Architecture
at Chicago

Admission Portfolio Guide

As a designed book, the portfolio indicates an individual's aesthetic sensibility and intellectual curiosity. Through the works themselves and in the inquiry or argument framed through their presentation, applicants should use the portfolio to exhibit their potential to develop original design work. Individual work is preferred, but when including group work, the applicant's role and contribution should be carefully noted. The portfolio should not document CAD drafting skills or technical coursework that is independent from design work.

Applicants with architecture backgrounds:
Portfolios should contain individual design work, primarily studio work completed in an academic setting. Applicants who have professional work experience should avoid including professional work, such as construction drawings or renderings, unless the applicant had a *significant* role in the design process.

Applicants with non-architecture backgrounds:
Portfolios may contain any visual, design, or creative works. This may include paintings, collages, graphic design, woodworking, freehand drawings, sketches, photographs, sculpture, furniture design, and so on. The admission committee prefers to see original creative work that best represents the applicant; applicants without formal architecture training will not be expected to include any architecture-related work. If you're concerned about having content to include, consider looking into architecture workshops (like our TryArch or YArch programs), enrolling in an art or design class, or exploring options at a local arts center.

Size + Format
- Printed and bound physical portfolios are required from all applicants. They should not be submitted on USB drives, as digital files, on CDs, etc.
- Portfolios should be *no larger than* 8.5 inches by 11 inches in size and 1 pound in weight.
- There is no specific page minimum or maximum requirement.

Image Preparation
Scan @ 600 dpi
Print @ 300 dpi

- Optimal printing resolution is 300 dpi. Never print at a resolution lower than 150 dpi.
- Render images at a better quality than you need. Always scale down, not up, to avoid losing quality.
- When cropping, resizing, and adjusting the color/contrast of images, use Adobe Photoshop for jpegs, tiffs, or photographic images (raster based) and use Adobe Illustrator for digital drawing files (vector based).

Page Setup
- Adobe InDesign is best (especially for multiple page documents creating PDFs for printing).
- Use margins, guides, and gutters on a template before laying out pages.

Layout Basics
- Keep it simple—avoid inconsistency
- Your projects are most important. Don't let the design of your portfolio overwhelm, or worse, surpass the quality of your projects.
- Be deliberate with font size, color, and text placement. Use the same dpi for all images.
- Be judicious with color, typography, and formatting. Check for consistency of punctuation, titles, etc. Remember to spell check and proofread and have one or two others read through your text.
- *White space is your friend!*

Finalizing Files
- PDF format is the best file format for printing and is available as an export option in InDesign
- Save all text as outlines for consistent output.

Printing and Binding
Quality can vary depending on the type of work being printed, so be sure to get a test print early, especially with print-on-demand services.

- AlphaGraphics – printing and metal coil binding
- FedEx Office – printing and metal coil binding
- Lulu.com – online print-on-demand service offering printing, perfect binding, and coil binding
- Blurb.com – online print-on-demand service offering printing and perfect binding