Your Work



- Keep identity consistent across portfolio, resume, and socials



- Build a simple logo, typography system, and restrained palette



- Treat branding as quiet infrastructure, not decoration



- Let the work stay central; avoid competing visual noise

LOGO



TYPOGRAPHY

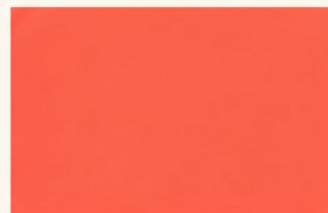
Aa

Heading

This is a headline

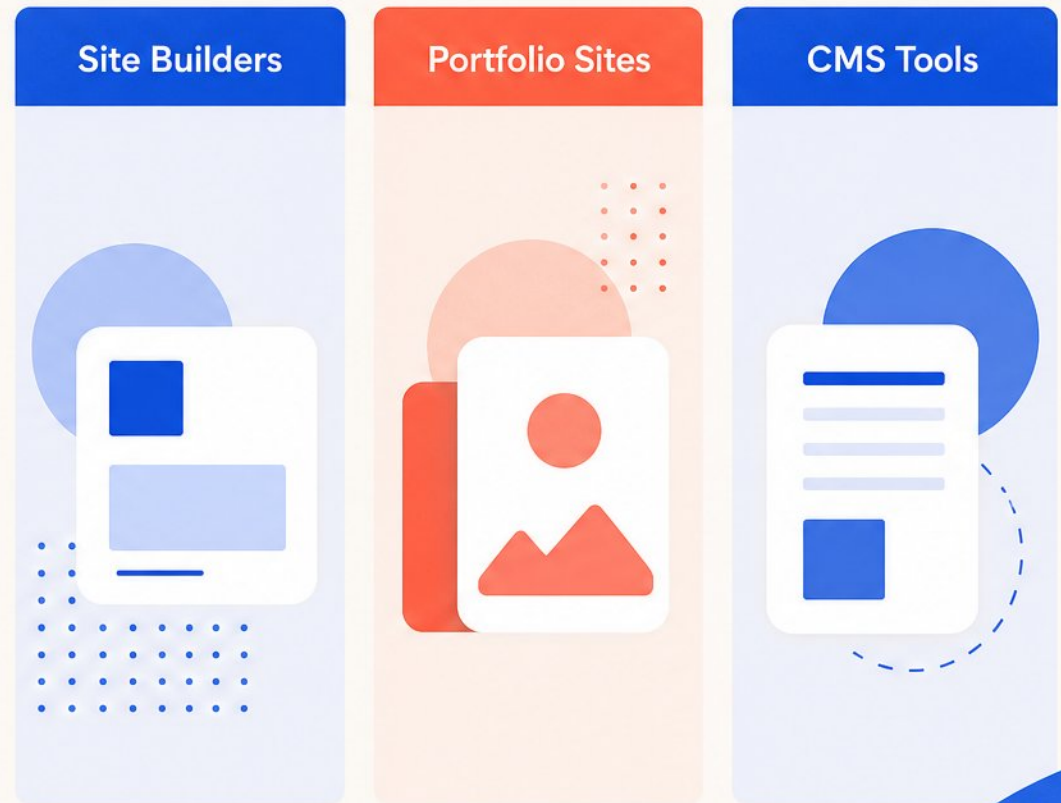
This is body copy. Clean, readable, and built for clarity.

COLOR PALETTE



Choosing Your Portfolio Platform

- Match the platform to your goals: visibility, customization, speed, and budget
- Webflow and Framer offer deep design control for custom portfolios
- Squarespace and Wix provide fast, polished templates with less setup
- Behance and Dribbble offer community visibility but lack custom domains
- Adobe Portfolio is free with Creative Cloud; custom domains require paid plans



Website Portfolio Essentials



- Mobile responsiveness and fast loading are non-negotiable



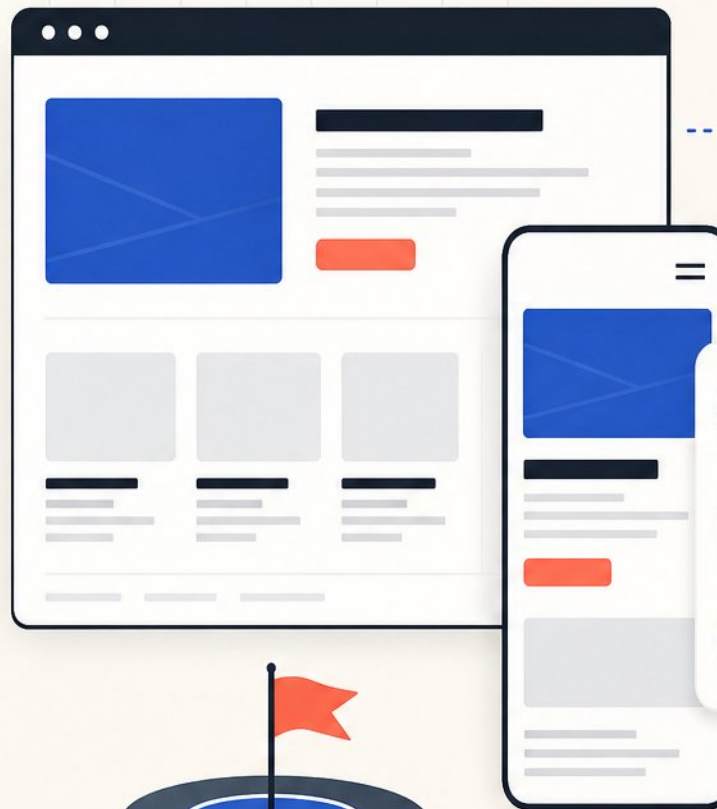
- Core Web Vitals: target LCP under 2.5s, INP under 200ms, CLS under 0.1



- Homepage acts as a path: clear positioning, strong projects, obvious next step



- Practical SEO, sitemap, and metadata basics improve discoverability



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target LCP under 2.5s



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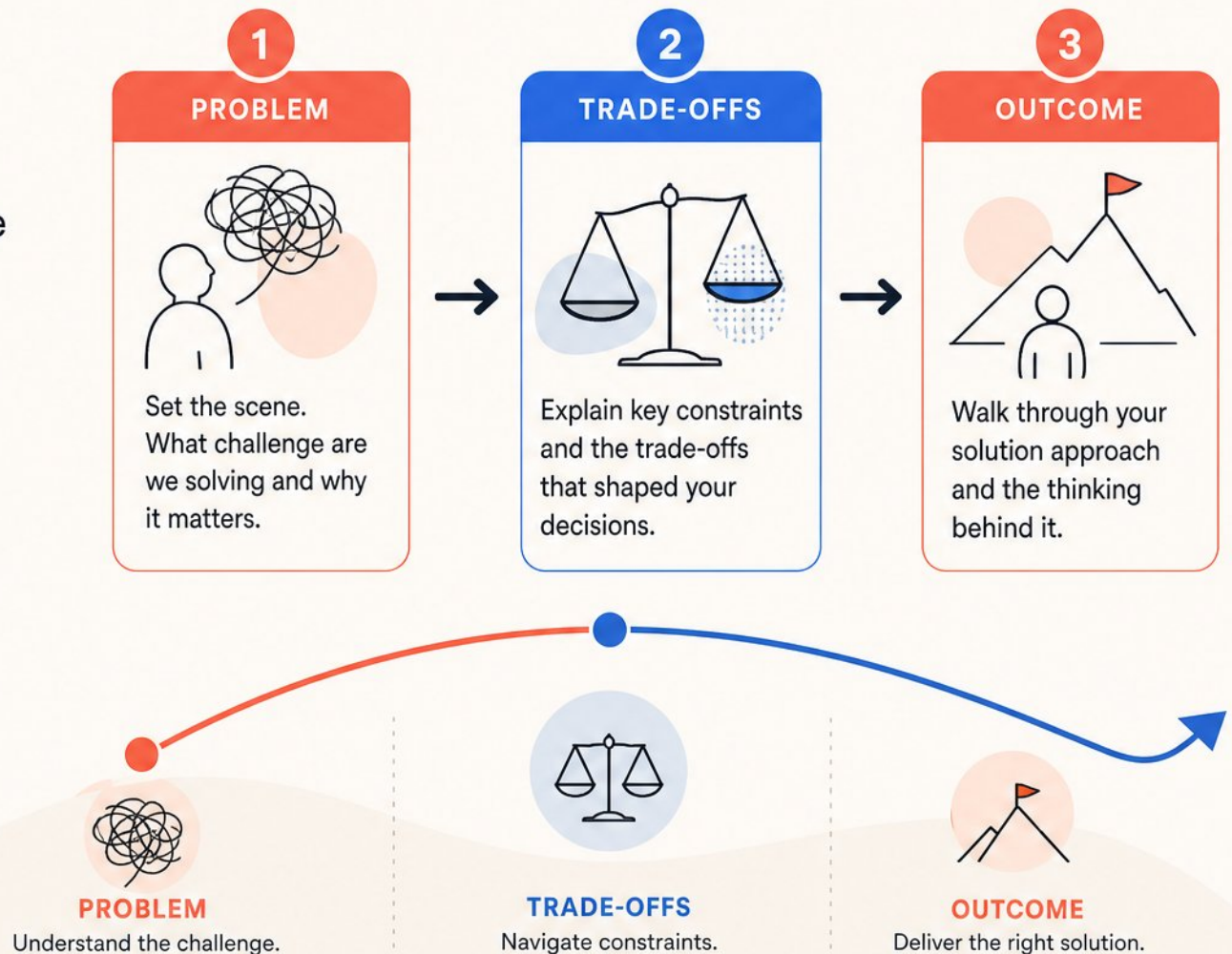
Creating a PDF and Print Portfolio

- PDF portfolios are ideal for email, job applications, and offline viewing.
- Use a clean layout with strong hierarchy and 2-3 fonts maximum.
- Keep files under 10-25 MB; name as YourName_DesignPortfolio_2026.pdf.
- For print, focus on paper quality, binding, and crop marks.



Telling a Story in Every Case Study

- Frame the problem before revealing the final design
- Start with a specific, relatable business challenge
- Share trade-offs and constraints to build trust
- Name what you rejected and why
- Tailor the story to the reader: client or hiring manager



Getting Feedback That Actually Improves Your Portfolio



- Find reviewers who represent your target audience



- Ask one focused question instead of "any thoughts?"



- Include context: role, stage, and biggest concern



- Frame the ask: "Would you interview or hire me?"



- Filter conflicting input through your own goals





Launching and Sharing Your Portfolio



- Test every link, form, and page on mobile before launch



- Scan for typos, broken images, and accessibility problems



- Tailor outreach for recruiters, clients, or design communities



- Share strategically on LinkedIn and relevant design groups



- Track visits, bounce rate, and which projects get clicked



Maintaining and Evolving Your Portfolio



- Schedule quarterly reviews to swap weak work and refresh case studies



- Remove outdated projects that no longer reflect your current level



- Prioritize improvements using analytics data and reviewer feedback



- Prefer frequent small updates over occasional large redesigns



- Decide on full redesign only when positioning or work type shifts

OUTDATED



REFRESHED



Portfolio Action Plan and Next Steps

- Run the replaceability audit: can AI recreate this page in an afternoon?
- Ship with 3-5 case studies that document thinking, not just final visuals
- Use the two-weekend plan: audit, write, build, test, and distribute
- Final check: mobile load speed, working form, clear next step
- Commit to quarterly project swaps instead of yearly overhauls



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/fd6d9019/public