

Position Description Format for General Schedule Positions (GS)

A. Introduction

Define the unit where the position is located by name and geographical location, and provide a brief statement of the unit's mission. Also summarize the purpose of the position.

B. Major Duties

Give an overall view of the position and list all major duties which are regular and recurring. The order in which major duties are described may vary. Major duties will be listed in the order of their importance; however, they may be listed in the sequence in which they occur day by day, over a longer period of time, or during an entire cycle. Include percentages of time spent on major duties involving distinctly different kinds or levels of work (for example, clerical duties and inspection duties might be different kinds of work assigned to one employee).

If the position is a supervisory position, state the supervisory responsibilities following the major duties. The paragraph must:

- Identify the numbers and types of positions supervised; and
- Describe the scope and degree of the supervisor's responsibility for work planning and organization, work assignment and review, and for administrative functions.

A sample statement may read:

Provides technical and administrative supervision to the following positions: 1 GS-0503-07, Financial Technician; 1 GS-1105-06, Purchasing Agent; 1 GS-0318-5, Secretary; and 1 GS-0326-04, Office Automation Clerk. Following this statement, add the following paragraph:

Provides technical and administrative supervision. Makes and approves selections for positions and recommends selections for subordinate supervisory jobs; assigns and reviews work; approves and disapproves leave; evaluates performance; identifies training requirements and arranges for training. Assures equal opportunity is extended to all employees and candidates for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or non-disqualifying handicapping conditions.

C. Evaluation Factors

FACTOR 1: KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

FL: ____, ____ pts

This factor answers two questions:

- what kind and level of knowledge and skills are needed; and
- how are they used in doing the work.

Both parts of this factor will be addressed in order to write an accurate and complete KSA.

Under the Factor Evaluation System, the knowledge factor includes information or skills the employee must know and how they are used to do the work. Sometimes a description of a skill requirement, which is generally observable, will be more precise. Show only the major knowledge and skills essential for full performance of the work (describe what is required of an employee when they are hired for the job - not stuff they can learn on the job.) The KSA's should correspond to the major duties - remember major duties are performed 25% of the time so four or five KSAs is sufficient. The KSAs can also be used as the selective placement factors for recruitment.

What not to use in KSA's:

- Quality of work;
- Creativity;
- Personal characteristics;
- "Expert knowledge of ____" (not clear as to what this means - better to use "Master of ____ in order to____.") in this case;
- Education, licensure, or certification requirements;
- Description of a major duty, e.g., the incumbent directs the planning, programming, developing, and presenting of the...;and
- Duplication of KSA's but written in a different manner;

Most of these are inherent in the other factors or should be included in the employee's performance plan. Supervisor's have a tendency to want to include every knowledge, no matter how insignificant.

The following are brief examples of statements appropriate for this factor.

- Professional knowledge of civil engineering to design flood control structures;
- Knowledge of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation to correct obvious errors in draft material;
- Ability to use a variety of software to type documents on a personal computer; or
- Skill in conversational Spanish to interview witnesses.

FACTOR 2: SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

FL: ____, ____ pts

This factor has three sub-factors:

- how the work is assigned;
- what the employee's responsibility is for carrying out the work; and
- how the work is reviewed.

The first sub-factor considers how the supervisor defines assignments to the employee. For example, a supervisor might assign work with detailed instructions on how to do the work; instructions only for new, difficult, or unusual aspects of the work; suggestions for procedures to follow; or only information about the objectives, priorities, and deadlines.

The employee's responsibility measures the degree of independence the employee has in making

decisions. For example: an employee might work exactly as instructed; refer situations not covered by instructions to the supervisor; or handle all work independently according to established policies and accepted practices.

The nature and extent of review of positions range from close and detailed, to spot check, to general review. Note that it is not just the degree of independence that is evaluated, but also the degree to which the nature of the work allows the employee to make decisions and commitments and to exercise judgment. For example, many clerical employees perform their work with considerable independence and receive very general review. This work is evaluated, however, at the lower levels of this factor because there is limited opportunity to exercise judgment and initiative.

The following illustrates how this factor should appear in a position description.

- The supervisor assigns work, advises on changes in procedures, and is available for assistance when required.
- The employee independently plans and carries out the projects and selects the approaches and methods to be used in solving problems.
- Completed projects are reviewed to determine that objectives have been met and are in compliance with supervisory instructions.

FACTOR 3: GUIDELINES

FL: ____, ____ pts

This factor has two sub-factors:

- the kind of guidelines used in doing the work; and
- how much judgment is needed to use them.

The first sub-factor addresses the guides themselves. Employees may use guides, such as desk manuals, agency regulations, standard operating procedures, handbooks, policies, and precedents. Do not list every specific guideline used or by its actual name. For example, "agency regulations covering voucher processing" is far more meaningful than "XYZ Regulation 3210." The position description becomes outdated when you use specific names like "XYZ Regulation."

Specific instructions, procedures, and policies may limit the opportunity to interpret or adapt the guidelines. On the other hand, the absence of directly applicable guidelines may require the employee to use considerable judgment in adapting current or developing new guidance.

The following illustrates how this factor should appear in a position description.

- Written and oral guides provide specific instructions for doing the work.
- Most of these instructions are easily memorized and require little interpretation. When instructions do not apply, the problem is referred to the supervisor.

OR

- Guidelines include agency regulations and directives, manufacturers' catalogs and handbooks, precedents, and files of previous projects.
- These guidelines are generally applicable, but the employee makes adaptations in dealing with problems and unusual situations.

FACTOR 4: COMPLEXITY

FL: ____, ____ pts

The factor has three sub-factors.

- the nature of the assignment;
- what the employee considers when deciding what must be done; and
- how difficult and original are the employee's actions or responses.

It is important to study the applicable Factor Evaluation System standard before describing this factor because the kind of information needed differs from occupation to occupation. Characterize the work in terms of the nature and variety of the tasks, methods, functions, projects, or programs carried out. This factor level should illustrate how the employee applies the knowledge and skills described in Factor 1.

Some employees have little or no choice about how to perform the work. Others may have to develop, analyze, or evaluate information before the work can progress. The level of difficulty in carrying out the work varies depending on whether the facts or conditions are clear-cut and apply directly to the problem or issue; vary according to the nature of the subject matter, phase, or problem handled; or involve unusual circumstances and incomplete or conflicting data. In some situations the work is mastered easily, and the employee takes the obvious course of action. The level of difficulty and originality increases as the employee considers differences in courses of action and refines methods or develops new techniques, concepts, theories, or programs to solve problems.

The following examples show how descriptions for this factor level can differ depending on the occupation.

Mail Clerk -

- The assignment involves opening, sorting, and routing mail by general subject matter to approximately 150 delivery points and by specialized subject matter to 70 or 80 points.
- The employee examines the content of a variety of materials to identify and associate subject matter with closely related technical units.
- The employee determines proper routing or other action to take.

Engineer -

- Projects involve developing designs, plans, and specifications for a variety of utility systems for multistory buildings.

- The engineer considers factors, such as unusual local conditions, increased emphasis on energy conservation, and the relationship of problems and practices related to engineering fields.
- In making decisions the employee is often required to depart from past approaches and to extend traditional techniques or develop new ones to meet major objectives without compromising design and engineering principles.

FACTOR 5: SCOPE AND EFFECT

FL: ____, ____ pts

This factor has two sub-factors.

- the purpose of the work; and
- the impact of the work product.

The first sub-factor states the objective to be achieved. This may involve the conclusions reached and decisions or recommendations made; treatment or service provided; results of tests or research performed; or approvals or denials made. Do not confuse this sub-factor with Factor 4, Complexity. Factor 4 deals with how the work is done to fulfill the purpose described in Factor 5.

The impact of the work product or service identifies who or what benefits from the employee's work and how this benefit is realized. Consider only the effect of properly performed work.

When "responsibility for accuracy" is critical in a position, it should be reflected in the complexity involved and the special knowledge required.

The following examples show how descriptions for this factor level can differ depending on the occupation.

Mail Clerk -

- The purpose of the work is to maintain control and reference files for incoming correspondence.
- The work contributes to the efficiency of daily operations of the organization.

Engineer -

- The purpose of the work is to provide technical expertise in the design of....
- This work affects the quality of designs of mechanical systems aboard floating plants and equipment used in dredging activities throughout the agency nationwide.

FACTOR 6: PERSONAL CONTACTS

FL: ____, ____ pts

This is a one-part factor covering the people contacted and the conditions under which the contacts take place. Creditable contacts are those made both face-to-face and by telephone.

Describe contacts in terms of the work relationship, unusual circumstances in arranging the exchange, problems in identifying the role or authority of those taking part, or use of different ground rules in different situations. Do not include contacts with supervisors in this factor; they are credited under Factor 2.

FACTOR 7: PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

FL: ____, ____ pts

This is a one-part factor explaining the purpose of the contacts described in Factor 6. This factor can be described by the following examples: to give or exchange information; to resolve problems; to provide service; to motivate, influence, or interrogate persons; or to justify, defend, negotiate, or settle matters. As appropriate, information that could affect the nature of the contacts can be covered. This might include, for example, dealing with people who are skeptical, uncooperative, unreceptive, or hostile; or, settling controversial issues or arriving at compromise solutions with people who have different viewpoints, goals, or objectives. Factors 6 and 7 presume that the same contacts will be evaluated for both factors. Therefore, use the same personal contacts that serve as the basis for the level selected for Factor 7 when selecting a level for Factor 6.

FACTOR 8: PHYSICAL DEMANDS

FL: ____, ____ pts

This is a one-part factor describes the nature of physical demands placed on the employee. Efforts such as climbing, lifting, stooping, and reaching can be important. The factor level should state how often and how intense the activity is and should include any physical characteristics or special abilities needed, such as specific agility or dexterity requirements. This factor relates to the application of the knowledge and skills mentioned in Factor 1.

FACTOR 9: WORK ENVIRONMENT

FL: ____, ____ pts

This is a one-part factor describes the physical surroundings in which the employee works and any special safety regulations or precautions that the employee must observe to avoid mishaps or discomfort. It is not necessary to describe normal everyday safety precautions, such as use of safe work practices in an office or observance of fire regulations and traffic signals. This factor relates to the application of the knowledge and skills mentioned in Factor 1.

Add the total points and convert to a grade using the Grade Conversion Chart found in the classification standard. For example,

Total points = 2,355 which converts to GS-11
(GS-11 point range is 2,355 - 2,750 pts)

D. Other Considerations (Check if applicable)

- Supervisory Responsibilities (EEO Statement)
- Training Activities - Career Intern, Student Career Experience Program
- Motor Vehicle or Commercial Driver's License Required
- Pesticide Applicators License Required
- Safety Officer Collateral Duties
- Radiological Protection Officer Collateral Duties

- Environmental Management Officer and Member Collateral Duties
- EEO Collateral Duties
- Drug Test Required
- Vaccine(s) Required
- Financial Disclosure Required
- Special Physical Requirements/Demands
- Special Agency Check (SAC) and limited background investigation required for Research Leader positions
- SAC and full background investigation required for positions working with BSL-3 (or higher) agents, or in BSL-3/BSL-4 facilities.
- Other:

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