

Building your creative portfolio

A practical guide to curating and showcasing your work

Welcome!

This toolkit is brought to you by [Media Trust](#) & [Hannah Berry George](#).

Packed with expert advice, practical tips, and industry resources, our toolkit is designed to help support under-represented talent step into advertising with confidence. Whether you're building your portfolio from scratch or refining it, this brief-yet-mighty guide will support you every step of the way.

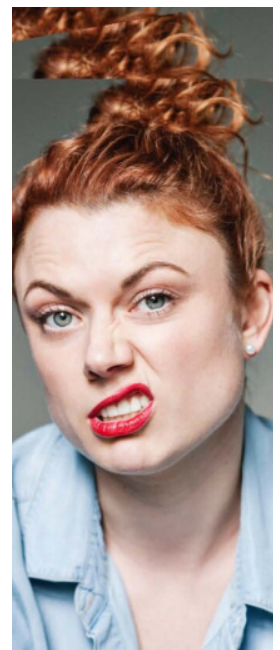
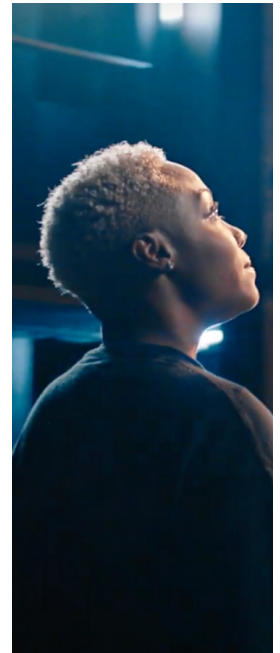
Why your portfolio matters

Your portfolio is your creative calling card. No matter if you're a designer, copywriter, strategist, or almost any other sort of creative, your portfolio is how you showcase your skills, creativity, and thinking.

So, here are some practical ways you can build a strong portfolio that reflects your potential and makes you stand out to employers.

About Hannah Berry George

HBG is a comedy and documentary writer-director with a background in journalism, sketch, stand-up, and improv. After winning an ADCAN Award in 2018 for her first commercial, her work has garnered millions of views, featured on major platforms, and screened at international festivals. She's now developing TV and feature comedy projects.

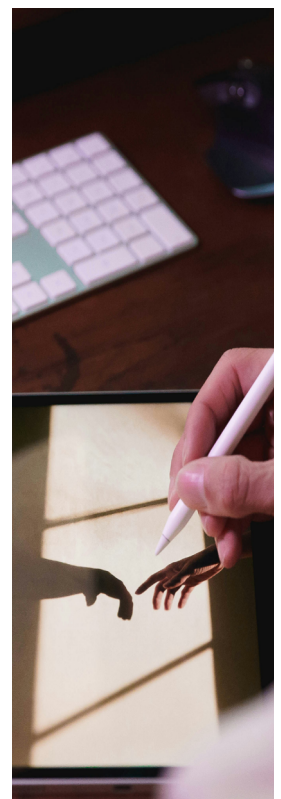


1. Break it down and build it up

Starting to build your brand, portfolio, and online presence can feel overwhelming, so it's best to break it down into manageable bite-size chunks. Set yourself daily, weekly, or monthly tasks and/or goals. When you have a specific aim you'll surprise yourself how much you can achieve.

Remember this is a marathon, not a sprint. Here are some key tips to help you get started:

- **Build your work:** There are lots of ways to do this and get it seen, including personal projects, competitions, and collaborations.
- **Reframe networking:** Think of it as having a chat, not a sales pitch. Take a plus one if you can and treat it like a mate's party where you turn up, chat to others, and find out about them. People love it when you take a genuine interest in them, and it's as much about building connections as it is promoting yourself and your work.
- **Keep a record:** Note your projects, achievements, roles, and responsibilities so you can update your portfolio and CV as you go. It's easier to tweak regularly than overhaul it entirely later.
- **Look out for opportunities:** Paid internships and graduate schemes can offer valuable industry experience and connections.
- **Contact brands you admire:** Make a list of companies you love, find the right people to contact, and send them a personalised message—keep it simple and succinct and say why you love their work so much.
- **Be patient:** Success takes time. Your portfolio will evolve as you find your creative style and voice, and that doesn't happen overnight.



2. Work on a speculative brief

A spec brief is a proactive way to show your creativity and problem-solving skills without needing an actual client. It's also great practice and gives you stronger industry understanding.

What makes up a strong spec brief?

- **Background:** Research the brand. What are its values? Who is the audience? What are the strengths of their existing brand?
- **Challenge:** Define the business or audience problem you're looking to tackle.
- **Solution:** Present your creative response. Why is it effective? How does it stand out?

Top tip: Use data to back up your thinking. Strong data-driven insights make a good idea even better.

Where to find inspiration and templates:

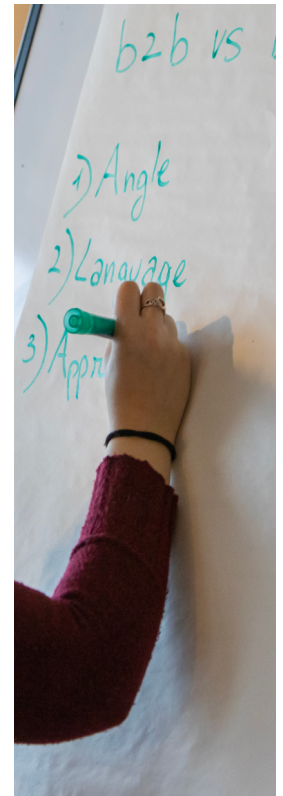
- **D&AD:** Templates, competitions, and real-world challenges.
- **Open-call competitions:** Team up with designers, strategists, or copywriters for stronger submissions.

3. Presenting your work

Your portfolio should be clear, easy to navigate, and visually engaging.

Free tools to use:

- **Canva:** Perfect for clean, simple layouts for portfolios and pitch decks. It offers a range of templates that can help make your work look polished and professional without needing extensive design skills.



- **Notion:** A flexible space to manage applications and your work. You can create a portfolio page with individual project breakdowns and include links to your work. It's also great for keeping track of industry contacts, networking follow-ups, and job applications all in one place.

Remember: Hiring managers are busy, so keep your portfolio as succinct and impactful as possible.

4. Key resources, trends & job boards

Stay current with industry offerings and opportunities with these go-to platforms.

- **APA Jobs:** An online hub for production roles.
 - **Creative Access:** A job board for under-represented talent with great opportunities like [this internship from Fifth Season](#).
 - **Design Jobs Board:** Creative jobs and vacancies.
 - **The Kennedys:** Paid pathways in advertising for underrepresented talent.
 - **Newsletters:** [AdWeek](#), [The Drum](#), [Campaign](#), [Marketing Brew](#), [Future Party](#), [BBH Labs](#).
 - **Podcasts:** [Yeah, That's Probably an Ad](#), [The Digiday Podcast](#), [Social Minds](#).
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5. HBG's pro tips for success

- **Be specific and targeted:** Tailor your applications and outreach according to the organisation and their goals.



- **Ask for advice:** Rather than asking someone to give you a job, a great way to build a relationship is to ask if they have any advice for you. This could be in an email, on a Zoom or face to face for a cuppa.

- **Follow up:** We have no idea what is going on in someone's work and personal life. So know that it has absolutely nothing to do with you if someone is unable to get back to you, but following up with a polite check-in can make all the difference.

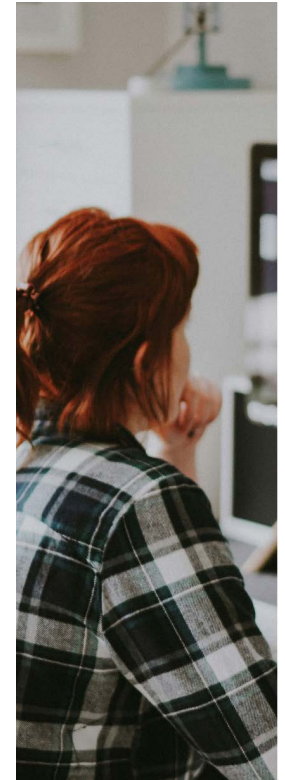
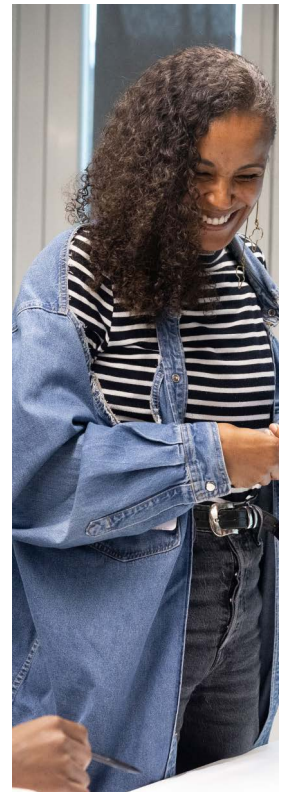
- **Do your research:** Everyone likes to feel heard, seen and special so make sure you've done the groundwork which shows employers that you understand the company and role.

- **It's not personal:** Getting a 'no' can suck but it's very often down to a combination of factors beyond your control. Mourn the loss, give yourself a treat and move onwards! You can't miss something you never had.

- **Keep refining your portfolio:** First drafts are just that - drafts. Go back to your portfolio regularly and update areas you've developed over time.

- **Connect on LinkedIn:** Connect with creatives and follow companies you admire on LinkedIn to grow your network organically. This is also a great and natural way to keep people in the loop with your latest work and availability.

- **Stay ahead:** The industry moves fast! AI and VR are evolving, social algorithms keep shifting, and consumer expectations around sustainability and ethics are higher than ever. With Meta's updates, X's rebrand, and ad regulation changes, keeping up isn't just an advantage, it's also a necessity.



6. Most importantly: keep going!

Breaking into advertising takes creativity, yes, but more than anything it's persistence. Keep experimenting, refining, and putting yourself out there. All of our portfolios are a work in progress – and that's ok.