

RHC

Portfolio Building

Showcase Your Work

RockHardChic.com

Premium Fashion Industry Resources

Portfolio Building Guide

Build a Killer Portfolio on Any Budget

Why Your Portfolio Matters

Your portfolio is your **#1 sales tool**. It's what:

- Gets you booked for paid jobs
- Shows your range and versatility
- Proves you're professional and reliable
- Attracts better clients and higher rates
- Opens doors to agencies and brands

The truth: A strong portfolio matters MORE than your measurements, age, or location.

What Makes a Great Portfolio?

The Essential Elements

1. Quality Over Quantity

- 10-15 AMAZING photos > 50 mediocre ones
- Each image should serve a purpose
- Remove anything that doesn't showcase your best

2. Variety & Range

- Different looks/styles
- Multiple expressions and poses
- Various wardrobe/styling
- Different lighting and settings

3. Professional Presentation

- High-resolution images (min 1200px)
- Consistent editing style
- Proper composition and lighting
- Clean, uncluttered backgrounds

4. Current & Relevant

- Photos from last 1-2 years
- Reflects your current look
- Matches the work you want to book
- Updated regularly (every 6 months)

Portfolio Types: What You Need

1. **DIGITAL PORTFOLIO (Essential for Everyone)**

Where to Host:

- Personal website (Squarespace, Wix, WordPress)

- RHC profile (free!)
- Model Mayhem or similar platforms
- Instagram (curated grid)

What to Include:

- 10-15 best images
- Contact information
- Basic stats (height, measurements, etc.)
- Social media links
- Booking email

Cost: \$0-\$20/month

2. **COMP CARD (For Professional Work)**

What It Is:

- 5x7" or 8x10" card with 4-5 images
- Your stats and contact info
- Given to clients at castings/auditions

Front Side:

- 1 strong headshot or beauty shot
- Your name
- Agency info (if you have one)

Back Side:

- 3-4 varied shots showing range
- Height, bust, waist, hips, shoe size
- Hair/eye color
- Contact info or agency

Cost: \$50-150 for 100 cards

DIY Option: Print at Vistaprint, Moo, or local print shop

3. **INSTAGRAM PORTFOLIO (Critical for 2024+)**

Why It Matters:

- First place clients check you out
- Shows your personality and lifestyle
- Builds your personal brand
- Can lead to direct bookings

What to Post:

- Professional shots from shoots
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Lifestyle/personal style
- Stories showing your personality

Grid Strategy:

- Consistent aesthetic/color palette

- Mix of professional + candid
- Strong first 9 posts (your "storefront")
- Post 3-5x per week minimum

Cost: \$0 (just your time!)

Building Your First Portfolio: Step-by-Step

Phase 1: Start With What You Have (\$0-\$100)

DIY Photoshoot at Home

- Use natural window light
- Simple white wall or outdoor location
- Phone camera is fine if it's good quality
- Have a friend take photos
- Focus on clean, simple shots

What to Shoot:

1. Headshot (straight-on, soft smile)
2. Beauty shot (close-up, makeup)
3. Full body (simple outfit, neutral)
4. $\frac{3}{4}$ body shot (showing movement)
5. Profile shot (side angle)

Wardrobe:

- White t-shirt/tank + jeans
- Black dress or fitted black outfit
- Something with color that flatters you
- Neutral/minimalist styling

Cost: \$0-\$50 (if you buy clothes)

Phase 2: Trade Shoots (TFP) (\$0)

What is TFP?

- "Time for Prints" or "Trade for Portfolio"
- Photographer gets images for their portfolio
- You get images for your portfolio
- NO money changes hands
- BOTH parties can use the images

How to Find TFP Photographers:

- Facebook groups (search "TFP photography [your city]")
- Instagram (search #TFPmodel #TFPphotographer)
- Model Mayhem or similar sites
- Local photography schools
- RHC photographer directory

TFP Safety Rules:

■ ALWAYS:

- Meet in public first or bring a friend
- Shoot in public locations or studios
- Check their portfolio/references
- Sign a simple model release
- Trust your gut—walk away if something feels off

■ NEVER:

- Shoot alone in private homes
- Do lingerie/implied shoots for free
- Give up usage rights without payment
- Work with photographers who pressure you

What to Get From TFP:

- High-res edited images
- At least 5-10 selects
- Permission to use for your portfolio
- Ability to post on social media

Cost: \$0 (just your time)

Phase 3: Invest in Professional Shoots (\$200-\$800)

When You're Ready to Pay:

- You've exhausted TFP options
- You need specific looks for your portfolio

- You want full control over concepts/styling
- You're serious about booking paid work

What to Book:

1. Professional Headshots (\$150-\$300)

- Clean, commercial-friendly headshot
- Natural beauty shot
- 2-3 outfit changes

2. Fashion/Editorial Shoot (\$300-\$600)

- Styled shoot with hair/makeup
- 2-3 looks
- Professional retouching
- 10-15 final images

3. Commercial/Lifestyle Shoot (\$200-\$400)

- Relatable, approachable images
- Natural settings
- Showing personality
- For commercial casting submissions

How to Find Good Photographers:

- Check their portfolio first
- Read reviews/testimonials
- Ask for references from other models
- Start with a smaller shoot to test

- Join the RHC community for recommendations

Cost: \$200-\$800 total

Portfolio Checklist: What Every Model Needs

MUST-HAVE SHOTS

■ 1. Headshot (Natural)

- Clean, simple background
- Natural makeup
- Soft smile or neutral expression
- Shows your face clearly
- Good for commercial castings

■ 2. Beauty Shot (Glamour)

- Close-up of face
- Professional hair & makeup
- Shows your features
- Editorial/fashion vibe

■ 3. Full Body (Neutral)

- Simple outfit (jeans + white tee)
- Shows your figure/proportions
- Neutral pose

- Clean background

■ 4. Fashion/Editorial

- Styled shoot
- Shows personality and confidence
- Strong concept or theme
- Magazine-quality production

■ 5. Movement/Action

- Walking, jumping, dancing, or moving
- Shows you can move naturally
- Demonstrates confidence
- Dynamic and energetic

■ 6. Lifestyle/Commercial

- Relatable, approachable vibe
- Natural setting (coffee shop, park, etc.)
- Candid feel
- Shows personality

NICE-TO-HAVE SHOTS

■■ **Profile/Side Angle** - Shows your bone structure

■■ **Different Hair Styles** - Up, down, curly, straight

■■ **Seasonal Looks** - Summer, fall, winter styling

■■ **Fitness/Athletic** - If targeting activewear brands

■■ **Swimwear** - For beach/resort modeling

■■ **Formal/Evening** - Gowns, suits, elegant styling

Portfolio Organization

How to Structure Your Portfolio

ONLINE (Website or RHC Profile):

1. Homepage/Landing

- 1 STRONG hero image
- Your name
- Quick stats
- Contact button

2. Portfolio Gallery

- 10-15 best images
- Organized by category OR chronological
- High-res, fast-loading
- Click to enlarge

3. About/Bio

- Short paragraph about you
- Your experience

- What you specialize in
- Personality/interests

4. Contact

- Email
- Instagram
- Location
- Booking inquiry form

COMP CARD:

- Front: 1 killer headshot + name
- Back: 3-4 varied shots + stats + contact

INSTAGRAM:

- First 9 posts = your "storefront"
- Grid aesthetic matters
- Mix of pro shots + personality
- Highlight reels for categories

Common Portfolio Mistakes to Avoid

■ DON'T:

1. Oversaturated/Over-Edited Photos

- Heavy filters ruin your natural look

- Clients want to see the REAL you
- Natural editing > heavy retouching

2. Too Many Similar Shots

- 5 photos from the same shoot = repetitive
- Show RANGE, not just one look

3. Low-Quality Images

- Blurry, pixelated, or poorly lit = unprofessional
- Quality over quantity ALWAYS

4. Selfies or Mirror Pics

- No bathroom selfies in your portfolio
- Use selfies for Instagram stories ONLY

5. Outdated Photos

- If you don't look like that anymore, remove it
- Update every 6 months minimum

6. Too Personal/Irrelevant Content

- Your portfolio isn't your personal photo album
- Party pics, vacation shots = not for portfolio

7. Inconsistent Branding

- Choose a style and stick to it
- Messy, random aesthetics confuse clients

Budget Breakdown: Portfolio Options

\$0 BUDGET (DIY + TFP)

- DIY at-home shoots (natural light, phone camera)
- TFP shoots with photographers (5-10 shoots)
- Free website or RHC profile
- Instagram as your primary portfolio
- **Timeline:** 2-3 months
- **Result:** 10-15 solid portfolio images

\$200-\$500 BUDGET (Starter)

- 1-2 paid photoshoots (\$200-\$300 each)
- Professional headshots (\$150)
- Basic website (\$10/month x 3 months)
- Comp cards printed (\$50)
- **Timeline:** 1-2 months
- **Result:** Professional starter portfolio

\$800-\$1500 BUDGET (Professional)

- 2-3 professional shoots (\$300-\$500 each)
- Hair & makeup artist (\$100-\$200/shoot)
- Comp cards + business cards (\$100)
- Professional website (\$20/month x 6 months)
- Wardrobe/styling (\$100-\$200)

- **Timeline:** 2-3 months
- **Result:** High-end, polished portfolio

DIY Photography Tips

Shooting at Home

Best Light:

- Golden hour (1 hour after sunrise, 1 hour before sunset)
- Overcast days (soft, even light)
- Large windows (indirect sunlight)

Best Locations:

- White walls
- Brick walls
- Outdoor parks
- Urban settings (alleys, streets)
- Rooftops or open spaces

Camera Settings (If Using DSLR):

- Aperture: f/2.8-f/5.6 (blurred background)
- Shutter speed: 1/125 or faster
- ISO: 100-400 (low as possible)
- Shoot in RAW format for editing

Phone Camera Tips:

- Use portrait mode for blurred background
- Tap to focus on your face
- Avoid using zoom (decreases quality)
- Shoot in natural light ONLY
- Use burst mode for movement shots

Editing Your Photos

Free Editing Software

- **Lightroom Mobile** (free app)
- **VSCO** (free presets)
- **Snapseed** (free, powerful)
- **Canva** (for resizing/formatting)

Editing Guidelines

DO:

- Adjust brightness/exposure
- Enhance colors slightly
- Crop for better composition
- Remove minor blemishes
- Sharpen the image slightly

DON'T:

- Over-smooth skin (looks fake)
- Change body proportions
- Use heavy filters
- Over-saturate colors
- Add excessive contrast

Goal: Natural, polished, professional

Portfolio Strategy by Goal

If You Want COMMERCIAL Work

- Clean headshots
- Lifestyle/relatable images
- Natural smiles and expressions
- Approachable, friendly vibe
- Minimal makeup and styling

If You Want FASHION/EDITORIAL Work

- High-concept styled shoots
- Strong editorial makeup
- Dramatic poses and expressions
- Magazine-quality production
- Creative, artistic vibe

If You Want FITNESS/ATHLETIC Work

- Athletic wear
- Gym or outdoor settings
- Showing strength and movement
- Healthy, energetic vibe
- Action shots

If You Want E-COMMERCE Work

- Clean white or neutral backgrounds
- Full body + close-up product shots
- Natural poses
- Showing clothes clearly
- Simple styling

Portfolio Update Schedule

Every 6 Months:

- Review all images
- Remove outdated or weak shots
- Add new images from recent shoots
- Update your website/profile
- Refresh comp cards if needed

Every Year:

- Complete portfolio refresh
- 2-3 new professional shoots
- Update headshots (if look has changed)
- Rebrand if your style has evolved

After Every Shoot:

- Add your best 1-3 images
- Remove similar weaker shots
- Keep portfolio tight (10-15 images max)

Free Resources & Tools

Portfolio Hosting (Free Options)

- **RHC Profile** - Free, industry-specific
- **Wix** - Free website builder
- **Carrd** - Simple one-page sites
- **Linktree** - Link aggregator for Instagram bio

Editing Apps (Free)

- **Lightroom Mobile**
- **VSCO**

- **Snapseed**
- **Canva**

Finding Photographers

- **Facebook Groups** - Search "TFP [your city]"
- **Instagram** - #TFPmodel #TFPphotographer
- **RHC Photographer Directory** - Free to browse

Learning Resources

- **YouTube** - Posing tutorials, modeling tips
- **Pinterest** - Inspiration boards
- **RHC Community** - Connect with other models

Portfolio Checklist Summary

Starting Out (Months 1-3):

- 5-10 DIY or TFP shoots completed
- 10-15 portfolio images selected
- Digital portfolio created (RHC + website/Instagram)
- Comp card designed (if pursuing agency)
- Instagram grid curated and optimized

Growing Your Portfolio (Months 4-12):

- 2-3 paid professional shoots

- Variety of looks (commercial, fashion, lifestyle)
- Updated portfolio every 6 months
- Comp cards printed
- Active social media presence

Professional Portfolio (Year 2+):

- 15-20 high-quality images
- Consistent editorial style
- Updated website/profile quarterly
- Strong Instagram presence (5K+ followers)
- Multiple tear sheets (published work)

Final Thoughts

Remember:

- Your portfolio is NEVER finished—it's always evolving
- Quality > quantity EVERY time
- Your portfolio should reflect the work you WANT to book
- Invest in yourself—but start where you are
- Update regularly as you grow

The most important thing?

START. Don't wait for perfection. Build your portfolio one shoot at a time, and keep improving.

Need feedback on your portfolio? Join the RHC community and get advice from experienced models and photographers!

Created by RockHardChic (RHC)

Empowering Models to Build Successful Careers

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