THE **WORKPLACE**

Portfolio

A **GUIDE** TO GETTING THE MOST
OUT OF YOUR **PART-TIME JOB**

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Workplace Portfolio! The Portfolio is designed to help you squeeze more learning out of your part-time job through a series of workplace tasks, reflections, and challenges. With a little extra work, the job that you have can offer deeper learning and connection to your classroom learning.

The Portfolio is organized into four main parts. Each part will shape an essential aspect of your learning:

> Part 1: Workplace Drill-Down: Artifacts and Reflections—where you collect documents from your workplace and reflect on parts of the business that you may have never considered before.

> Part 2: Classroom Connections Reflection—where you think about what you've learned at school and how it connects (or doesn't connect!) to your job.

> Part 3: Stretch Experience and Reflection—where you challenge yourself to learn a new skill, shadow a supervisor at your workplace, or brainstorm a solution to a workplace problem.

> Part 4: Portfolio Conversation—where you discuss your completed Portfolio with someone from your school or workplace—or both.

STAYING ORGANIZED

Plan on spending approximately 10–15 hours assembling artifacts, writing reflections, engaging in new workplace experiences, and conducting conversations for the Portfolio. Ideally, your time will be spread over several weeks.

In some cases, you will receive course credit for your work on this project, and some employers may be willing to allow you to work on parts of the Portfolio while on the job. Make sure you check on this before you spend part of your shift writing a reflection.

Parts 1–3 may be worked on in any order. Part 4, the Portfolio Conversation, must be held after parts 1–3 are completely finished. If you are working on the Portfolio as part of a class, your teacher can help you set due dates. Otherwise, you'll need to set your own targets. Use the table below to keep track of your progress.

Portfolio Part	Due Date	Date Done	Verified by (signature)
1. Workplace Drill-Down: Artifacts and Reflections			
2. Classroom Connections Reflection			
3. Stretch Experience and Reflection			
4. Portfolio Conversation			

PART 1:
Workplace Drill-Down: Artifacts and Reflections

This section of the Portfolio identifies 10 elements that are common to any business or work enterprise. For your Portfolio, you must address at least 6 of the 10 categories, each with an artifact and reflection.

Artifacts

Artifacts are usually existing documents or copies of documents that act as evidence for one of the categories. The table below suggests specific artifacts as suggestions—many other items can also serve as evidence as long as they align well with the category. Make sure that you have permission from your worksite manager to use any artifacts that you collect and that they are from your place of work.

For your Portfolio, you must simply include a copy of your artifact and a brief written description that explains what it is, what it's for, and how it demonstrates that category.

Reflections

Reflections are what they sound like—written pieces of prose that you create. Prompts are provided here for each of the categories to spur your thinking, but feel free to reflect on other issues related to the category. Please make sure that your reflections align with the category and are about 300 words in length. If you run out of things to say, address another one of the prompts from that section.

Let's Get Started

1. Planning

How an organization plans (include goals and objectives); type of ownership (public, private); relationship of the organization to economic, political, and social contexts; market research; and assessment of needs.

- Strategic planning
- Goals/objectives
- Assessment or research

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Strategic or business plans	
☐ Annual goal statements	How does the firm meet a real need in the community?
☐ Expansion plans	
☐ Company profiles	How are mission, vision, goals, etc., made, and how do these targets help steer the direction of the company?
☐ Other	

1. Management

Structure and process for effectively accomplishing the goals and operations of the organization using facilities, staff, resources, equipment, and materials.

- Organizational structure
- Corporate culture
- Mission statement

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Organizational chart	
☐ Job descriptions of management positions	Where does your position fit within the company's employee structure?
☐ Employee handbooks	How is the company organized and managed at your site?
☐ Other	Does the management of the company seem to focus more on quality and service or

3. Finance

Accounting and financial decision-making process, method of acquiring capital to operate, management of financial operations including payroll.
- Capital acquisitions
- Financial operations

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Interview with company financial officer or accountant ☐ Company policy statements regarding payroll ☐ Profit and loss statement ☐ Other	How does your company raise money to expand? What are the primary sources of revenue and biggest expenses? Who is in charge of financial operations? Is it the job of a manager or department? Who determines if your business is making

4. Technical and Production Skills

Basic technical skills in math, communications, computer applications, operation of equipment and machinery, operation and production processes, applicable rules and regulations, etc.

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Job descriptions ☐ Training materials ☐ Lists of skills from interviews with employees ☐ Interview with a recruiter or hiring manager ☐ Other	What basic skills are required of various positions? What new skills have you learned in this job? How have you applied skills learned at school in this job?

5. Principles of Technology

Technological systems being used in the workplace and their contributions to the product or service of the organization.
- Technology in the workplace
- Knowledge management in business
- Continued professional training

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Photos or descriptions of technologies used in the workplace	Describe your firm's computer network.
☐ Interview with a chief technology officer or information technology staff	What computer applications are used and where did they come from?
☐ Technology training materials	What other (non-computer) technologies and tools are essential to your business?
☐ Other	What technological tools have you learned to use in your work and how might these skills help you in the future?

6. Labor Issues

Rights of employees and related issues; wage, benefits, and working conditions.
- Job descriptions
- Employees' rights and responsibilities
- Services, benefits, and protections offered to employees
- Role of labor organizations

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Job descriptions	
☐ Documents describing worker rights (may be in employee handbook)	Are workers in your business members of a labor union? Why or why not?
☐ Interview with human resources staff	How do employees ensure that their rights are protected in this job?
☐ Labor union contract or documents	What benefits and services are offered to
☐ Other	employees? Is there anything that should be

7. Community and Social Impact

Impact of the company on the community; impact of the community on the organization.
- Community activities and issues
- Organization's involvement in the community
- Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices
- Benefit corporations (B Corps)

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Promotional materials describing community events or community service results	How does your company or organization directly benefit the community?
☐ Descriptions of community impacts/ events	What steps can your firm take to better meet needs in the community?
☐ Interview with community relations staff	What are ESG practices? How does the business or organization you work for set policies around these practices?
☐ Other	How could your community benefit by your business becoming a B Corp?

8. Health, Safety, and Environment

Practices and laws affecting the employee, the surrounding community, and the environment.
- Regulatory issues
- Workplace safety

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Workplace safety guidelines, posters, handbooks, policies, etc.	What policies and practices are in place to help protect worker safety at your jobsite?
☐ Environmental regulations and policies	What policies and practices are in place to help reduce waste and pollution at your jobsite?
☐ Interview with a company safety officer	Are there particular regulatory agencies that set laws for businesses or organizations in your industry? How does your employer ensure compliance? (E.g., Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Reserve Board, Occupational Safety and Health Administration.)
☐ Other	

9. Work Habits and 21st-Century Skills

Nontechnical skills such as collaboration and teamwork, creativity and imagination, critical thinking, problem solving, time management, thinking, interpersonal communication, appropriate dress and behavior on the job, etc.

- Positive attitude
- Personal fitness and appearance
- Readiness to work

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Customer service policies and training materials	What are key features of your workplace "culture?"
☐ Interview with a recruiter or hiring manager	How are "soft skills" such as attitude, interpersonal skills, etc., valued and taught at your workplace?
☐ Descriptions of company culture and practices regarding "soft skills"	
☐ Other	

10. Industry Connections

The industry that your employer is part of and its characteristics.

- Supply chains
- Industry associations
- Industry clusters
- Certifications

Potential Artifacts	Reflection Prompts
☐ Business plans	What industry does your employer belong to? What are the related characteristics of the industry and your employer?
☐ Supplier and/or client contracts	
☐ Industry association collateral	What do supply chains for your employer look like?
☐ Certification requirement documentation	
☐ Interview with manager or business leader	What industry associations does your employer belong to? How do they serve the industry and your employer?
☐ Other	
	What certifications are required to work for your employer? How are they obtained?

PART 2:
Classroom Connections

For this section, the task is to write a two-part reflection that discusses the connections between learning at school and learning on the job. Aim for your writing on parts 1 and 2 combined to be 400–500 words total.

REFLECTION PART 1:

Career-Technical Coursework on the Job

Begin by discussing the specific knowledge and skills you have learned in your career and technical education (CTE) courses at school that you are applying on the job. For example, a student in a culinary arts class might have learned food safety techniques that are similar to practices used at their job at the local sandwich shop.

In your reflection, discuss issues such as:

- The specific tasks that you are doing on your job
- Similarities and differences between CTE course knowledge/skills and workplace knowledge/skills
- How school learning helped or hindered workplace learning
- How the curriculum in your elective/ CTE courses could be adjusted to more closely align with workplace practices and expectations
- How you can work with your manager to find tasks at work that help you apply your CTE coursework

REFLECTION PART 2:

Core Coursework on the Job

Shift your focus now to knowledge and skills learned in core academic courses (English, math, science, social studies, world language) that you are applying on the job. Use the prompts below.

In your reflection, discuss issues such as:

- Similarities and differences between core academic course knowledge/skills and workplace knowledge/skills
- How school learning helped or hindered workplace learning
- How the curriculum in your core academic courses could be adjusted to more closely align with workplace practices and expectations
- How you can work with your manager to find tasks at work that help you apply your core coursework

PART 3:
Stretch Experience and Reflection

For this section, the task is to conduct one "stretch experience" on the job, and then write a brief description and reflection about that experience. Stretch experiences are defined as any experience at your workplace that represents a new challenge or unique new task that requires you to step out of your comfort zone and/or develop a new skill.

If you are working on your Portfolio with a teacher or mentor, please discuss your idea for a stretch experience with them **beforehand** to get approval and hear if they have any ideas on how your experience might be improved. Then work with your workplace manager to approve and implement the experience.

Learn a new technological skill or new process at your workplace
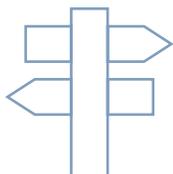
Example:
Chris works at a grocery store as a bagger. As a stretch experience, Chris learns how to use handheld scanning devices and digital tablets during the store's inventory audit process.

Shadow your boss (for at least half a day)

Example:
Darla works as a fourth-grade counselor for the summer day camp run by her city's parks and recreation department. As a stretch experience, Darla spends a full day following the city parks and recreation director around. In the morning, they attend a staff meeting, go to observe the installation of some playground equipment, and interview a possible maintenance vendor. After lunch, Darla observes a planning meeting where three city directors are discussing the upcoming budget. Throughout the day, Darla quietly takes written notes, making observations about the knowledge and skills she sees on display.

Interview a senior manager for your company about their career path and leadership role

Example:

Julio works at a local smoothie shop that is part of a national chain. As a stretch experience, Julio interviews the company's regional manager. Julio prepares questions in advance, dresses in professional attire, and gets permission from the regional manager to record the interview so that he can review it when writing his reflection.

Come up with two to three ideas for how your workplace could be improved for workers, customers, and/or efficiency

Example:

Shannon is a sales representative at a popular clothing store in her hometown. She notices that there are sometimes not enough staff at busy times during the week, while some employees get their preference in schedule and others don't. Shannon offers to develop a new process for scheduling employees that better matches the flow of customers while ensuring fairness in schedule preferences among her team.

Reflecting on Your Stretch Experience

After you have completed you stretch experience, write a reflection of 300–500 words that addresses the following:

- Describe what you did for your stretch experience
- Explain why this experience qualified as a "stretch" for you
- Discuss what you observed and learned
- Reflect on any insights this experience gave you into your current job or future career path

PART 4:
Portfolio Conversation

Now that you have completed parts 1–3 of your Workplace Portfolio, it's time to share it with the world—or at least with a teacher or employer partner.

The goal here is for you to have an intentional sit-down conversation of 15–30 minutes where you show your Portfolio work to an adult, answer questions about what you've assembled and how you went about completing your work, and discuss your learning and future goals.

Your teacher or school-based Portfolio mentor will help you organize this final experience. If possible, try to include a supervisor or colleague from your worksite in the discussion.

To prepare for this final part of the journey, make sure you can:

- Display your completed Workplace Portfolio—including all artifacts and reflections from parts 1–3

- Remember and address specific entries in your Portfolio—talk about what you did and how you did it

- Answer big-picture questions about the process of putting your Portfolio together, like:
  - What did you learn during the process?
  - What worked well and what would you have done differently?
  - How does this change the way you view your part-time job?
  - What are the implications on your future education and career goals?