

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET A PLACE IN THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN?

TP School of Design is Singapore's most established design school in a polytechnic. With its most comprehensive range of courses, there is no better place to do design. Your entry ticket to this award-winning school via the Early Admissions Exercise is a well thought-out, nicely crafted, comprehensive portfolio of your work that will impress a panel of Design lecturers.

Don't have a portfolio? Not sure how to get started?

Don't worry, because this is the Ultimate Definitive Guide that will help you nail that design interview and put together a decent portfolio. This is the power manual that will give you the inside guide into getting a place in TP School of Design.

BUT FIRST, DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you're not afraid of hard work, picky about details, curious about the world, ask why not more than why, love to document life, got a bit of an idealistic streak, love to share your opinions, got lots of great ideas and an eye for strong aesthetics, then you might be the one we are looking for.

What we look for:

- Energy**
- Passion**
- Tenacity**
- Curiosity**
- Idealism**
- Leadership**
- Interest**
- Diversity**
- A wide range of interests**
- Guts and grit**
- Confidence**

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio is not a collection of certs. It is a collection of your work. Your sketches, your videos and short films, the music you write, your artwork, your craft pieces – anything that tells us who you are, what your interests are, where your passions lie.

A portfolio can be a physical collection of work or it can be digital and stored online – think online portfolio sites like Behance or a website you created (eg Wix.com) or your very own YouTube channel, even a specially curated Instagram feed.

It can include but should not **ONLY** consist of your school 'O' Level Art or Design & Technology coursework. We are keen to see work that goes beyond that of schoolwork.

Testimonials from teachers are nice but not a deal-breaker if you don't have them.

Show us what you can do in art and design. We would love to see everything and anything that will give us a good idea of who you are, what your passion is in design, where your strengths are.

HOW TO MAKE A SHINY PORTFOLIO?

1. Draw

2. Photograph

3. Journal

4. Style

5. Craft

1. DRAW

Draw your world

your hand, your cat, your house, your bestie, your lunch. It's okay if it is imperfect because everyone's got to start somewhere.

Draw differently

don't just copy and trace your favourite manga character. Own it. Style and draw your own superhero if that's where your interest is.

Draw in different mediums

use pencil, pen, try chalk, use water colour, ink, oil – be as creative in your choice of media.

Bonus hint: if you can't draw, try different ways to style a picture. Pointillism is one example. There are many others. Lots of videos on YouTube and on Pinterest to show you how.

2. PHOTO- GRAPH

Everything around you – create an Instagram account with a clear and interesting thematic concept: eg interesting architecture, old houses, playtime, elderly, dying trades, canteen food etc.

A strong photography portfolio can be relevant for any design course. For example, if you have a strong interest in architecture, shoot a series of photographs featuring light, shadow, lines and shapes.

If Communication Design is your aim, shoot a series with a strong narrative, for example people with unusual pets, the unseen heroes around your school or neighbourhood – think strong human or social messages. If you are keen on fashion, style your own fashion shoot.


Get the picture?

3. JOURNAL



Prepare a visual journal or a creative journal. Document your life through tiny sketches, photographs, scraps of memorabilia, short reflections in a journal. It can have a thematic concept: for example, your trip to Japan, your daily life, your outings with friends, or even the life of your cat but it should be as visual as possible. If you keep nicely hand-written, hand-drawn study notes with little illustrations, this might be worth showing too.

4. STYLE



Put together a styleboard of images with a thematic angle. For example, if you are into fashion, prepare moodboards that show styles dictated by a concept, eg a specific colour or lifestyle or particular period in time, selected designers and so on.

For example, if you picked the colour red to focus on, all images on the styleboard should then reflect the theme and contain red accessories, red accents, red apparel. Have a very clear idea WHY you choose this thematic as you will need to explain this to us when you meet us at the interview.

Likewise, if you are applying for the interior architecture course, you can create styleboards that show your knowledge and passion for architecture. For instance, curate your styleboard with images to fit an idea eg modern Japanese minimalism, or Cubism architecture. Combine these with a rough proposed layout sketch of how your design would look when influenced with these styles.

5. CRAFT

Do something creative with your hands – pottery pieces, ikebana floral arrangement, a bag you sewed, pop-up cards you made and so on. Consider some of the following items:

Cards

Calligraphy

Resin jewellery

Custom-made badges

Leather pieces

Clay work

Pottery

Tiny architectural models

Hand-sewn dresses for dolls (or friends!)

It need not necessarily be all about design. For instance, if your passion lies in baking and you cooked up your own unique recipe for cookies or cake, that is also relevant. In fact, bring some for us to sample too!

FOR THOSE CONSIDERING

THE DIGITAL FILM & TELEVISION COURSE

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Scripts

Show us an interesting script you have written. It could be for a school play you have directed or just something you wrote for fun as you planned your dream short film. It need not be long but should tell us a good story.

Short videos

It can be as short as one minute. You can go longer than that of course. It should be enough to tell us the story you want us to see. Could be a school event, a family occasion, a music video or an original short film, or an outing with friends. What's important is the narrative. If you have submitted work for a competition, we'd love to see that too. Best part is you don't need fancy expensive equipment too. Shoot with just your mobile phone.

Storyboards

If you can't write, tell a visual story. Map a story via individual frames (like a comic strip) and sketch out what happens in each frame. Challenge yourself to tell a good story in 20 frames or less.



HOW WE SELECT YOU

Your choices matter

When you fill up your EAE application, it's really important to make your choices wisely. This is because you will only see ONE offer at EAE. Your first choice gets priority. In other words, if you picked Poly A for first choice and TP Design School for second choice, you will not see an offer from us if Poly A also offers you because Poly A will have priority. No matter how much we like you.

Even if all your three choices wanted to offer you a place, you would not see all three offers. You would only see just ONE offer, according to your priority of choice. So if you want a place in TP Design School, put us as first choice to maximize your chances.

The Aptitude Test

The aptitude test will now be combined with the interview. It is a quick assessment conducted on the spot during the interview which will look at some basic general knowledge about design and to see if you have some flair for design work. It is not something you can mug for; so just give it your best shot during the interview.

The Interview

You will face a panel of interviewers comprising of three senior staff from the School of Design. Don't worry we're a nice friendly bunch. We just want to get to know you a little bit better. The interview is a solo individual interview. It's just you and us. It's really not as scary as it sounds. Just be yourself.

HOW TO IMPRESS AT THE INTERVIEW?

Speak our lingo

If you know even a little about some design terms, (eg form, shape, lines, light, colour, shadow, contrast, exposure, material, story, angles, narrative) use them when talking about your work, or what you like about design in general.

Ask questions

Curiosity is a sign of a creative mind. It also shows how interested you are in the course and in the school.

Don't be shy

Keep the conversation going. Try not to be monosyllabic in your replies. Give examples of what you say and prolong our contact with you. We want to hear your story.

Smile!

It's okay to be nervous but don't let that get the better of you. Relax, and breathe. We are just there to get to know you. Smiles may sometimes help you connect with us better.

Dress to impress

T-shirts are okay but it's good to look neat and presentable. Not all designers wear all black, so don't try too hard. Keep it simple, smart and stylish. And if you can't decide, just wear your school uniform!

“WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS COURSE?”

AND OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

To help you be a little less nervous and to prep up a bit for the interview, here are some common questions we like to ask students when we meet them.

Tell us what you know about the course.

Did you attend the Open House?

What are your favourite books/magazines/films/songs/spaces?

What contemporary artist/designer inspires you?

Do you have a favourite designer?

Why do you want to do design?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

TIPS FOR THE E- INTERVIEW

Testing, testing

Test your equipment and make sure your wifi connections, camera and microphone are all working and the device you are using has adequate battery life.

Check your angles

You may have a beautiful forehead, but we'd like to see more of you, so be sure you angle your camera such that we can see your full face.

Light up your space

Set up your interview space at home early. Ensure that you are in well-lit space that is relatively quiet if possible.

Pen and paper

You'll need several clean sheets of paper (A4 or A3 size are all okay), pencils and pens to do the aptitude test 'live'. Colour pencils are optional. Have those ready and within reach on the table.

Get your stuff ready

Be sure to get your artefacts, your sketchbooks, your digital portfolio or websites all ready. You could also open all digital sites on the screen ahead of time so that you can easily toggle screens to show us your work. Have your IC on standby too in case we need to make sure you are who you say you are.

TIPS & RESOURCES

1.

If you don't know how to shoot a video, write a script, draw a still life, shoot great pictures, create a visual journal, take the initiative to learn. There is A LOT on YouTube, Pinterest to teach you. The effort you put into learning and trying will really go a long way to impress us!

2.

For interesting art supplies, look at \$2 shops like Daiso. Art and craft material are sold inexpensively there and you could find some interesting ideas to start your journey there.

3.

Remember: we are not looking for slick, finished work, or fantastic proficiency (you're coming to Design School to learn after all!) in design. We are looking for people with a heart for design.

4.

Show us rough sketches, doodles on textbooks etc. Take pictures of objects that you have made or may have given away.

FAQS

I have no portfolio. What should I do?

If you don't have a portfolio, spend some time and effort to make a quick one by using some of the ideas and suggestions offered in this guide.

I have no Art or D&T background. Can I still apply for Design?

It's okay if you don't have Art or D&T background. Many of our students still do well in Design without any prior knowledge of art and design. Design in fact, goes beyond mere drawing skills alone. It is a diverse discipline that involves the ability to think critically in search of solutions that meet the brief.

What are we looking for?

The short answer is, we look for creativity and passion for design. But creativity can be expressed in many ways, not just drawing and sketching. Those technical skills are teachable. It's okay if you can't draw. Creativity is found in the culinary arts, in music, dance, drama, film-making, writing, sewing and more. We look for people who are curious, who are willing to work hard, who enjoy different ways of looking at the world. We also look out for those who enjoy working with their hands to make something.

How many pieces of work must a portfolio have?

A good portfolio will give us an idea of the range of work you do. So anything from 5 pieces to about 15 would give us a good sense. Of course if you would like to show us more, that's always welcome!

FAQS

Must a portfolio be physical drawings or actual work?

No, not necessarily. A portfolio can be digital – scanned and uploaded into your tablet or laptop. It can be a blog or a website you've developed. If you can't bring physical objects you've made eg D&T projects or large-scale artwork, then take a picture and show us. Those who are interested in the Digital Film & Television course may bring scripts that they have written or short videos they have shot for personal or school projects.

What is the test about?

The aptitude test looks at how much you know about design in general. Some parts may test your ability to develop quick ideas or the way you look at objects, lines, shapes and the world around you.

Is the interview a group interview or a solo interview?

The interview is a chance for us to get to know you better, hence this is a solo interview. You will be facing a panel of three tutors from the School of Design. Smile and be brave.

What happens if I don't get selected?

Try, try again. Please apply at JAE after the release of the 'O' level results if you are still interested in a place in the School of Design.

How many places are you offering at EAE?

We are allowed to take up to 50% of the course at EAE. The remaining places will be offered after the release of the O Level results.