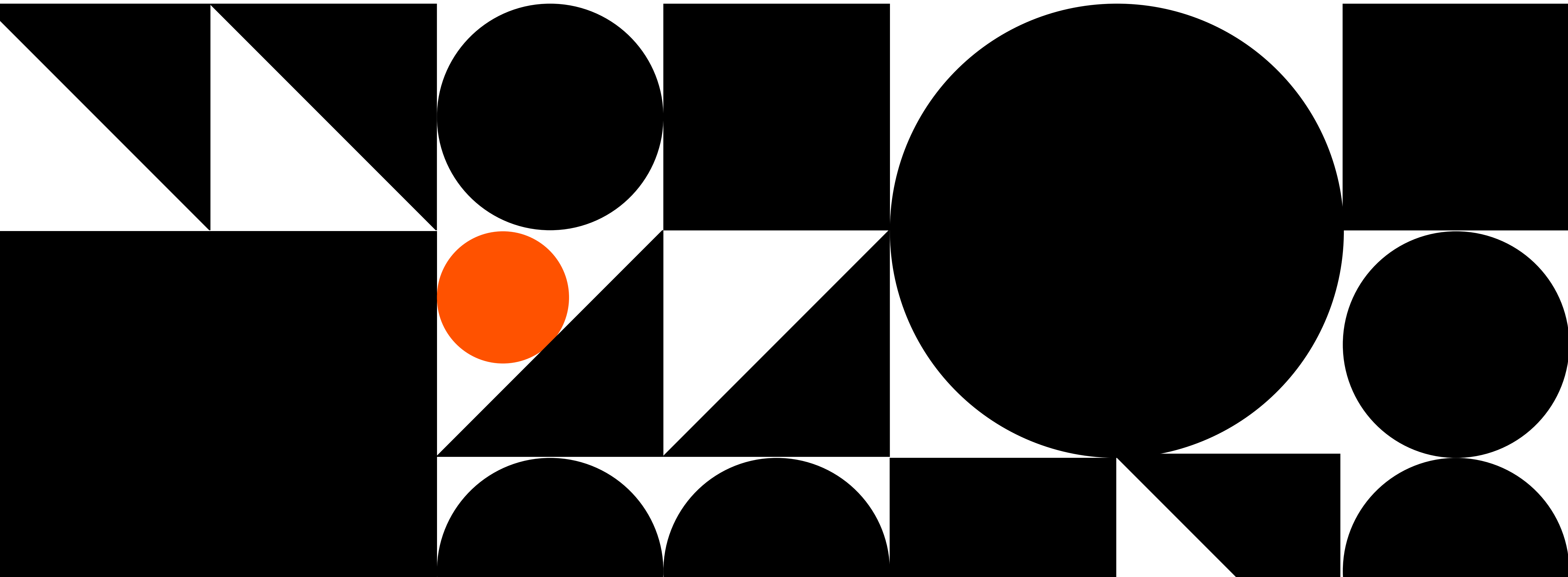


# **BUILDING THE PERFECT PORTFOLIO**



**It's taken years to get here, but now it's time to get a job. And to do it you'll need one hell of a portfolio. There are thousands of graduates and they're all after the same thing. Your folio needs to be beautifully designed, personal to you and unique enough to make people remember and want you.**

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In these unusual times, it's even more important to make sure your portfolio is the best it can be. You might not get the chance to present in person, so make sure your portfolio reflects your skills and personality.

1

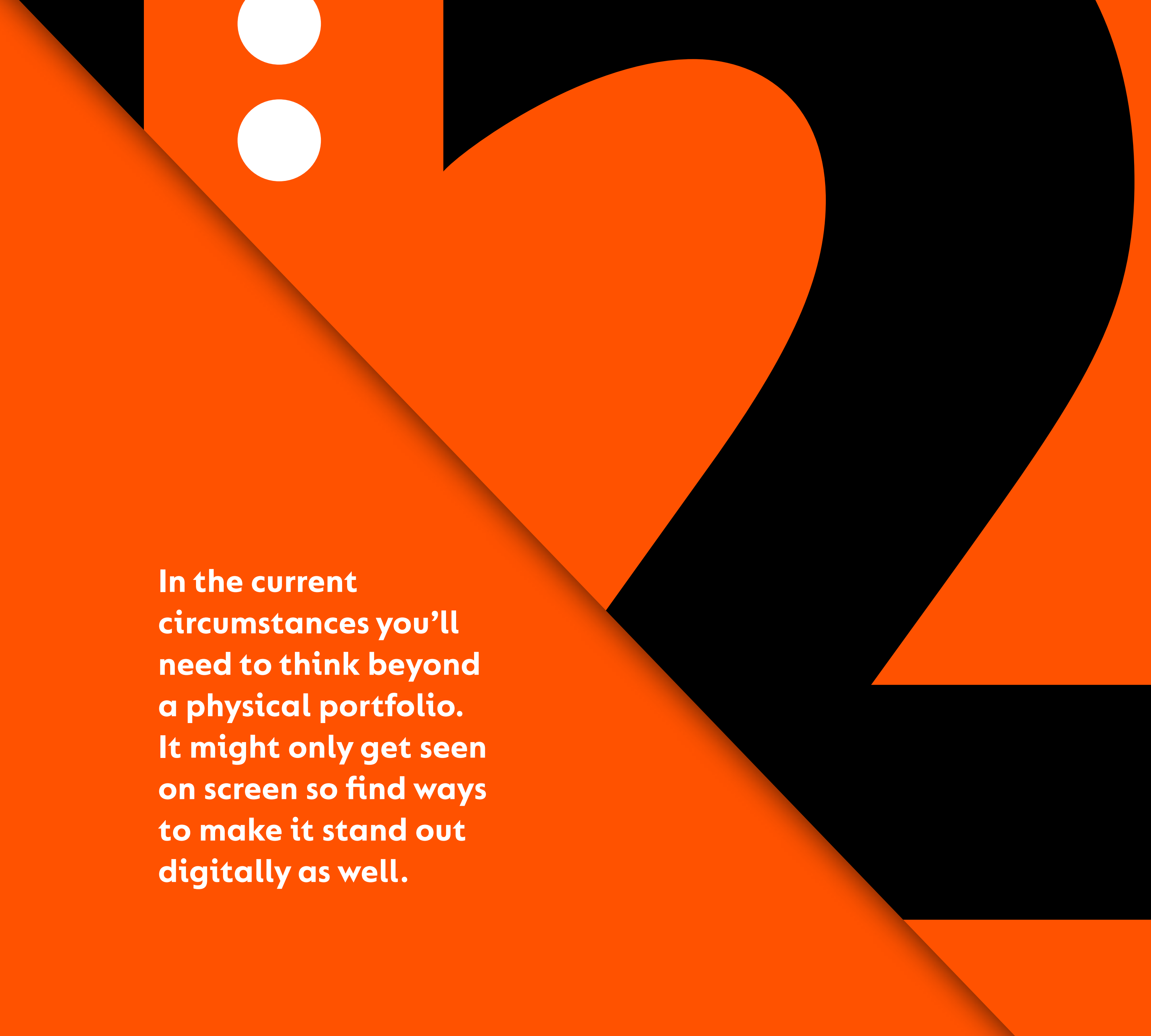
## SELF EDIT

Don't just throw it all in, be selective. You need your best work that you'll be proud to show to give you the best chance. Aim for about 10 projects, with one that shows your design process.



# NO PLASTIC WALLETS

Create a folio that's unique to you, that means no generic black folders or wallets that hide your work. Something original will make you stand out and show that you really care.



**In the current circumstances you'll need to think beyond a physical portfolio. It might only get seen on screen so find ways to make it stand out digitally as well.**

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# 3

## **MAKE IT LOOK GOOD**

If it's scruffy and disorganised then that reflects on you. It should be considered, clear and tell the story of your work without you needing to be there to present it.





4

## **SHOW IDEAS**

Along with your folio showcase rough ideas, sketches and your design process. Excite them and demonstrate that you understand the process – research, idea generation and design craft.



# CRACK THE FORMAT

Printed loose A3 sheets in a swanky box are a good idea – this makes it easy to update and hand around. Or a printed book. If you want a digital job, make an interactive portfolio.



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A printed folio is always best, but think about ways to make your work stand out digitally as a PDF, keynote, website, showreel or on social media just in case this is the only way you get to show it off in the circumstances.



## **MAKE IT RELEVANT**

Once you know where you want to work, tailor your folio to fit. It'll be harder to make it into a packaging agency with a folio full of books and digital work, for example.



# GET THE ORDER RIGHT

Treat your folio like a film – start and end with the very best work. It'll help them remember you. With at least one project show your design process from start to finish too.

# 8

## **SORT SAMPLES**

It's always great to show the real thing, like mock-ups of books and packaging. This will make your presentation very interactive, so that you can pass things around and be engaging.

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It's always great to show the real thing, like mock-ups of books and packaging. This will make your presentation very interactive, so that you can pass things around and be engaging.

**You might not get the opportunity to show your samples in real life so get creative with how to show it virtually, like working up a 3D render or doing a video to show how your design works in a physical space.**

The background features a large white circle on the left side, partially overlapping a black circle in the center. Several other orange circles of various sizes are scattered across the white background. A black curved shape is visible on the left side, partially overlapping the white circle.

## **A FOLIO IS FOR LIFE**

Your shiny new folio is ready, but it's never finished. Keep it up to date along the way, out with the old and in with the new. As a designer you're always learning and developing your skills.

**You've nailed your portfolio – well done! But don't get too comfortable, you need to get it under people's noses and impress them with your skills. It's time to put yourself out there and get noticed...**



# Dear

.....

# Please give me a job.

# Please.

# Pretty please

## **FIRST CONTACT**

Your first contact is incredibly important. Write a personal letter to a named person in the agency saying why you want to work for them and the top line of why they would want you – it will help you stand out. Also show you've done your research and put something in the letter about the company you're writing to. Letters are always best, but if you have to email never do a 'round robin' to lots of agencies, it should still be personal.

You could even see your first contact as a design challenge. If it's a packaging studio, send the letter in a specifically designed package.

**Make yourself stand out.**

# Dear

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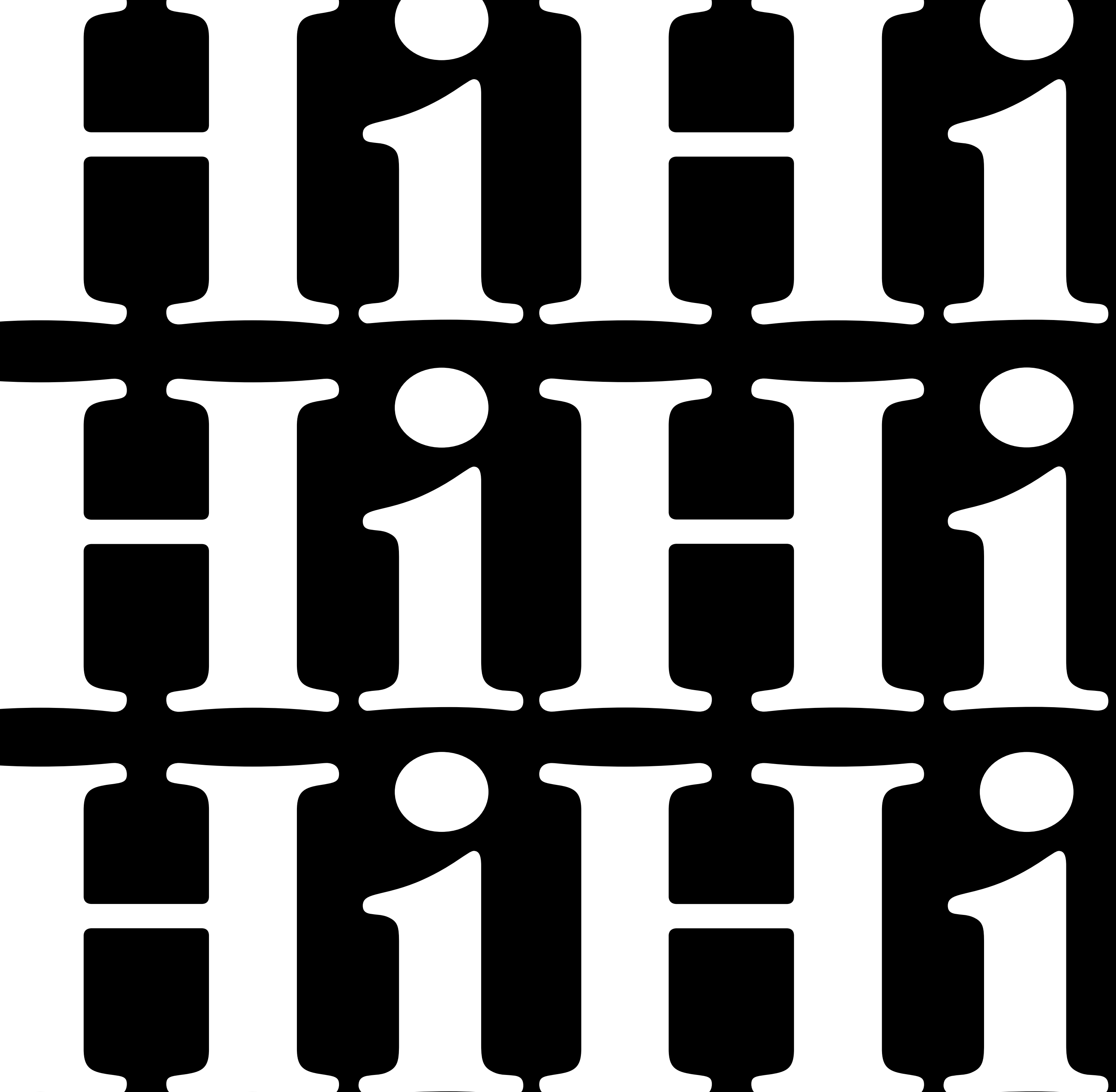
are always

never do

it show

Y

**With a lot of agencies working from home at the moment, a letter might not get through in time so email is the way to go. Be aware that people might be busier than usual so keep it focussed and to the point.**



## **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK**

Go to events and exhibitions whenever possible. Contacts are invaluable in the design industry and you never know who you might meet, and what advice you might get. It'll help you determine what kind of company you want to work for and the type of designer you are and aspire to be in the future.

Enter student competitions, anything to get your name out there and get even more practice generating and developing your ideas and presenting your work.



**It's unlikely that events and exhibitions will be happening for a while, but that doesn't mean you can't network or contact people. Get active on social media and engage through messages, comments and tweets. There are still virtual events and competitions going on so seek them out and get involved.**

## **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK**

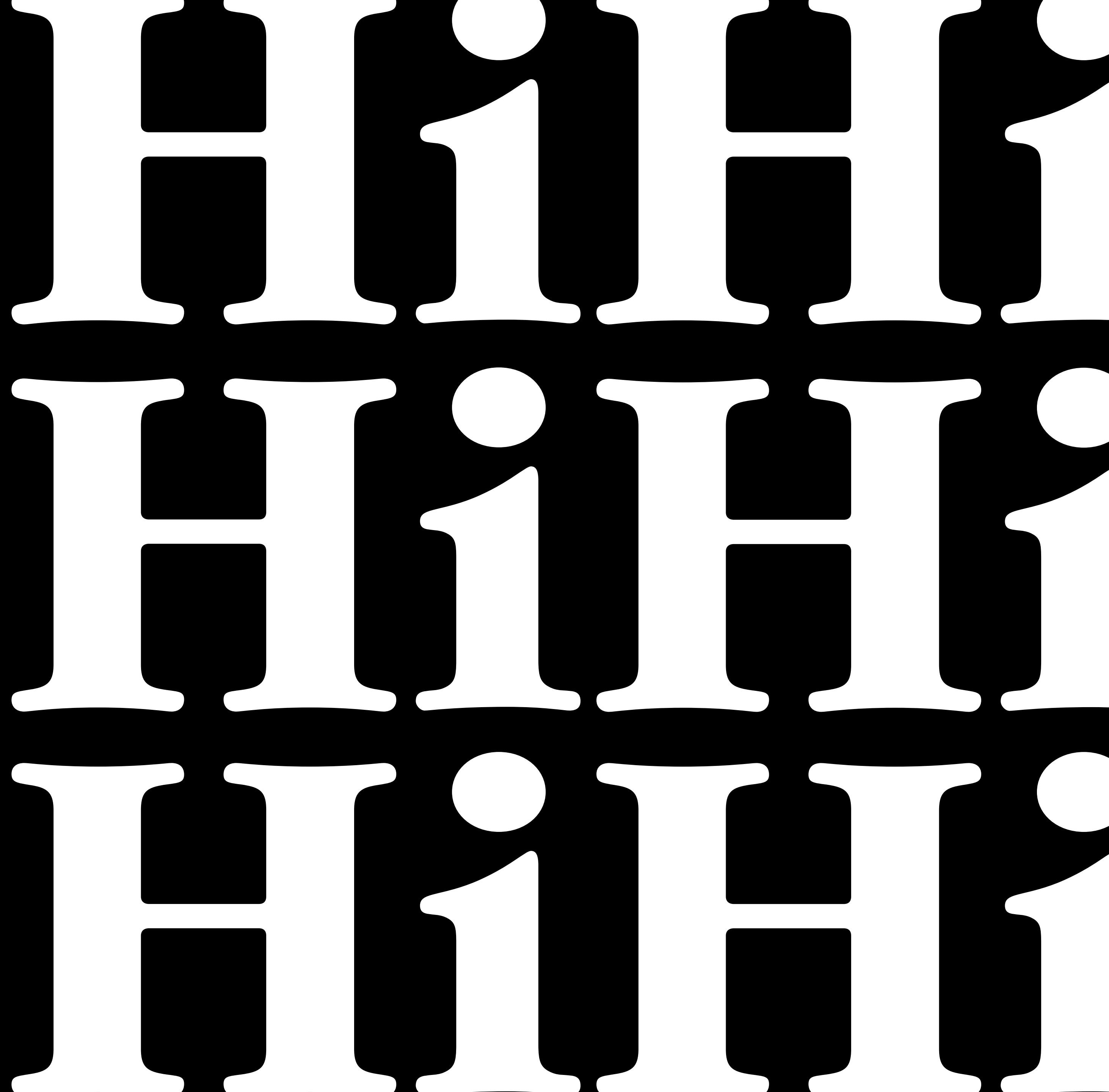
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Placements really do help, they give a greater understanding of how the design industry works outside of University and real experience of deadlines, project restrictions and working within a creative team.

Even a one week placement can provide useful insight into studio life. If you do get a placement work hard and be nice to people. Don't be afraid to fail or ask a silly question, it's how you'll learn and it shows you are engaged in the conversation.

Be prepared to work as part of a team, share your ideas and the credit. Making a brew or two goes a long way to integrating you into the team!



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**Become a pro at video conferencing – this might be how you are interviewed. Placements could be tricky, so consider freelance work or self-initiated briefs.**





# INTERVIEWS

If you're lucky enough to land an interview – either for a placement, internship or full time role – be prepared for doing it over a video call.

Usual interview rules apply so dress appropriately, be prepared to ask questions and know your portfolio inside out.

However video calls come with their own rules and quirks, so make sure you have the best set-up you can. Consider what can be seen at the other end, and use it as another opportunity to present yourself in the best way.

As a minimum make sure the space is neat, tidy and uncluttered. Small touches like some samples of your work in shot will help you look more professional.

From a practical point of view, make sure your camera is set up at the right angle and that you have the best Wifi you can. A slow or bad connection can make the process a real pain which could reflect badly on you.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

It's probably the most important typographic layout that you'll ever do. Design a CV that makes you stand out. Often it's the first thing that will be seen so it should be beautifully set and represent you – as a creative and professional designer.

Your CV is much more important than you think. So don't treat this as just something you have to do or an after thought. It should be a natural progression of your portfolio and personal to you. For example you might have created your own visual identity that could carry on into this piece.

Write it, read it and set the typography to look as beautifully simple as you can.

A CV can help you make a really good first impression. Talk about your experience, any placements you've done, your education, qualifications, the skills you have – you know, that sort of thing.

Lastly say a bit about you – what you like doing, interests, clubs, volunteering – they need to get to know you and envisage you as part of their team.

**PS – Don't forget to spell check it.**





**Be bold. Put yourself out there. Be open to critique. Show initiative. Be prepared to fail before you succeed. Ask questions. Ask even more questions. Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Research everything and then research it some more. Be inquisitive. Be indispensable. Soak everything up. Learn from every experience. Practice. Practice. Practice.**

## **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

Hopefully this guide has helped you build the perfect portfolio and land your perfect job. But if there's one thing to remember; every job is different. And everyone wants something different from a new employee or a junior graphic designer. The best advice is to know your audience.

Know who you are trying to connect with. Know where you are trying to work and do everything you can to appeal to them specifically. Show them why they can't do without you.

**Be bold. Put yourself out there. Be open to criticism. Show initiative. Be prepared to fail before you succeed. Ask questions. Ask even more questions. Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Research everything and then research it some more. Be inquisitive. Be indispensable. Soak everything up. Learn from every experience. Practice. Practice. Practice.**

**It's a challenging year to be entering the job market, but don't despair. There are still opportunities and jobs out there. Use your time productively and keep up the momentum. And remember these uncertain times will pass, your design adventure is for life!**

Know  
with. Know  
to work an  
can to appe  
Show them why  
without you.



Get in touch if you'd like any advice:  
[info@stbgraphicdesigners.com](mailto:info@stbgraphicdesigners.com)

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