

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO
DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

 Accredible

FOREWORD

Thank you for downloading the Accredible Definitive Guide to Digital Badge Design. This guide is for issuers creating digital badge designs for students, members, affiliates, and more. In this guide we will explore digital badge designs issued for different pathways, how to keep badges consistent to brand style guidelines, and what goes into an eye-catching design.

Who we are: Accredible is an industry-leading digital credentialing platform. Founded in 2013, Accredible believes that everyone should be able to prove their credibility with ease regardless of who you are, where you live, or how you gained your knowledge.

Our experience serving millions of credentials globally has enabled us to understand and meet the needs of organizations undergoing digital transformation. As one of the longest-serving digital credentialing platforms, our insight into the space is unique and unrivalled. We provide actionable guidance at every step from research and evaluation, through to launch, growth, and development. Our knowledge informs the best practices for organizations to start, scale, and succeed in digital credentialing.

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Who is this guide for?

This guide offers actionable advice for organizations designing digital badges to deliver to their candidates. Discover how different badges are used for various learning environments and what key design elements should be included. Use the included print-friendly checklists to plan digital badge details and provide guidance for inhouse or external graphic designers.

How to use this guide

Use this guide to:

- Plan digital badge designs for various environments
- Establish what information to include in the design
- Create digital badges for progressive learning
- Understand what goes into successful design

AN INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL BADGES

What is a digital badge?

A digital badge is a type of credential issued to candidates for meeting certain criteria. This includes students completing educational courses, employees passing training, individuals signing up for membership or becoming an affiliate of a non-profit or association. Digital badges follow the Open Badge Format and are portable, verifiable, and include detailed context about the represented achievement or affiliation.



Digital badges are versatile in their use and can be issued as a standalone achievement or as part of a ‘stacked’ micro-credential collection. Stacked badges can be collected in various models:

- **Vertical:** Progressing through levels in a single topic, for example Microsoft Word levels 1, 2, and 3
- **Horizontal:** Building a collection of awards across numerous topics, for example Microsoft Word level 1 and Microsoft Excel level 1
- **Hybrid:** A combination of both vertical and horizontal where the learner builds a personal portfolio of different skills to various levels of competency, for example Microsoft Word levels 1 and 2, Microsoft Excel levels 1, 2, and 3, and Microsoft Powerpoint level 1

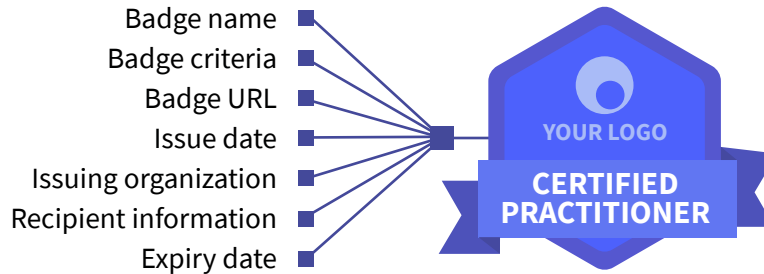


Standalone Badge

Progressive Badge Set

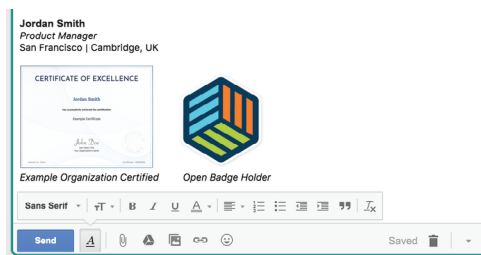
AN INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL BADGES

Digital badges are more than simple images. A digital badge created and issued through Accredible’s platform is automatically encoded with the necessary credential information. This ensures that badge designs don’t become cluttered and third-parties can still retrieve the important credential details.

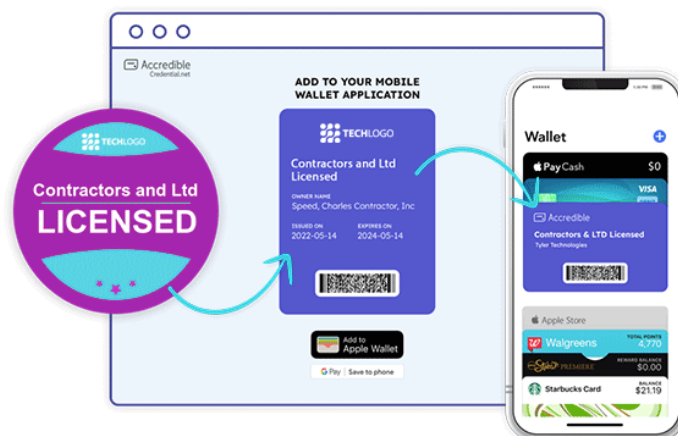


How to use a digital badge

Digital badges are easily shareable, can be added to LinkedIn profiles, and embedded on websites and in email signatures. Encouraging recipients to celebrate their achievements by sharing their digital badge is a great way to increase visibility for the brand and the credential. It also allows recipients to showcase their abilities and professional development for improved employability.



Using Digital Wallet Cards, recipients can upload their digital badge to the wallet on their smartphone device for display and verification on the go. This is convenient for recipients that have to show credentials when arriving on job sites or during an interview.



PLANNING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

Digital badges follow the Open Badge Infrastructure developed by the Mozilla Foundation and currently administered by IMS Global. The Open Badge Infrastructure states the included metadata should enable a third-party to verify:

- The recipient the digital badge was awarded to
- The skills/knowledge/experience gained

Contextual data helps to establish the value of the digital badge, especially for external use outside the native badging system, and should be thorough and detailed.

The badge image itself is the most visual part of a digital badging system and involves more consideration than simply throwing some design elements together. Issuers need to decide the type of digital badge to be delivered and how digital badges relate to each other, i.e. are they standalone achievements or part of a progressive pathway?

Types of Digital Badge

Skill Badge

Used to recognize professional skills gained through on-the-job training or education.

Knowledge Badge

Used to represent knowledge acquired through training, education, and experience.

Participation Badge

Used to recognize and reward participation such as volunteering, sponsorship, and attendance.

Identity Badge

Used to represent affiliation and membership to associations or communities.

Certification Badge

Used to award candidates for achieving a certification. Many organizations issuing career-advancing credentials tend to use digital badges to represent individual modules that culminate into a digital certificate.

Social & Life Skill Badges

Used to represent skills or experiences that fall under personal development.

PLANNING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

Types of Badge Pathway

There are various pathways that issuers can design digital badging systems around that enable candidates greater flexibility during skill or knowledge acquisition.

Standalone

A digital badge that doesn't specifically connect to any other digital badges through increasing levels or relevance.

Descriptive

Digital badges that enable candidates to choose their own learning paths that can be linear or non-linear.

Prescriptive

Digital badges that follow a linear sequential pathway of achievement and are usually set by the issuer, for example Microsoft Word levels 1, 2, and 3.

Other terms that are used to describe digital badge pathways include:

Stepping Stones

A sequential, prescriptive path of learning that candidates follow step-by-step as determined by the issuer.

Collection

A non-linear, prescriptive learning path that leads candidates to a specific collection of awards or achievements.

Constellation

A non-linear, descriptive learning pathway that puts control in the hands of the candidate and enables them to build a custom portfolio of ability.

What information should be included on the digital badge?

To support the design process, the information to be included in the digital badge image itself should be planned and decided before handing off to design.

Issuers often choose to include their branding or logo, the badge or award name, and the level of the badge (for progressive awards). Some issuers also include the recipient name, recipient ID, and the issue date.

The Accredible credentialing platform supports dynamic text known as 'attributes' across both digital badges and digital certificates. Attributes are dropped into the design and automatically return the required information in the final design when the badge is generated. This is useful when using a single badge design across many courses where the course name needs to change or for including recipient names or ID numbers without creating additional admin work.

PLANNING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN CHECKLIST

Planning a digital badge design checklist

Use the below checklist to help establish the preferred type of digital badging system and the information to include to inform each badge design.

Yes/No/Comments

Who is the target audience for the digital badge?

What skills, experience, or knowledge does the digital badge represent?

What type of digital badge will be offered?

What type of badging pathway will be used?

Is the brand style guide available for reference?

What specific brand stylings need to be included?

Logo

Color

Icon(s)

Do digital badges need to represent increasing levels?

What information will be included in the digital badge design?

Will attributes (dynamic text) be used in the design?

Is a graphic designer required?

CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

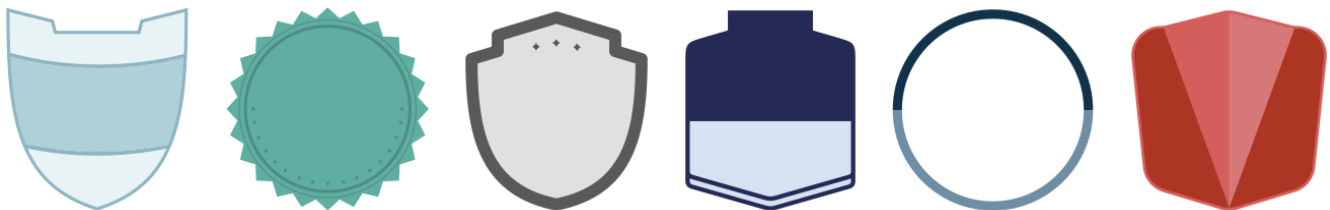
Digital badges are a portable representation of the organization which means style and branding need to remain consistent across different badge designs. How a badge looks will influence how the badge is perceived and contribute to how motivated candidates are to earn the badge.

Digital badges can be created through the Accredible platform. Navigate to **badge.design** to try out the Badge Builder Studio or **sign in via the dashboard** for full functionality.

Accredible's badge design tool is an easy-to-use drag-and-drop designer that includes a library of design elements including shapes, icons, and ribbons, and an image upload feature for adding logos, custom typography, and additional elements. This guide will refer to **Accredible's Badge Builder Studio** but the advice can be applied across all graphic design applications.

Choose a background shape

There are a variety of options for the background shape of a digital badge including circles, squares, shields, and other block geometric shapes. Accredible's badge design tool includes over 100 different background badge templates to choose from, all of which are easily customizable to feature the issuer brand colors.



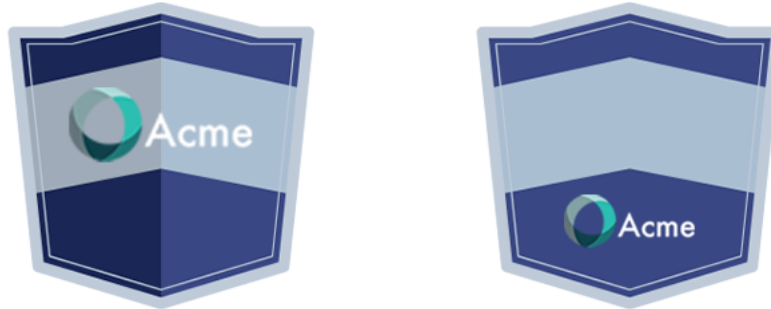
Designers can also start with a basic flat shape and add their own decorative elements such as borders, banding, decoration, and outlines.

Inspiration for choosing a background shape should be taken from the organization branding and what elements are used. For example, does the organization logo feature distinct geometric shapes or does the brand font have hard or soft corners? This helps styling remain consistent and increases brand recognition when viewed by third-parties.

CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

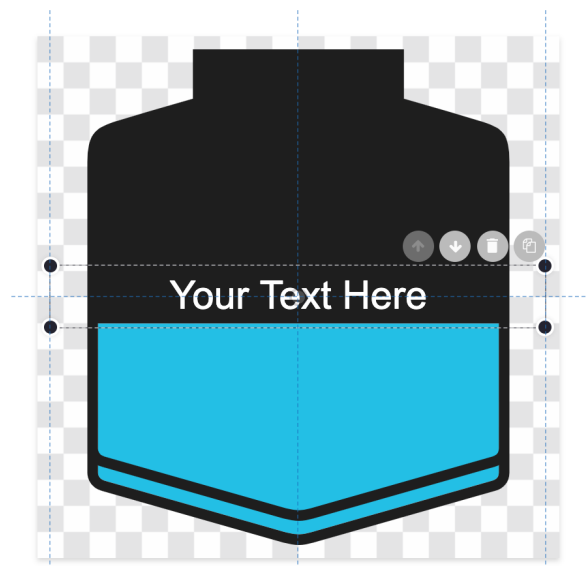
Add branding

The issuer of the digital badge should be identifiable at a glance. Logos and branding should be clear and legible on the badge, rather than squished or shrunk into a corner where they become distorted. Where brand colors have been used on the background shape, ensure that once the logo is added it is still visible and doesn't get lost against the background.



Add the logo or branding prior to any additional design elements such as icons or decorative images. This helps to keep the focus on the issuer, rather than cluttering the design and trying to fit everything in together. Once the logo has been added to the design, it's easier to see where additional elements can be included. Make sure to include the right size logo for the design, enlarging a logo image file that is too small can cause distortion and appears low-quality. For reference, the Accredible Badge Builder Studio shape templates measure 400px by 400px.

The Accredible badge designer includes 'smart guides' which appear during the design process. Smart guides make it easy to align elements to the overall design or to elements within the design and will helpfully snap icons into preferred positions. For finer control over positioning, designers can also use the keyboard arrow keys to nudge a selected element in small increments of 1px or hold shift + arrow key to move in 10px increments.



CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

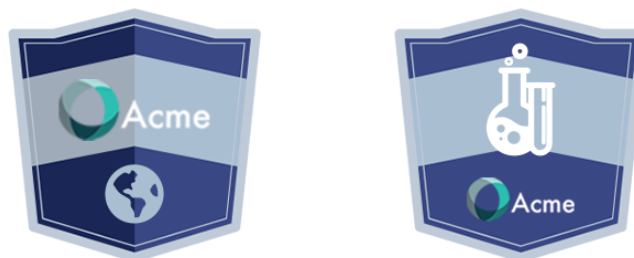
Add decorative elements

Decorative elements for digital badge designs are completely optional and should be used sparingly to prevent cluttering the design.

The most common decorative element added to a digital badge is the ribbon. Ribbons traditionally sit across the background shape and draw focus to a key piece of information such as the badge level, the badge name, or the issuer name. Ribbons can also be entirely decorative like those used on a physical rosette award.



Adding decorative elements such as icons can help identify the type of industry skill gained. For example, a microscope to represent a scientific achievement or art supplies to represent creativity. Decorative icons that differ across badge designs should share similar style characteristics to ensure consistency. For example, using one-color simple icons across all badges rather than switching between 3D shaded and one-color icons.

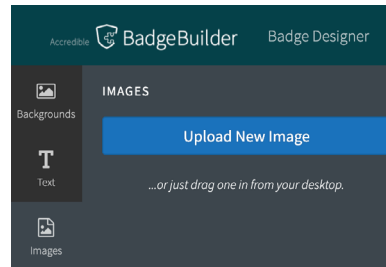


Decorative elements are also used to establish levels by including an increasing number of shapes such as dots or stars to recognize badges within a progressive pathway.



CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

The Accredible badge designer includes a library of flat one-color icons to use that can be customized to a preferred brand color. Issuers can also upload their own icons and images via the 'Images' tab using the 'Upload New Image' button.



Add attributes

For digital badge designs that need to generate constantly changing information as dynamic text, the Accredible platform includes the use of attributes. To access attributes, designers need to be signed into the Accredible platform. The badge designer is accessed via the 'Designs' option in the navigation bar, followed by clicking the 'Create Badge Design' button on the right-hand side of the page.

Once in the designer, navigate to the 'Attributes' option in the left-hand design menu and then select one of the default attributes to drop into the design. The appearance of the attribute is fully customizable including the color, alignment, font, sizing, and spacing.



Custom attributes can be set up by scrolling to the bottom of the default attribute list and clicking the 'Manage Attributes' button. *This will navigate the user away from the page so make sure to save any designs you are working on first.* Once the custom attribute is set up, navigate to the design tool or previously saved design and access the 'Attributes' option as before.

CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

Progressive badges

Progressive badges are designed in line with each other and clearly represent the pathways which candidates need to take.

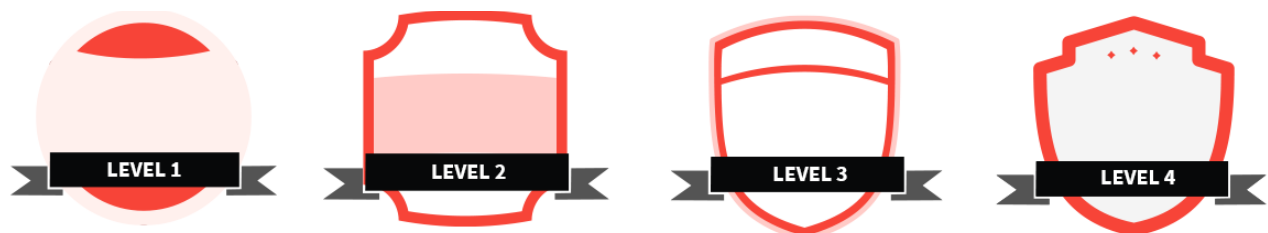


The badge colors and shapes are typically consistent across the individual badges with the increasing levels written on the badge and/or represented by icons including stars, dots, or other shapes.

There are many ways to design progressive badges. Some issuers use different colors to represent different levels.



Some issuers use different digital badge backgrounds to provide variation across levels while keeping design elements consistent to ensure they are recognizable as a collection.



CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN

If the planned progressive pathway is intended to culminate in a final badge, the “highest-value” badge within the collection should stand out against the individual level badges. This represents the increased importance of the final badge within the collection and motivates recipients to work towards the achievement.



CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN CHECKLIST

Creating a digital badge design checklist

Use the below checklist to inform the design process and what needs to be included or represented in the digital badge design.

Reminder: The Accredible Badge Builder Studio shape templates measure 400px by 400px.

Before creating the badge design

Yes/No/Comments

What shape will be used for the digital badge design?

Is an optimally sized logo image file available?

Will a ribbon be used in the design to highlight details?

What detail will be highlighted in the ribbon?

Are additional decorative elements going to be used?

What do the decorative elements need to represent?

Are attributes going to be used in the design?

Do custom attributes need to be set up?

Are progressive badge designs required?

Is a final badge design required?

CREATING A DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN CHECKLIST

After creating the badge design

Yes/No/Comments

Does the badge design meet the brand guidelines?

Is the badge issuer recognizable?

Is the text legible and correct?

Do the decorative elements fit the context of the design?

For progressive badges

Yes/No/Comments

Are badge designs consistent within the collection?

Are badge levels represented correctly?

Does the final badge standout in the collection?

IN SUMMARY

Designing a digital badge requires thought about what the digital badge needs to represent and how to balance the design elements. Key elements to remember when designing a digital badge:

- Digital badge designs should be instantly recognizable as belonging to the issuer.
- When adding branding and additional imagery to the digital badge design, image files should be optimally sized.
- Included imagery and decorative icons should be relevant to the award.
- Progressive digital badges should be designed similarly across the collection.
- Progressive digital badge levels should be clear and legible in the design.
- If a final badge is to be offered, this should stand out from the rest of the badge designs for that collection.

Experience making digital badges with the basic **Accredible Badge Builder Studio** or **sign up for a trial issuer account** for access to the full functionality of the design tool.

Looking to issue digital badges to over 20 unique recipients or require additional control over branding the credential experience? **Get in touch with the Accredible sales team** for further information and a platform demo.



Accredible

Accredible is the industry-leading digital credentialing platform that securely issues, manages, tracks, and verifies millions of high-stakes credentials across the globe. Accredible integrates with leading learning software including Canvas, D2L Brightspace, Kajabi, Kryterion Webassessor, Moodle, Thinkific, and more. Over 1,900 leading universities, associations, and technology companies such as Google, Skillsoft, Slack, the Association of Corporate Treasurers, Chartered Banker Institute, University of Cambridge, AMPP, Hootsuite, IEEE, Cengage, MIT, Rutgers, INSEAD, IAPP, UC Berkeley, AMBA, and The Digital Marketing Institute rely on Accredible to create, deliver and manage digital certificates and open badges. Learn more at accreditable.com

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