

ninedots

Getting started as a Designer

If you're at the beginning of your design journey, or you're thinking about a career change - this is for you!

Design is an incredible world to be in. Whether you're a UX Designer getting into the nitty gritty of what people actually want from their products, a Product Designer working on the next amazing app that will be downloaded en masse, or a UI Designer creating a product that is intuitive and easy to use - you've made a great decision!

The purpose of this guide is to start you off on the right foot when it comes to things like courses, portfolios, interviews etc. to help you get to where you want to be!

Courses!

There are a lot of courses out there, and it can be hard to know which ones are worth looking at. No course will ever be a waste of time (you're investing in your future!), but before going in you should consider what you want to get out of it.

If you're completely new to design, then a longer course will give you the formal training, or if you come from a background in, say, architecture and want to move into UX then maybe a masters or a shorter one will suffice. Always consider what you want to get out of it. A few courses that we recommend (having spoken to designers who have done them, and hiring managers) would be:

Degrees & Masters

Interaction Design, **NCAD**

UX Masters, **IADT**

Creative Digital Media & UX, **TU**

Diplomas/ Shorter Courses

Professional Diploma in UX Design, **UX Design Institute**

Various courses, **Interaction Design Foundation**

Give Good UX, **Joe Natoli**



If you're not sure on the path you want to go down, you could always try free/ more affordable introductions to design. **Udemy** has a lot of great ones to try!

Portfolio!

Your portfolio is incredibly important. When you get to a certain level of experience it doesn't carry *as much* weight, but certainly while you're hands on as a designer you'll be expected to have one.

Always consider the user when it comes to your portfolio. Who will be reviewing it? Do they come from a design background? (they might not!)

It's incredibly important to build out your portfolio well so that you can show off all that you can do. Portfolio sites (as opposed to PDF docs) are much easier to include with any application you make. Squarespace and Wix are quite easy to use for this. There is a lot of advice out there on the internet, but here are some resources which will help you on your way!

[Design principles for building your first portfolio](#)

[How to structure your UX portfolio](#)

[NN/g steps to creating a UX Design portfolio](#)

[Inspiring UI Design portfolios!](#)

[What recruiters look for in your portfolio!](#)

[Design portfolio resources](#)

Applying for Jobs

When the time comes for you to apply to jobs, it's always a better approach to be intentional about your applications, rather than spraying and praying!

Here are some tips:

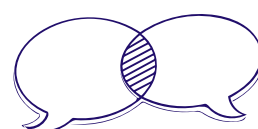
- Be aware of your experience. Most job adverts have what the company would ideally like in their next team member, but sometimes there's flexibility (flexibility where if they're looking for five years experience and you have four and a half, rather than if they're looking for six years and you've six months)
- Is your portfolio linked on your CV? Is it easy to find?
- Is your CV designed? Does it stand out and have easily digestible information? A well put together CV has more impact than one that's just a page of text
- If you're reaching out to a recruiter/ sending a cover note with your application **don't copy and paste!!** Write a new message for each one, or at least adapt one you've sent before. Make sure you don't apply to company X and tell them how interested you are in company Y! Your response rate will be better if you spend the time tailoring a message



Set up job alerts on LinkedIn, Indeed or your preferred jobs board!



Interviewing



This is easier said than done, but try to remain calm when interviewing!

No hiring manager, recruiter, Head of Design, Principal Designer etc. is trying to catch you out, or wants you to be stressed. You're contributing to the growth of design in Ireland, and everyone wants you to succeed.

With that being said, when it comes to interviews, companies do have certain things they need on their team. Your interview is a series of meetings to see if you're the best person for their team, and if their team is the best fit for you!

Here are a few pointers to get started with preparing:

- **Research** the company! Know who you're speaking to and why you're interested in joining them. You don't need to know everything, but at least research what the company does and what they're about
- **Practice!!** If you know that you have an interview coming up where you will need to discuss your experience, then practice what you're going to say. This isn't about memorising anything, but more so to make you comfortable discussing your experience
- Try to remain **concise** (but detailed) with your answers. The temptation may be there to go down a rabbit hole, but do your best to stay on topic and keep your answers relevant to the question
- Understand your **strengths and weaknesses**. Everyone has a weakness, and it doesn't make you less of a designer if you're stronger in one area than another. A weakness is just an area where you can grow more, so don't be afraid to own it
- If you're working with a recruiter, **ask questions!** They should be able to tell you what the interview process is like so that you know ahead of time what you can expect.

For some more help with interviews, download our Design Interview Prep Guide [here!](#)

Welcome to the World of Design!

Starting out in any industry takes time, patience, dedication, *tears*, determination and resilience.

Stick with it. You can do it!

This is the most challenging part of your career, getting that first opportunity, but don't give up if you don't get something straight away. The design industry in Ireland continues to mature, and there are more and more companies investing in building out design teams.

When the teams are on the smaller side, they may not be able to support a new designer in terms of mentorship, but as they grow more opportunities for junior designers become available.

Last, but not Least....

Rejection, while not a fun thing to talk about, it happens.

Though it's not personal.

If you apply to a Senior Design position, when you don't have the experience of a Senior Designer it's not a personal thing against you at all. **Remember that.**

If you have a few years of Graphic Design experience and apply for a Senior UX Design position, that also might not result in moving forward to an interview. Again, it's nothing against you personally - it's just that the company needs senior UX experience.

For each setback you have, you're getting closer to the right place for you. So don't think that rejection means you're not good enough. It doesn't. It just means this isn't the one for you.

If you would like some advice, some feedback on your portfolio, a CV review or anything at all - we're happy to help! Pop an email over to Aisling and she will get back to you - Aisling@ninedots.io