Portfolio Tips
Tips on putting together your portfolio for application to Cleveland Institute of Art
You’ve spent a long time preparing for this moment, and the following guidelines will help you create a portfolio that best reflects your work.

We’re here to help.

Our Admissions Counselors can review your portfolio before you submit, or discuss next steps for your portfolio or the application process. Contact us at 800.223.4700 or admissions@cia.edu.
This painting demonstrates technical ability as well as competent use of the medium.
the importance of a portfolio

Developing a strong portfolio can position you for acceptance into college and merit-based scholarship consideration.

Our Admissions Committee will evaluate your portfolio and assess the work for:
- technical abilities,
- conceptual problem-solving skills,
- use of your chosen mediums.

Prior to that review we recommend that you schedule an appointment with one of our admissions counselors for a preliminary portfolio review. A campus visit and an appointment with one of our counselors can provide feedback on your current work and guide you as you work toward your best possible portfolio. We can conduct a preliminary review via Skype or Google hangouts, too, if coming for a visit isn’t practical.
what to include in your portfolio

Your portfolio should include between 12 and 20 pieces. This number will give us enough information to make an accurate assessment of your abilities. At least four of those pieces must be drawings (observational drawings are highly recommended; sketchbook work is also encouraged).

We encourage you to feature your strongest pieces created in your junior or senior years (in or outside of school). In addition to the drawings, the remaining portfolio pieces can take many forms including (but not limited to): paintings, prints, photographs, sculpture, animations, illustrations, computer-generated works, and clay, metal, or glass objects.

Make an effort not to include work copied from photographs or other published works. Try not to copy work of other artists—we want to see your thinking.
Observational drawings include still life, gesture, figure drawings, portraits, and landscapes.
Photograph your work against a neutral background, so the image focuses on the piece rather than where the work is placed.
Organizing your portfolio

Approach your portfolio like you’re creating a visual narrative about yourself. Keep in mind that relationships in color, media, composition, and concept can link one piece to another and help your portfolio flow in a cohesive manner.

Photographing your work You don’t need sophisticated equipment to photograph your work. But you should take your time, be sure your images are sharp and lit evenly (try to avoid harsh highlights or areas that are too dark). Shoot work against a neutral background, so the focus is on the work, not the room you’re shooting in. And it’s ok to crop your images.

Go to cia.edu/portfolio for more information on photographing your work and preparing your portfolio.
Need to work on creating your portfolio? The best thing you can do is to keep a sketchbook.

You don’t need to rely solely on a high school art class—join an art club through your local library or community center. Work on projects at home, and share with creative friends for feedback. There are lots of books with ideas for projects to challenge your visual skills.

You can also assign yourself projects. Create a logo for yourself or a friend’s business. Paint a landscape, then re-paint it in two different color palettes. Draw something from an unexpected perspective. Render something using different media.

For more ideas, visit cia.edu/portfolio-prep.
CIA's Pre-College program offers two-week residential courses for high school students that can help you build your portfolio, and earn college credit at the same time. Visit cia.edu/precollege
This sketch demonstrates a sense of light, form, and composition, while also showing an interest in storytelling.
When your portfolio is ready, upload your images and submit online at: cia.slideroom.com after sending your application to us. We also will accept portfolios of artwork submitted in a CD or DVD format.
Self-portraits are an easy way to practice your observational drawing skills.

Submit your portfolio online at cia.slideroom.com.
Incoming Freshmen:

☐ Include at least 12 pieces of artwork (no more than 20)

☐ Include at least 4 drawings (observational drawings are highly recommended, sketchbook work is encouraged)

Transfer Students:

If possible, include these preferred elements to help us determine your transfer placement.

☐ 2–3 examples of 3D work

☐ 2–3 examples of 2D work

☐ 3–4 examples of digital work (using Freehand, Illustrator, InDesign, or Photoshop)

☐ 4–6 examples of work pertaining to the major you wish to enter
Submit your application and portfolio online (preferred), or by mail to:

**Cleveland Institute of Art**  
**Office of Admissions**  
11610 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland OH 44106
In order to submit a complete application you must also include the following items:

- **Application** Apply online at cia.edu/apply or download an application
- **A personal statement outlining your reason for applying**
- **Official high school/college transcripts**
- **A letter of recommendation** (preferably from an art teacher or counselor)
- **Official SAT or ACT test scores**
- **A $40 application fee**
- **Portfolio of artwork** online (preferred) at cia.slideroom.com
when can you apply to CIA?

You will be considered automatically for merit scholarships if all of your application materials have been submitted by March 1. CIA will review completed applications throughout the academic year, and continue to accept students after March 1 based on rolling admission.

Visit cia.edu/apply for more information on applying as a:

- First-time freshman
- Transfer student
- International student
- U.S. veteran
- Non-degree seeking student
First-time freshman Application Deadlines:

Dec 1
Early Action 1

Jan 15
Early Action 2

Mar 1
Regular decision deadline for first-time freshmen

Transfer Student Application Deadlines:

Nov 15
Regular transfer student decision deadline for spring semester

Jun 1
Regular transfer student decision deadline for fall semester
Majors
Animation
Biomedical Art
Ceramics
Drawing
Game Design
Glass
Graphic Design
Illustration
Industrial Design
Interior Architecture
Jewelry + Metals
Painting
Photography + Video
Printmaking
Sculpture + Expanded Media

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