

3rd Year Check List - Build

Welcome to your 3rd year at RISD! By now, you're well on your way in your major, with a solid portfolio in development and growing confidence in your skills and critical thinking. This year is about taking your work to the next level, networking, and gaining experience through internships or projects. This roadmap will guide you through this year as you prepare for your 4th year and think about your career after RISD.

Fall: Set Goals and Strengthen Your Network

Set Career and Skill Goals

Start thinking about what you want to do after graduation. What kinds of jobs, creative work, or industries interest you? Based on that, set a few goals—like learning new skills, expanding your knowledge of a field, or building experience in certain areas that deeply engage you.

Refine Your Portfolio and Website

Choose your strongest, most recent work and organize it into a clean, professional [portfolio](#). Whether it's a PDF, website, or online platform like Behance, your portfolio should highlight your skills, creative voice, and the type of work you want to do. Think about the story you want to tell about your work.

Develop a List of Potential Companies & Organizations

Research companies, studios, artists, or organizations in your field where you'd like to intern, work, or collaborate with. Use our job board [ArtWorks](#) and other [industry resources](#) along with [LinkedIn](#), [RISD's Alumni Directory](#) and the ArtWorks Employer Directory to learn about employers and opportunities. Also research the companies and organizations from the [Design Portfolio Review](#), [Fine Arts Portfolio Review](#), and [Internship Connect](#). Keep a list with contact info and notes on each one to refer to later.

Attend Career Center Programs & Events

This is a great year to build your career knowledge and continue attending workshops, panels, and networking events related to your field. These can give you insight into industry expectations, networking skills, and potential career paths. Try to attend at least two to three career programs each semester. You'll receive career program emails and can also find programs on Involved and our [Events](#) page. [Internship Connect](#) takes place every Fall and is a terrific event to learn about internships and make professional connections.

Take Part in the Art of Business Series

Business skills can benefit every aspect of your creative professional goals - freelancing, studio practice, and full-time and part-time work. Gain knowledge from [Art of Business](#) guest speakers that can help you succeed and prepare you for what lies ahead in your professional life - finances, legal issues, pricing, marketing, and building your freelancing or business.

Consider Doing an Internship

Junior year is the most popular time to do an internship and you can begin your search now for an internship in Wintersession or Summer. Wintersession is an optional opportunity to gain hands-on experience through a short-term [internship](#) or course related to your interests. If you decide to participate, be sure to register it in [ArtWorks](#). The experience can provide you with portfolio-worthy work and help expand your network. If you're an international student, it's important to meet with [ISSA](#) and to confirm the requirements for [CPT - Curricular Practical Training](#) - if you plan on doing an internship in the U.S.

Connect with Alumni and Professionals

Build strong [connections](#) with alumni and other professionals working in your field via [LinkedIn](#) and the [RISD Alumni Directory](#) and introduce yourself as a RISD artist/designer interested in learning about their career paths. Your faculty may also be helpful with industry knowledge and connections.

Make a Career Advising Appointment

This can be an important year to meet with a career advisor. We can discuss your career goals, direct you to resources, advise on networking, and help you develop steps to move forward in your career development. Make an [appointment](#) to also get help with your resume and cover letters, portfolio feedback, internship tips, grant advice and more.

Winter: Take Time to Experiment, Expand and Plan

Engage in an Internship or Course

Participate in an [internship](#) during Wintersession or begin your search and outreach for an internship this summer. With Wintersession optional, experience a course during this time period within or outside your field. If you decide to participate, it can provide you with portfolio-worthy work and help expand your network.

Polish Your Resume and Cover Letter

Work with the Career Center to create a standout [resume](#) and [cover letter](#) tailored to your field. Include relevant coursework, major projects, leadership roles, jobs, and internships to show off your experience and dedication. Also your campus job

is already building skills you can carry into your creative career. Translate your job tasks into resume language that stands out and connect other work to creative industry skills and needs.

Create or Refine Your LinkedIn Profile

Establish a professional online presence by creating or refining your [LinkedIn](#) profile. Use it to connect with alumni, classmates, and industry professionals, and to share accomplishments or projects you're proud of. The Career Center can help guide you through this process and provide feedback on your profile.

Refine Your Networking Skills

Wintersession is a perfect time to practice [networking](#) in low-stakes environments. Take part in our annual 'Networking & Building Professional Relationships' program to get comfortable with these skills. Connect with peers, attend events, and try to reach out to 3-5 alumni in your field on [LinkedIn](#). Ask them about their creative interests, career paths from RISD, day-to-day work, and potential opportunities in their fields. Don't worry about their level or status; LinkedIn is all about making connections.

Practice Interviewing

Consider a mock [interview](#) with the Career Center to get comfortable talking about yourself, your work, skills, and goals. Practice describing your creative process and explaining the choices behind key pieces in your portfolio.

Learn New Digital Skills or Software

If you have the time and interest, Wintersession can be a great way to master new software or digital tools that are in high demand within your industry. Learning specific programs can enhance your skills and broaden your opportunities.

RISD's [LinkedIn Learning](#) gives you free access to a broad range of tutorials.

Use CreativeStudy Tutorials for Finance, Business, Legal, Freelancing Help

[CreativeStudy](#) can provide you with key personal business and finance knowledge that can be vital to your creative practice.

Start Preparing for Summer Opportunities

If you're planning to secure a summer opportunity, whether it's an [internship](#), assistantship, summer job, residency, grant, or on-campus experience, you can begin researching and applying during Wintersession. You can find opportunities through [ArtWorks](#) and other resources on our [Internships & Jobs](#) page. Some may have early deadlines, so it's helpful to polish your resume, tailor your portfolio to the opportunity, and apply early. The Career Center can work with you on all of these tasks.

Research Managed Grants & Internship Support Opportunities

You can find an array of [RISD Managed Grants](#) and internship support opportunities on these pages of our site. Many are available to juniors and this may be one of your last years to take advantage of them. Most have deadlines in

winter and spring. Begin researching them now for consideration this summer. Applying to these opportunities can help you gain grant, proposal, project development, and writing experience.

Spring: Apply, Prepare, and Advance Your Career

- Apply for Summer Opportunities**

Junior year is one of the key times to experience an [internship](#) or [artist opportunity](#) in the summer. Send out applications and reach out to employers and organizations. Make sure each application is customized for the position, highlighting the skills and experiences most relevant to the opportunity. Be sure to have a strong application package ready, including your tailored [resume](#), [cover letters](#), and portfolio

- Refine Your Portfolio**

Make sure your [portfolio](#) is ready for applications. Review it with a Career Center advisor for feedback, and update it with recent work or any special projects from Wintersession (if applicable).

- Attend the Design or Fine Arts Portfolio Reviews**

This is the perfect time to attend these major events to gain professional feedback on your portfolio as you prepare for internships, jobs, freelance and more related to your fields of interest and industries. Find lots of helpful information about the [Design and Fine Arts Portfolio Reviews](#) through their websites.

- Plan for Graduate Schools (if applicable)**

If you're planning to pursue [graduate studies](#), start researching programs, preparing your application materials, and ensuring deadlines are met. Begin working on your statement of purpose, gathering recommendations, and refining your portfolio for application.

- Engage in Student Organizations and Department Activities**

Use [Involved@RISD](#) to participate in clubs, student organizations, or department events which can help you build leadership skills, create connections, and add depth to your resume.

- Visit the Career Center for Advising & Resources**

Make an [advising appointment](#) to support you through the opportunities you're seeking and to further explore your interests and career goals.

Summer: Gain Experience and Plan for Senior Year

Build Experience Through Summer Opportunities

Gain hands-on experience by completing an internship, assisting an artist, participating in a residency program, working on a studio or gallery project, or pursuing a personal project. Document your work and reflect on what you learn to strengthen your portfolio and focus your goals for senior year.

Update Your Professional Materials

Add new work, experiences, and skills to your resume, portfolio, and LinkedIn profile. Keep these updated as you gain these experiences so you're prepared to show your work to employers or collaborators at any time.

Refine Your Networking Skills

Summer is also a great time for [networking](#). Try to reach out to 3-5 alumni in your field on LinkedIn. Ask them about their creative interests, career paths from RISD, day-to-day work, and potential opportunities in their fields. Don't worry about their level or status; LinkedIn is all about making connections.

Reflect on Career Goals for Your Fourth Year

As you step soon into your final year, take a moment to reflect on how far you've come. Which projects, ideas, or skills have shaped you the most? What do you want to accomplish before graduation—whether that's refining your body of work, experimenting with bold new concepts, or building connections for life after school? Setting clear intentions now can help you make the most of this upcoming milestone year and carry your momentum into your professional life after graduation. Also consider valuable Professional Practices classes that may be available in your department for this upcoming 4th year.

Explore Post-Graduation Opportunities

Start looking into companies, galleries, studios, residencies, arts organizations, and other creative spaces that align with your interests. Even if you're not applying yet, exploring what's out there can help you understand what opportunities exist and how to shape your goals and portfolio for life after RISD.