



Writing Effective KSAs

"Tips for Enhancing your ability to
submit quality KSA's"



USDA – NRCS Federal Women's Program

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2007*

Greetings,

Writing great KSAs, KSAs that will help you make the best qualified list is an intimidating task. Why? KSAs are the first impression of your work. They are the key to you being placed on the best qualified list, to you being asked for an interview. You have this one opportunity to express your work in a way that tells the reader the story of simply put, your knowledge, skills and abilities. All this on less than two sheets of paper. KSAs are intimidating because you don't know the secrets, you don't know what reviewer's are looking for and you are not confident in your writing skills.

Don't stress! As you review this document and see for yourself what writing effective KSAs entails, the intimidation eases and your confidence will grow in its place.

You will find an easy to understand process for writing effective KSAs. You will find list of action words to use, a sample cover letter, sample KSAs and lots of additional information and tips that will guide you towards your goal of advancing towards the next step in your career.

This book is a guide. Always read the vacancy announcement carefully. Take your time and plunge on. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Sharyn C. Alvarez
NRCS-National Federal Women's Program Manager

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Marianne Williamson

Regarding: Moving Up! Tips for preparing KSA's and your application.

Hello

I don't remember who gave me this information. I do know it was a friend, someone who wanted to help me. It is one of the best pieces of information on completing applications and KSAs and has served me well. To this very day, the process for applying for positions includes reviewing this booklet. So I decided to update the cover, make copies and share it with you.

Please note that the information in this document is a guide. *You should always thoroughly read the vacancy announcement for the position you are applying for and carefully follow the instructions.*

You will see a few terms that are obsolete, i.e. SF-171, don't disregard the good information here because of a few obsolete terms, don't assume that because this document was first developed in 1988 that the information in it is irrelevant.

Take a few moments to review this document, save it and most of all share it with others. If you want to "Move Up", you are responsible for providing the best possible portrait of your knowledge, skills and abilities. This book will help you.

Moving Up: Tips for Preparing KSA's and SF-171's

THE HIGHER YOU CLIMB on the career ladder, the fewer the jobs and the tougher the competition. Management referrals are a thing of the past in the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Unlike the private sector where job applicants are selected for interviews based on a brief resume of experience and education, Federal job applicants must demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for a position extensively in writing in addition to filling out the "Personal Qualifications Statement," Standard Form (SF) 171.

The result? Many otherwise competent employees who don't know how to "sell" themselves on paper are finding it harder than ever to climb the career ladder.

"Selling" oneself may have a negative connotation to some. After all, we're not used to automobiles. We're human beings with thoughts, feelings, talents, and values.

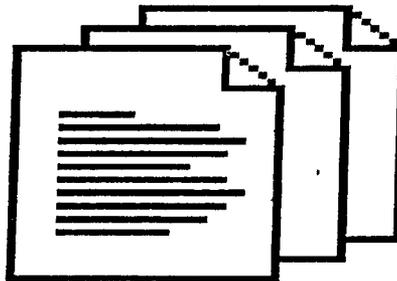
What "selling yourself" really boils down to is presenting your abilities in the best possible light. Managers want resourceful, responsive employees who show initiative in solving problems. Think about the application process—KSA's and SF-171—as your opportunity to demonstrate that you have what it takes to do the job.

Let's assume you wouldn't even think of applying for a job that you didn't feel you could do. The challenge is convinc-

ing the hiring official that you are the best person for the job. How?

Put Yourself in the Boss' Shoes

First, approach your responses to the KSA's as though you were the selecting official. What would you look for in an applicant if you were the selecting official? What would you want to know about that person? What strengths would you want that person to demonstrate? Consider your answers to the KSA's as an opportunity to show the select-



ing official that you do have the knowledge and abilities required to excel at the job.

Second, make sure you understand how responses to KSA's are evaluated. For example, your response to *knowledge* statements should refer to an organized body of factual or procedural information that you possess which enables you to perform the job. *Ability* statements should refer to your capacity to perform an activity.

Applicants' SF-171 and KSA responses are evaluated by raters, who hold or have held the same type of position at the advertised grade or above. For example, applications for a GS-11 soil conservationist position could be rated by a three-person panel consisting of a GS-11 district conservationist, a GS-13 state resource conservationist, and a GS-12 agronomist. Each knowledge and ability response is scored at one of three levels. The levels are:

- 1- Minimally acceptable (below what is expected)
- 3- Satisfactory (the level expected to

perform adequately)

- 5- Superior.

Size-Up Competition

Your score will depend partly on how you answer the KSA, and partly on how you rate compared to the competition. Depending upon the calibre of the competition for a job, you may make best qualified on one panel but not on another. The personnel office forwards the applications for the best qualified candidates to the hiring official.

Your first goal is to make the best qualified list. In most cases, to receive a rating of 5 (superior) on an element, you must be able to demonstrate that you have experience in providing leadership or were involved in persuasive or controversial situations. The more complex the situation, the higher your rating will be. Talk less about what the job or program requires, however; emphasize what you can and have been successful at doing.

If you don't make the best qualified list, don't be discouraged. Request a copy of your scores from your personnel office so that you can see what areas you need to improve.

Evaluate Your Accomplishments

For example, consider how you would respond to the following KSA: Ability to analyze information and for-

"Approach your responses to the KSA's as though you were the selecting official. What would you look for in an applicant...?"

ulate policy. The higher the level of the policy you wrote in previous positions, the higher will be your rating. How much involvement did you have in writing the policy—final approval authority or was it referred to a higher authority? Was the policy designed to resolve a controversial issue? What kind of information were you required to analyze before formulating the policy? What was the policy used for? How complex is it? How many people did it affect? What was the result in measurable terms? Did it result in higher productivity, more efficient use of funds, better morale?

Let's take a more specific example. In this case, the KSA title is "Maintain Effective Media Relations." The KSA definition is, "Ability to establish and maintain cooperative relations with representatives of informational media and organizational groups."

Credit levels or scores are assigned according to the level of ability you are able to demonstrate:

Superior ability is indicated by fully demonstrating ability on all important aspects of the element. Only a brief orientation period would be needed to perform the function requiring this ability with full effectiveness. Example: Has established and maintained relationships with representatives of various media for the purposes

of persuading or influencing them about the agency's position on a controversial policy.

Satisfactory ability is indicated by the level of ability which enables a person to satisfactorily perform most of the normal functions of the job requiring this ability. Example: Established or maintained relationships with media representatives to educate or inform.

Minimally acceptable ability is indicated by a minimum level of ability required to perform job functions successfully after a normal period of orientation. Example: Meets X-118 qualification requirements.

You should cite the type of experience, training, awards, and appraisals you have received that would be indicative of the ability of each credit level.

Remember, the preparation of the KSA responses and SF-171 reflects on your writing and organizational ability. Now that you know how KSA responses are evaluated, consider the following tips in developing your KSA's and SF-171.

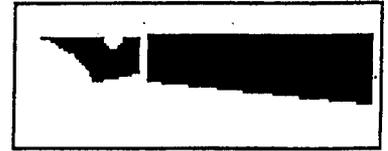
Tips for Writing KSA Responses

1. Don't be modest. If you don't tell them, who will?

2. Write clearly and concisely. (Some classic examples of not writing what you mean: "I always classify myself and then check my classification;" "I am skilled in handling myself...") Be sure you say what you mean.

3. Type your application. Make sure it and supporting materials are neat and clean. Nothing turns off a rater faster than a messy, coffee-stained application. They can't rate if it they can't read it. Employers want resourceful, professional employees who will reflect credit on the agency. If you can't type, persuade a friend or hire a typing service.

4. Express accomplishments in specific terms. Use numbers or kinds. For example, "prepared four initial review drafts of series, designed and installed 70,000 feet of terrace, wrote a monthly column for three weekly



newspapers with a combined circulation of 40,000."

5. Don't be afraid to use the word "I." Avoiding the use of the first person leaves the reviewer to wonder who really did the work. "Sixty conservation plans were prepared," is an example. By whom—you, the whole office, the janitor?

6. Don't assume that because the raters know you personally, that they know what a good job you do. The raters may be more impressed by someone who took the time to tell them.

7. List actions and results. So what if you held a no-till field day? Did the practice increase in the county as a result?

8. Show increases in production over previous years, it indicates progress.

9. Your response to a particular KSA should stand on its own. Don't refer the rater from the KSA response to the SF-171 or to attachments. It's a sign of laziness.

10. Don't "snow" the rater by trying to pass off philosophy for knowledge or experience.

11. If you lack certain experience, say so, but mention pertinent training and say that you would like the chance to apply it.

"There is no such thing as an all-purpose SF-171....The preparation of KSA responses and SF-171 reflect on your writing and organizational ability."

12. Use strong action verbs and the active voice. (A list of action verbs follows this article.) Raters are more likely to be impressed by direct language rather than by vague, flowery prose.

13. Address each KSA in a separate section and give it a title. (Sample KSA factor language follows this article.)

14. Write your responses for the grade level for which you are applying. Don't write GS-9 answers if you are applying for a GS-12 position.

15. Use bullets, not prose. Don't be verbose, wordy, or needlessly repetitive.

16. Be consistent between the SF-171 and KSA.

17. If it takes two staples to hold the packet together, it's probably too much "stuff." Limit each KSA response to about one and a half pages, typewritten and single-spaced.

18. Have the packet reviewed by a colleague or first-line supervisor to ensure the materials are complete and well worded.

19. Last, but not least, don't lie. People do check references, so when selling yourself, resist the temptation to aggrandize.

Tips for Completing SF-171's

1. Arrange your experience in chronological order. Don't leave gaps in dates. If unemployed, state dates of unemployment.

2. Include all experience,

paid or volunteer. Use a separate block for each grade level.

3. Use your own words in filling out the experience blocks. Never use position descriptions or quote them verbatim.

4. Write everything on the SF-171 itself—cut and splice with continuation forms if necessary. Fill the allotted space or eliminate blank lines.

5. When listing training, be sure to give title of courses, dates attended, and number of hours. For positions that have positive education requirements, make sure your



semester hours and courses taken are accurately listed.

6. List phone numbers, if possible, in addition to addresses for references. Make sure you check with those you list as references first to request permission to use their name.

7. There is no such thing as an all-purpose SF-171. It's best to tailor each application to the job for which you are applying.

8. If your SF-171 is reproduced, leave the date and signature blocks blank and fill them in before mailing. Photocopied signatures are not acceptable. Also, make sure every page is easily readable and is in the correct order.

Summary

Remember, your SF-171 and KSA responses are the first step in your climb up the career ladder. Give them the time and attention they deserve. Following this article, are

sample KSA responses and a list of action verbs to help get you started.

But first, two final suggestions. ~~Don't be afraid to seek help in preparing the SF-171 or KSA responses from your personnel officer, a supervisor, or trusted professional friend.~~ Many people

are genuinely interested in seeing others grow and advance. Managers, particularly, want to see their employees accept new challenges in the areas where they are most needed. If you have a good relationship with your supervisor, enlist his or her help. Often, others can help you assess your strengths more objectively than you yourself sometimes might.

Finally, edit and proofread. And, edit and proofread again. After all, if you can't get your job application right, what can you do?

Sample KSA Factor Language

1. Ability to Communicate Orally.

- Responsible for presenting briefings to top management.
- Independently managed telephone inquiries utilizing discretion and problem solving abilities.
- Served as an officer and member of Toastmasters International, which required making weekly group presentations including mastering the art of making impromptu speeches.
- Conducted meetings of key office personnel to meet project target dates and to keep the staff apprised about upcoming events.
- Served on a special task force to develop recommendations for nonmonetary awards.
- Presented a training course to office personnel on effective time management techniques.
- Served as the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) keyworker charged with interacting with employees to explain the purpose of the campaign, present the office goals, and respond to technical questions.
- As an Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor (EEO), spoke with employees and management officials to informally resolve disputes.

2. Ability to Communicate in Writing.

- Independently responded to formal and informal inquiries for information. This activity required the composition of letters and memoranda for top management approval.
- Assisted in the composition of a major study's recommendations for removal of the 55 mph speed limit on Interstate Highways.
- Prepared briefing papers for top management review.
- Prepared written procedures for paperwork processing techniques within the office.
- Served as a creative writer in the development of unique position descriptions.
- Prepared contract specifications including application instructions.
- Composed speeches for top level Government officials.
- Designed narrative visual aids for briefings.
- Prepared Federal orders and directives.
- Drafted and edited position descriptions and selective ranking factors.

3. Ability to plan, organize, and carry out a series of actions that are required to accomplish a project.

- Conducted major study to determine organizational feasibility to centralize the Data Processing Center and presented findings to management.

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- Investigated and analyzed options for problem resolution.
 - Served as Chair of the Secretary of Defense's Special Task Force on Communications. Results of final survey indicated an 80 percent improvement in internal and external Department-wide communications.
 - Participated in survey team to analyze paperwork management procedures and make recommendations.
 - Analyzed articles submitted for publication in the office newsletter.
 - Compiled data for speeches to the media and Departmental personnel on key policy issues.

4. Ability to Analyze and Solve Problems.

- Researched technical information and proposed alternative solutions to major problem areas.
- Conducted a study of organizational procedures for the regional office of personnel.
- Interacted on a daily basis with key management and the supervisory officials to insure program continuity.
- Prepared a definitive outline with time tables to accomplish a pilot study program on drug abuse.
- Participated with a survey team to provide statistical data on seatbelt utilization in the New England area.
- Analyzed articles and reports for national publication in a departmental newsletter.

5. Ability to Manage Major Programs.

- Served as project manager for the new Federal Retirement System.
- Managed the budgetary requests to insure that major project funding was requested.
- Managed the supervisory responsibilities of program support personnel.
- Coordinated major program changes with top management and regional officials.
- Composed the technical handbook changes for major programs.
- Briefed management officials on the status of major programs relative to established goals for the project completion.
- Conducted major study to determine the office's feasibility to centralize the data processing center and presented the conclusions to management.
- Interacted with key officials of the Office of Personnel Management to provide overall guidance to Government-wide procedures and regulations.

6. *Ability to Supervise, Motivate and Train Other Employees.*

- Due to extensive knowledge of program operations and automated services, trained subordinate personnel in technical program operation.
 - Developed instructional guides to be utilized by other personnel when training new employees. These instructions provided definitive guidelines in accordance with organizational procedures.
 - Improved quality and quantity of employee production through effective human relations programs and motivational incentives.
 - Responsible for the orientation and training of summer employees in the entry and retrieval of information from the automated information retrieval system.
 - Verbally communicated technical instructions to field personnel which resulted in more effective system/program administration.
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Action Verbs

accelerated
accomplished
acquired
adapted
administered
advanced
analyzed
anticipated
applied
appointed
appraised
approved
arranged
assessed
assisted
assumed
assured
audited
awarded
briefed
budgeted
built

cataloged
caused
changed
classified
collected
commanded
competed
compiled
completed
composed
computer
conceived
conceptualized
conducted
constructed
contracted
controlled
convened
convinced
coordinated
counseled
created

cut
dealt
decided
delivered
demonstrated
designed
detailed
determined
developed
devised
diagnosed
directed
discovered
displayed
disseminated
distributed
documented
doubled
drafted
earned
edited
educated

effected
elevated
eliminated
employed
enabled
encouraged
enforced
engineered
enlarged
enlisted
ensured
equipped
established
estimated
evaluated
exceeded
excelled
executed
exhibited
expanded
expedited
explained

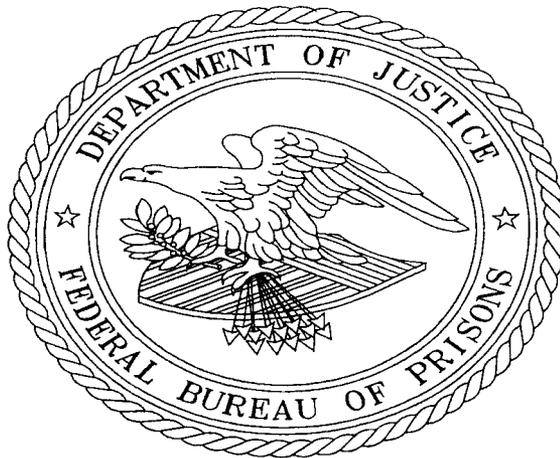
extended	insured	persuaded	simplified
faced	integrated	piloted	solved
facilitated	intensified	pioneered	sought
fashioned	interacted	placed	sparked
filled	interpreted	planned	specified
filmed	interviewed	prepared	spoke
financed	introduced	presented	staffed
finished	invented	prevented	started
focused	invested	procured	stimulated
forecast	investigated	professed	strengthened
forged	issued	profited	structured
formalized	joined	programmed	studied
formed	justified	prohibited	submitted
formulated	kept	projected	substituted
fostered	keynoted	provided	succeeded
fought	launched	published	suggested
found	learned	qualified	summarized
fulfilled	led	ranked	supervised
functioned	located	received	surveyed
furthered	maintained	recognized	synthesized
gained	managed	recommended	tackled
garnered	mandated	reconciled	tapped
generated	marketed	recruited	targeted
governed	mastered	reduced	taught
granted	mediated	regulated	tested
guaranteed	modeled	renegotiated	traced
guided	monitored	reorganized	trained
halved	motivated	replaced	transformed
headed	moved	replied	translated
helped	named	reported	traveled
hired	negotiated	represented	treated
hosted	obtained	researched	trebled
illustrated	offered	resolved	triggered
implemented	officiated	responded	tripled
improved	opened	revamped	turned
improvised	operated	reviewed	unified
incorporated	ordered	revised	updated
increased	organized	satisfied	upgraded
informed	originated	saved	used
influenced	overcame	scheduled	verified
initiated	oversaw	screened	volunteered
innovated	paid	secured	won
inspired	participated	selected	worked
installed	perfected	served	wrote
instructed	performed	settled	

Writing Your KSAs: A Framework to Follow

1. **In the opening statement, refer the reader to the KSA you are addressing.**
 - "In my current position as a _____ with the _____, I have had extensive experience with...."
 - "In the course of my duties as a _____, I am responsible for...."
 - "During my tenure with _____, a substantial part of my duties have included...."
 - "My ability to _____ was gained through formal education augmented by over _____ years of practical experience as a _____ for the _____."
 - "Since _____, I have been a _____ with the _____ and responsible for...."
2. **Give examples that clearly demonstrate your knowledge, skills and abilities.**
 - "In one instance I...."
 - "When I started on the job we had a recurring problem with...."
 - "One major project involved...."
 - "My supervisor selected me to serve on a task force to...."
 - "I collaborated with a team to...."
3. **Take your examples one step further. Look for key results. Quantify if possible.**
 - "The new procedures I instituted resulted in...."
 - "My ability to _____ substantially/significantly increased/decreased....."
 - "As a result...."
 - "I received a Performance Award for...."
 - "We exceeded our goals by...."
 - "This led to...."
4. **Relevant training or course work**

KSA Handbook

A guide to presenting your
Knowledge, **Skills** and **Abilities**
when applying for positions.



Federal Bureau of Prisons
Human Resource Management Division
Special Projects Section, Washington, D.C.
Revised March, 2005

KSA Handbook

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Part 1. Understanding KSAs

1.1. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities and the Application Process

Candidates applying for positions often must include written responses to Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) along with their resume, SF-171 or the Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF 612) for General Schedule positions. The KSAs are listed on vacancy announcements and require applicants to describe experience which demonstrates their possession of the respective KSAs.

1.2. What are KSAs?

KSAs are qualities needed by applicants to successfully perform their job. They are used in the Merit Promotion process to distinguish the "**highly qualified candidates**" from among the "**qualified**" candidates. KSAs are defined as:

KNOWLEDGE

An organized body of information, usually factual or procedural in nature. For example, "*Knowledge of Contract Law and Regulations*" could be used as a KSA for a Contract Specialist position.

When responding, applicants should indicate what contract laws and regulations they are familiar with, discuss how they applied these laws and regulations in the work environment, and describe other significant situations they were involved in.

SKILL

The proficient manual, verbal, or mental manipulation of data or things. For example, "*Skill in Operating Personal Computers*" could be used as a KSA for a Computer Assistant position.

When responding, applicants should indicate what type of personal computers they have operated, discuss the various types of software programs they have used, and describe how these programs were applied in their work environment.

ABILITY

The power or capacity to perform an activity or task. For example, "*Ability to Identify Signs of Discord, Tension, or Abnormal behavior*" could be used as a KSA for a Correctional Counselor position.

When responding, applicants should discuss the various signs of suspicious behavior they have encountered, how they responded, and indicate what impact it had on the work environment.

1.3. Why are KSAs Important?

KSA's are EXTREMELY IMPORTANT in the merit promotion evaluation process. Poor responses may prevent you, as an applicant, from being considered among the best qualified group. Remember, your score for experience is based solely on your responses to the KSAs, not the information included in your resume, SF-171 or Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612).

1.4. How is the Crediting Plan used for Merit Promotion?

Upon receipt of your application package and KSA responses, the Human Resource Management staff will determine whether you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. Once minimum qualifications have been determined, the crediting plan is used to evaluate your responses.

A crediting plan is a three tier rating instrument. For each KSA in the crediting plan, scores are assigned for the highly successful, successful and barely successful level. Each level has a description of bench marks, which are examples of tasks a candidate would perform at that level.

In using the crediting plan, the Human Resource Management Staff will assign a numerical score based on your responses to the KSAs. Once the total score (responses to KSAs, performance appraisal, training) is determined, you will be ranked among other applicants. Those applicants who scored in the range of the highest scores will have their names included on the Best Qualified List. The Best Qualified List is forwarded to the Selecting Official, who ultimately makes the selection for the vacancy.

- Maintain a personal notebook, table, or journal. You can record your major accomplishments, projects or activities as they occur. When it is time to respond to KSAs, you will have information at your fingertips.

2.2. Developing KSA Responses

One of the most common errors made in addressing KSAs is to start writing randomly or haphazardly. Applicants may jot down thoughts with no organization and structure, and in some cases, no relationship to the KSA. What is written initially is put on paper and attached to the application package.

Of course, there should be brainstorming involved when preparing your responses to KSAs. Prior to responding to each KSA, think about what type of tasks you performed and why you performed them in *relationship* to the KSA. Think about for whom you performed the tasks. Ask yourself whether you made any major accomplishments. When performing these tasks, did a significant impact on the work environment occur?

By asking these questions, you think critically and objectively about the tasks you performed. In addition, it will help remind you to think "only" about tasks directly related to the KSA.

Of course, there are times when a particular task performed will apply to more than one KSA. In those situations, you may discuss the same task under different KSAs, but be sure to show the direct relationship of the task to the additional KSAs.

To reinforce the idea of organizing your thoughts when responding to KSAs, ask yourself these **five standard questions** as a "**checklist**" regarding individual tasks you performed.

1. **What** action was performed?
2. **Why** was the action performed?
3. **For whom** was the action performed?
4. What were the **accomplishments**?
5. Did the action produce a significant **impact** on others or the work environment?

When preparing KSA responses, you sometimes may write a long list of examples of tasks for each KSA. If the responses become too long, identify those tasks which are most critical.

How can you decide which examples of tasks to keep in comparison to those that can be discarded? Use the following type of tasks to represent your experience, when possible:

LEADERSHIP

Use tasks that demonstrate your leadership, organization, or management skills. For example, applicants should discuss their role on committees and/or taskforces; discuss how they planned activities and events; or discuss their responsibilities in managing groups of individuals in various settings (i.e., office, classroom, organization/club, correctional environment).

FUNCTIONING IN A STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENT

Use tasks that demonstrate your ability to effectively deal with stress related events/activities. For example, applicants could discuss their responsibility for inmate work details, describe their counseling experience, or discuss how they dealt with critical deadlines.

COMPLEXITY AND/OR CREATIVITY

Use tasks that demonstrate complexity or creativity. For example, applicants could describe how they designed programs for personal computers, prepared papers on technical subjects, or used formulas to derive solutions.

PERTINENCE TO THE POSITION

Frequently, applicants apply for positions outside their own discipline. However, applicants who have experience directly related to the position and include this in their responses, will usually be awarded the higher points.

MAJOR IMPACT OR SIGNIFICANT OUTCOME

Use tasks where your actions had an impact on others or the work environment. For example, applicants could discuss procedures they developed for their office that streamlined operations; discuss how they negotiated a contract that resulted in a favorable outcome; or describe how their input on a project made a significant impact on the organization.

Applicants who respond to KSAs by showing a relationship to any of the above areas are more likely to receive more points for their responses. Place yourself in the panel member's seat and think about what you would look for if making the selection.

2.3. Other Tips on Responding to KSAs

Listed below are additional tips to use when responding to KSAs:

- Express your accomplishments in specific or measurable terms. For example, "developed and wrote operating procedures for.....participated in five program reviews.....provided training once a month to groups of 10 to 15 employees on.....supervised approximately 10 inmates in"
- When describing work experience, be specific about your role in completing tasks. Sometimes it is difficult for reviewers to determine whether the applicant performed the task alone, assisted, or participated as part of the group, if not specifically stated.
- Show increases in production over a time period. For example, "developed operating procedures used by the division that reduced processing time by 50%..."
- Don't be modest in describing your accomplishments. Those reviewing your application cannot assume any level of experience that is not documented. In addition, they will not assume you performed certain tasks based on your "job title."
- Be honest and consistent in your responses to your KSAs and on your resume, SF-171, or Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612). References may be checked, so resist the temptation to exaggerate the truth. Information in your "KSA responses" should not be in conflict with your "resume, SF-171, or Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612)".
- Use strong action verbs describing your experience. Reviewers are likely to be impressed with direct language rather than vague or flowery prose. Avoid repetitive language and cliches, such as "I'm a people person." See the listing of Action Verbs.
- Don't try to "snow" the Employee Services Staff and panel members by passing off a "*philosophy*" for knowledge or experience. When you

Part 2. Writing Responses to KSAs

2.1. Preparing Responses to KSAs

Prior to responding to KSA's, gather and review information on past and present experience. Remember, you do not have to restrict your responses to your present position, but can discuss related past experiences.

Check the following sources that are available to you when preparing to respond to KSA's:

- Get a copy of the vacancy announcement and read it thoroughly. Review the experience requirements in the vacancy announcement to determine if you have related experience.
- Pull out your current SF-171/resume/Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612) and make sure it is updated. You do not want information in your application package to be in conflict with your responses to the KSAs.
- Get a copy of any documents which will give you information that could be included in your KSA responses (i.e., college transcripts, training records, awards, documents you have written, etc.).
- If you prepare weekly or monthly status reports regarding the work you perform, gather them to review. These reports could provide information regarding past assignments, projects, or activities that need to be addressed in your KSA responses.
- Review you previous performance or progress review.
- Scan your computer directories and disks to help you remember past work assignments. Again, there may be a critical information that could be used in addressing your KSAs.
- Talk to someone currently in the position/discipline in which you're interested if possible. This works especially well for applicants who are contemplating a career change. In addition, it may help you determine whether there is any correlation between your experience and the position you are applying for, prior to addressing the KSAs.

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lack certain experience, indicate **any** relevant training or academic course work. Use examples of volunteer work experience. Both volunteer and paid work experience are acceptable.

- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread! Get a coworker, supervisor, or other associate to help you proof your responses. Lack of attention to your grammar and spelling may diminish your written responses and leave lasting impression on the rating panel.
- Don't borrow language from your position description when writing your responses. Remember, managers and supervisors help prepare position descriptions and are familiar with its content. Paraphrase and make the language in the response your own.
- Remember to include all training/education related to the KSAs in your responses --- including job-related cross development courses. Do not expect the Employee Services Staff or panel members to guess what training might be applicable to the KSA by referring to your application. It is your responsibility and failure to do so may cost you valuable points.
- Type your responses. Why? It looks more professional and is easier to read and understand.
- Keep your responses no longer than 1 and ½ pages. Remember, get to the point and avoid including insignificant information.
- For each KSA, use either bullets "●" at the beginning of each response OR a paragraph format. If you use paragraphs, be sure to limit your paragraph size.
- Spell out all terms prior to using acronyms. Employee Services Staff and panel members may not always be familiar with abbreviated terms used in various disciplines.
- Do not refer reviewers to other parts of your application (i.e., SEE Block A of my SF-171) as a response to your KSAs. Produce your written response in a format similar to the sample response shown on page 9. There are no predefined forms for KSAs.

One of the most common errors applicants commit from the above list deals with using flowery or subjective language in KSA responses. Be objective by

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2.5. Action Verbs

Below is a listing of action verbs that you may wish to use when preparing your written responses to KSAs.

accelerated	discovered	granted	ordered	specified
accomplished	displayed	guaranteed	organized	spoke
acquired	disseminated	guided	originated	staffed
adapted	distributed	halved	overcome	started
administered	documented	headed	supervised	stimulated
advanced	doubled	helped	paid	strengthened
analyzed	drafted	hired	participated	structured
anticipated	earned	hosted	performed	studied
applied	edited	illustrated	performed	submitted
appointed	educated	implemented	piloted	substituted
appraised	effected	improved	pioneered	succeeded
approved	elevated	improvised	placed	suggested
arranged	eliminated	incorporated	planned	summarized
assessed	employed	increased	prepared	supervised
assisted	enabled	informed	presented	surveyed
assumed	encouraged	influenced	prevented	synthesized
assured	enforced	initiated	procured	tackled
audited	engineered	innovated	professed	tapped
awarded	enlarged	inspired	profited	targeted
briefed	enlisted	instructed	programmed	taught
budgeted	ensured	insured	prohibited	tested
built	equipped	integrated	projected	traced
cataloged	established	intensified	provided	trained
caused	estimated	interacted	published	transformed
changed	evaluated	interpreted	qualified	translated
classified	exceeded	interviewed	ranked	traveled
collected	excelled	introduced	received	treated
commanded	executed	invented	recognized	trebled
competed	exhibited	invested	recommended	triggered
compiled	expanded	investigated	reconciled	tripled
completed	expedited	issued	recruited	turned
composed	explained	joined	reduced	unified
computer	extended	justified	regulated	updated
conceived	faced	kept	renegotiated	upgraded
conceptualized	facilitated	keynoted	reorganized	used
conducted	fashioned	launched	replaced	verified
constructed	filled	learned	replied	volunteered
contracted	filmed	led	reported	won
controlled	financed	located	represented	worked
convened	finished	maintained	researched	wrote
convinced	focused	managed	resolved	
coordinated	forecast	mandated	responded	
counseled	forged	marketed	revamped	
created	formalized	mastered	reviewed	
cut	formed	mediated	revised	
dealt	formulated	modeled	satisfied	
decided	fostered	monitored	saved	
delivered	fought	motivated	scheduled	
demonstrated	found	moved	screened	
designed	fulfilled	named	secured	
detailed	functioned	negotiated	selected	
determined	furthered	obtained	settled	
developed	gained	offered	simplified	
devised	garnered	officiated	solved	
diagnosed	generated	opened	sought	
directed	governed	operated	sparked	

2.4. Sample KSA

ELEMENT: **ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ORALLY.**

For: 05-BRO-025 Employee Services Manager GS-201-13
Announcement No. Position Series - Grade

As a Supervisory Employee Services Specialist, I interact with staff, managers and supervisors on a daily basis to convey information on training programs, provide guidance on training needs, and supervise employee development staff. Specifically, I perform the following tasks:

- *Conduct numerous training classes, both formal and informal, to groups of 15 to 35 individuals on such topics as "Instructors Skills", "Planning for Your Future", "Career Growth", "Using Lotus-1-2-3", "Providing Guidance to Your Employees" and "Basic Functions of the PC".*
- *Meet with managers, supervisors, and vendors to discuss training that is needed for specific groups, divisions, or sections. For example, the agency's Administrative Division had an influx of new secretaries who lacked Lotus 1-2-3 experience, which was now needed for a major long term project in the Division. After determining the Division's training needs and meeting with managers, I provided training to all secretaries. This training contributed to the Division meeting projected deadlines for work output.*
- *Brief upper management on specific budget needs and operating costs for employee training. In addition, I gave a formal presentation to upper management for an agency wide training program. Although the agency was facing cuts in other program areas, I was able to persuade management to approve this training.*
- *Supervise and provide guidance to 5 employees in the Employee Development Division. In addition, I meet with subordinates several times during the rating period to discuss employee concerns, goals, progress reviews, and the final performance rating. This past rating period, I developed an "Improvement Plan" that encompassed additional on-the-job training and formal training classes for employees who were weak in specific areas. I guided them in meeting established goals. Due to the positive turn-around in employee performance, this "Improvement Plan" has been deemed a success by upper management.*
- *I have completed the following training courses: 1) Effective Communication, 1/03; 2) Improving Supervisory Skills, 4/02; and 3) Negotiation with Others, 10/04.*
- *I was selected as "Supervisor for the Quarter" 4/03 to 6/ 04 by staff due to my concerns, interests, and efforts in helping subordinates to improve their performance.*

Verifiable by:

Name & Title

Phone Number

Applicant: Ms. Applicant

Date: _____

stating the facts and avoid subjective comments about yourself as much as possible.

Let's look at responses to the KSA "**Ability to communicate orally**" from Applicant X who is applying for an Employee Services Manager position.

Ability to communicate orally.

As an Employee Services Specialist, I interact with a variety of people, from staff to managers regarding training needs. I provide training to staff on a variety of topics. I set up training for staff. I meet with vendors. I have had many employees thank me for providing them with a better understanding of their training needs. My supervisor told me I was doing a great job and

Applicant X provides limited detail regarding the tasks being performed. In addition, subjective information regarding how others feel about him is included.

Applicant X was given the task of rewriting his response based on KSA tips previously discussed. Now, let's look at Applicant X's final response on the SAF after thinking more about the tasks he performed.

In the second KSA response (see next page), the applicant specifically discusses the type of people s/he interacts with, the purpose of those contacts, and what accomplishments have been achieved.

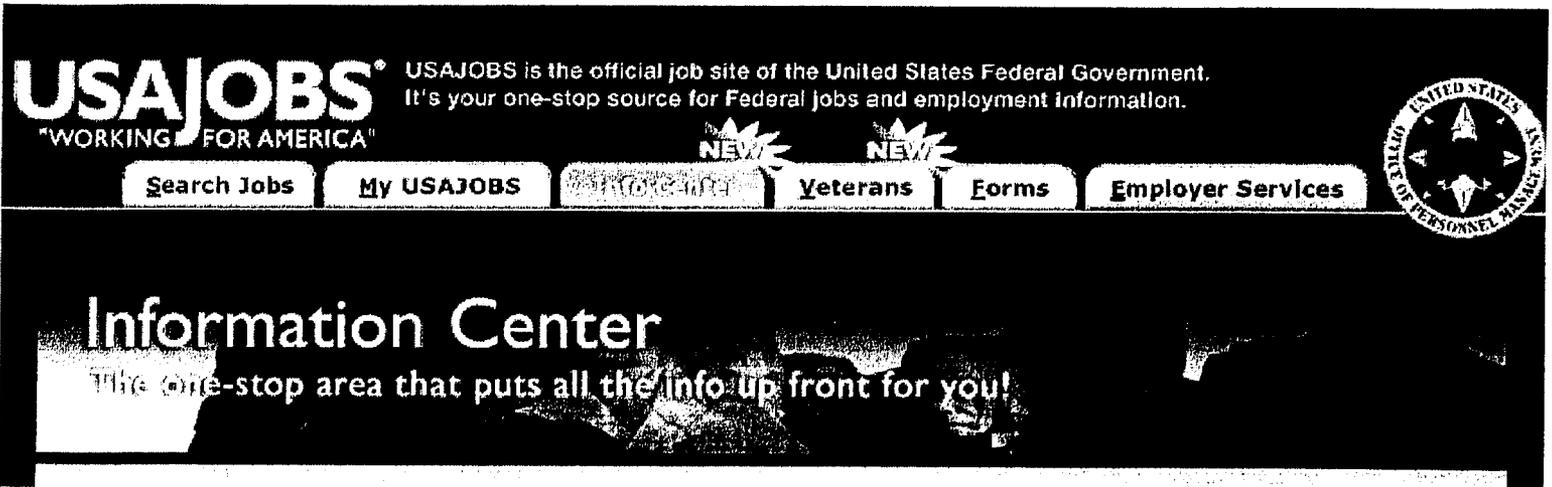
If you can remember to:

- prepare;
- ask the five standard questions;
- avoid including subjective remarks in your KSA statements as much as possible;
- and keep in mind the additional tips given on writing responses to KSAs;

you should be able to improve your KSA responses and subsequently, your scores. Good Luck!

I M P O R T A N T R E M I N D E R S :

- ➔ *There are no KSA forms. You must produce your written response in the suggested format on page 9. Be sure to include the vacancy announcement number and KSA you are addressing at the top of the page and your name and date at the bottom of the page.*
- ➔ *Remember also to include the name and telephone number of individuals who can verify your experience.*



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RESUME & KSA TIPS



RESUMES

As you may have noticed if you have begun your Federal job search, agencies have varying and unique application procedures to meet their hiring needs. One application format may be acceptable for one agency and not another. In the past, this proved to be frustrating for job seekers applying to multiple positions.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- » Disabled Persons
- » Students
- » Veterans
- » SES

SOME USAJOBS FEATURES

- » Job Search
More than 16,000
worldwide
opportunities updated
daily...
- » Online Resume
Builder

Building Your Resume on USAJOBS

In an effort to drive the Federal hiring process toward a universal application format, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) gathered together several agencies from around the government to create one resume format that would include all of the crucial data required for Federal application into one uniform resume format.

The product that resulted was the USAJOBS Resume Builder. The USAJOBS Resume Builder allows you to create one uniform resume that provides all of the information required by government agencies. Instead of creating multiple resumes in different formats, you can build your resume once and be ready for all job opportunities.

» USAJOBS Resume Builder

Resume & KSA (Knowledge, Skills & Abilities) Tips

Pay Attention to Keywords

Whether you're writing your first resume, updating an existing one, or answering a position's Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities (KSA's), stop and think about which keywords you need to add. You could be the most qualified person for the position, but you could be lost in a sea of applicants without the right keywords.

→ A Single Keyword Communicates Multiple Skills and Qualifications

When a recruiter reads the keyword "analyst," he or she might assume you have experience in collecting data, evaluating effectiveness, and researching and developing

new processes. Just one keyword can have tremendous power and deliver a huge message.

→ Study Job Announcements

This is the best way to determine important keywords. Review several job announcements and their questions for your ideal position. The jobs don't have to be in your geographic target area. The idea is to find skills, experience, education and other credentials important in your field. You will probably find keywords frequently mentioned by different agencies. Focus on the "requirements," "skills" or "qualifications" sections of job ads, and look for "buzzwords" and desirable credentials for your ideal job.

Be Concise

Don't confuse telling your story with creating your autobiography. Recruiters are inundated with applications and are faced with weeding out the good from the bad. The first step involves quickly skimming through submissions and eliminating candidates who clearly are not qualified. Therefore, your application needs to pass the skim test. Look at your resume and/or KSA's and ask yourself:

- Can a hiring manager see my main credentials within 10 to 15 seconds?
- Does critical information jump off the page?
- Do I effectively sell myself on the top quarter of the first page?

→ The Sales Pitch

Because applications are quickly skimmed during the first pass, it is crucial your resume and KSA's get right to work selling your credentials. Your key selling points need to be prominently displayed at the top of the first page of the resume and directly address each question asked in the KSA section. For example, if an advanced degree is an important qualification, it shouldn't be buried at the end of a four-page resume. If a KSA question asks about your writing ability, immediately detail your experience instead of enjoyment of it.

→ Use an Editor's Eye

Many workers are proud of their careers and feel the information on a resume should reflect everything they've accomplished. However, a resume shouldn't contain every detail and KSA's should only address the question at hand. So be judicious. If your college days are far behind you, does it really matter that you pledged a fraternity or delivered pizza? The editing step will be difficult if you are holding on to your past for emotional reasons.

Use Numbers to Highlight Your Accomplishments

If you were a recruiter looking at a resume or an answer to a KSA, which of the following entries would impress you more:

- Wrote news releases.
- Wrote **25** news releases in a three-week period under daily deadlines.

Clearly the second statement carries more weight. Why? Because it uses numbers to quantify the writer's accomplishment, giving it a context that helps the interviewer understand the degree of difficulty involved in the task. Numbers are powerful resume tools that will help your accomplishments draw the attention they deserve from prospective employers. With just a little thought, you can find effective ways to quantify your successes on your resume.

→ Think Money

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For-profit, nonprofit, and government organizations alike are and always will be concerned about money. So as you contemplate your accomplishments and prepare to present them on your resume or in your KSA's, think about ways you've saved money, earned money, or managed money in your internships, part-time jobs and extracurricular activities so far. A few possibilities that might appear on a typical college student's resume:

- Identified, researched and recommended a new Internet Service Provider, cutting the company's online costs by **15** percent.
- Wrote prospect letter that has brought in more than **\$25,000** in donations to date.
- Managed a student organization budget of more than **\$7,000**.

→ Think Time

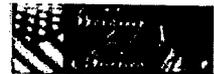
You've heard the old saying, "Time is money," and it's true. Companies and organizations are constantly looking for ways to save time and do things more efficiently. They're also necessarily concerned about meeting deadlines, both internal and external. So whatever you can do on your resume or in your KSA's to show that you can save time, make time or manage time will grab your reader's immediate attention. Here are some time-oriented entries that might appear on a typical college student's resume:

- Assisted with **twice-monthly** payroll activities, ensuring employees were paid as expected and on time.
- Attended high school basketball games, interviewed players and coaches afterward, and composed 750-word articles by an **11 p.m. deadline**.
- Suggested procedures that decreased average order-processing time from **10 minutes to five minutes**.

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This is a United States Office of Personnel Management website. USAJOBS is the Federal Government's official one-stop source for Federal jobs and employment information.



Additional Information about KSAs

- ☒ Give examples that show:
- ☒ **Initiative:** You saw a problem and resolved it.
- ☒ **Innovation:** You developed a new system; used software for a new purpose.
- ☒ **Leadership:** You mentored less experienced employees.
- ☒ **Complexity:** You experienced challenging times on the job.
- ☒ **Scope:** You were involved in a variety of work that covered many functional areas (e.g., personnel, budget, information technology, etc.).
- ☒ **Teamwork:** You were part of a team activity whose members possessed different skills and abilities, shared a common purpose, and worked together to achieve clearly identifiable goals (remember when showing team activity to identify YOUR role in the team, not the role of the team).

FEDERAL RESUME - Required Information -

Your resume **MUST** contain the following information:

JOB INFORMATION

Announcement number, title and grade(s) of the job for which you are applying.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full name, mailing address (*with Zip Code*) and day and evening phone numbers.
Social Security Number
Country of citizenship (*Most federal jobs require United States citizenship.*)

VETERANS' PREFERENCE

If you served on active duty in the United States military and were separated under honorable conditions, you may be eligible for veterans' preference. To receive preference if your service began after October 15, 1976, you must have a Campaign Badge, Expeditionary Medal, or a service-connected disability. For further details, call the OPM Service Centers listed in Appendix B or visit OPM's USAJOBS internet web site at <http://www.opm.gov/>.

Veterans' preference is not a factor for Senior Executive Service Jobs or when competition is limited to status candidates (*current former federal career or career-conditional employees*).

To claim 5-point veterans' preference, attach a copy of your DD-214, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty* or other proof of eligibility.

To claim 10-point veterans' preference, attach an SF-15, *Application for 10-Point Veterans' Preference*, plus the proof required by that form.

Visit our [Veterans page](#) for more information.

REINSTATEMENT ELIGIBILITY

(If requested, former federal employees must attach a SF-50 proof of your career or career-conditional status.)

Highest federal civilian grade held (*Also give job series and dates held.*)

EDUCATION

High School

Name, city, and State (*Zip Code if known*)
Date of diploma or GED

Colleges and universities

Name, city, and state (*Zip Code if known*)
Majors
Type and year of any degrees received (*If no degree, show total credits earned and indicate whether semester or quarter hours.*)

Send a copy of your college transcript only if the job vacancy announcement requests it.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Give the following information for your paid and non-paid work experience related to the job for which you are applying. (*Do not send job descriptions.*)

Job title (*include series and grade if federal job*)
Duties and accomplishments
Employer's name and address
Supervisor's name and phone number
Starting and ending dates (month and year)
Hours per week
Salary

Indicate if we may contact your current supervisor.

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

Job-related training courses (*title and year*)

Job-related skills; for example, other languages, computer software/hardware, tools, machinery, typing speed.

Job-related certificates and licenses (*current only*)

Job-related honors, awards, and special accomplishments; for example, publications; memberships in professional or honor societies; leadership activities; public speaking; and performance awards. (*Give dates but do not send documents unless requested.*)

All About KSAs

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) are factors that facilitate the objective, competitive evaluation of best-qualified applicants from the total pool of eligible applicants for advertised vacancies. KSAs are directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the position being filled and are predictors of successful performance. They are used in rating and ranking each applicant's experience, education, and training against the requirements of an advertised position. In a way, KSAs can be viewed as written interview questions.

KSAs:

- Are ratable from a written job application;
- Should be performed in a minimum amount of time (usually within 90 days of entering a job);
- Do not require a qualitative assessment of how well an applicant performed a function or duty;
- Do not reflect non-work-related qualities or traits; and
- Distinguish the best-qualified applicants from the basically qualified applicants within a pool of candidates.

Applicants also must possess/meet any *selective factor(s)* identified in a vacancy announcement in order to be considered basically qualified for a position.

What is a Selective Factor?

A selective placement factor is a competency, KSA, or special qualification that is in addition to the minimum requirements in a qualification standard but determined to be essential to performing the duties and responsibilities of a particular position. It is essential for a new employee to bring this quality to the job. A selective factor is customarily one that cannot be acquired within 90 days of entering the job.

How are KSAs Developed?

KSAs are developed through detailed analysis of the duties and requirements of the position (i.e., the position description, performance elements, competency statements, etc.). First, job elements that are key to the successful performance of the position's duties and responsibilities are identified. From these job elements, KSAs are identified and the rating or crediting plan is established.

What Happens Next?

The subject matter expert (SME) is assigned to review or rate the pool of qualified applicants. The SME reads each applicant's written response/description of how he/she meets each KSA (i.e., experience, training, or other evidence). Each applicant is given a numerical rating. Based on this numerical rating, the "highly or best" qualified applicants are referred to the selecting official for further consideration.

KSA Statements

The KSAs necessary for the successful performance of a position are stated in each job vacancy announcement. **It is important** to know that KSAs are often referred to in a vacancy announcement as:

- **Evaluation Factors,**
- **Rating Factors,**
- **Quality Ranking Factors,**
- **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, or**
- **Job Elements.**

How Important is it to Address the KSAs When Applying for a Job Vacancy?

It is very important! Some agencies value KSAs as a means of keeping down the number of applications they must review. They know that certain job hunters, even highly qualified ones, may not go to the trouble of applying if a separate statement is required. This means that the agency already has narrowed the field to the highly motivated and seriously interested applicants.

Sometimes it is a mandatory requirement. The agency will state in the vacancy announcement that if you do not submit a supplemental statement addressing each KSA, your application will not be considered. In some cases it is up to the applicant. An agency may "strongly suggest"; it may "recommend"; or it may point out that if you do not address the KSAs, you might not receive proper credit for all of your experience and skills. But the final decision about whether to do the additional work is up to you.

Addressing the KSAs – The Writing Part

Do not assume that the reviewer will pull the information out of your application package, because they will not. When answering the KSAs:

- Be specific.
- Be precise.
- Get to the point.
- Don't ramble.
- Use lots of examples.
- State specifically what you have done.
- Don't try to bluff the reviewer with words.
- Don't borrow language from the position description.

This same sort of guidance is often included in the vacancy announcements. The documents specifically ask for “detailed evidence” ...“clear, concise examples that show the level of accomplishment and degree of responsibility” ...“examples that show depth of knowledge, level of skill, degree of ability” ... evidence of “what you actually did and the results that were obtained.”

Here's what they do not want to see: generalized statements that say, in effect, “Yes, I have what you're seeking...take my word for it.” Nor are reviewers impressed with your claims to possess “thorough knowledge” or “familiarity with” or “considerable skill.” Such non-specific qualifying adjectives do not give them anything to measure. In fact, the phrases say nothing.

Some vacancy announcements try to help you focus on what they are after ...or why they are looking for a particular talent. For example: one of the mandatory KSAs in a vacancy announcement for a supervisory position is typically the ability to communicate orally and in writing. The announcement will state, “A manager must be able to communicate by writing well documented and easily understood material.” Applicants will be asked in the announcement to describe their accomplishments in the area as they relate to the technical requirements of the position. It will state, “Describe past accomplishments which demonstrate your writing ability. In doing so, describe the kinds of documents you have been responsible for writing, the type of review to which they have been subject, and the target audience.”

The ability to communicate orally and in writing is a required KSA for so many positions, at all levels of Federal service, so the elements of this KSA have universal importance. Here is how they might be addressed in an application:

- Describe the kinds of documents you have written. E.g., “I researched and wrote a 72-page document in support of a request for funding an international conference on ecosystem management of marine resources.”
- Describe the type of review to which they have been subject. E.g., “This document was reviewed by my immediate supervisor, the division director, and the ad hoc steering committee established to develop a conference agenda.”
- Describe the target audience. E.g., “This request and supporting material were distributed to eight Federal and five international agencies being solicited for funding.”

If appropriate, note the outcome of your efforts:

- Describe the results of your activity. E.g., “Ten of the 13 agencies approached readily agreed to provide the necessary funding support to convene the meeting, which is scheduled for the second quarter of the next fiscal year.”

Winning Words

The sole purpose of a KSA is to measure those qualities that will set one candidate apart from the others. Below is a list of winning words to consider when responding to KSA statements:

ACTION VERBS

Design	Administer	Manage	Devise
Improve	Conduct	Contract	Motivate
Research	Expand	Support	Monitor
Consult	Present	Organize	Sponsor
Train	Operate	Develop	Reorganize
Establish	Evaluate	Test	Recommend
Supervise	Edit	Publish	
Analyze	Produce	Coach	
Contact	Negotiate	Counsel	

SPECIFIC NOUNS

Products	Members	Publications	Morale
Courses	Surveys	Institutions	Document
Projects	Needs	Prototypes	Facilities
Reports	Goals	Analysis	Requirements
Campaigns	Plans	Study	Specification
Criteria	Policies	Conference	Budget
Findings	Performance	Guidance	
Accounts	Literature	Litigation	
Colleagues	Records	Procedures	

DESCRIPTORS

Implementation	Potential	Monthly	Diverse
Customers	Scientific	Federal	Annual
Strategic	Leading	Resourceful	Professional
Profitable	Pioneering	Fiscal	Quantitative
Collaborative	Successful	Analytical	Qualitative
Accurate	Accurate	Congressional	International
Adept	Legal	Definitive	
Competent	Numerous	Functional	
Statistical	Long-Range	National	

RESULTS

Increased
Enhanced
Quicker

Decreased
Expanded
Additional

Improved
Enlarged
Reduced

Faster
Growth

The Most Common KSAs

A job hunter needs to review only a few announcements before realizing that there are certain KSA requirements that pertain to nearly all Federal vacancies. In a review of countless announcements, Human Resources Services staff identified several requirements that are commonly encountered. Among these are: ability to work with others; ability to manage complex programs and projects; and ability to conduct research, compile data, conduct analyses, and make recommendations.

The two most common KSAs by far are: (1) the ability to communicate orally, and (2) the ability to communicate in writing. Because of the universal nature of these two requirements, NARA offers a series of possible responses to these KSAs:

KSA 1: Ability to Communicate Orally

Example of a poor response: I am quite capable of oral communication as I have a lot of experience talking to my peers about a variety of subjects. You will see my skills at the interview.

Example of responses that convey specific information about an applicant:

At the GS-5/7 level: As a student at the University of Maryland, I completed course work in public speaking and drama. I have received training in clear and concise communication of all types of information, as well as training in persuasive presentation of views. During summers, I worked for Landmark as a tour guide. In this position, I conveyed information regarding the Nation's Capital to tourists from around the world. Enunciation and sentence structure were vital for effective communication especially with persons for whom English was not a primary language.

At the GS-9/11 level: As a claims examiner with the Office of Workers Compensation, I am called upon to explain highly technical information related to the laws, policies, and regulations regarding the Workers Compensation Program. I must gauge the comprehension level of the inquirer and deliver the information using terminology appropriate to that level. In addition to my duties as technical expert and point of contact, I participate in the preparation and delivery of presentations regarding the status of our program. I have delivered technical presentations to managers up to the associate director level.

At the GS-12/13 level: Throughout my Federal career, skill in oral communication has been vital to my success. As a staffing specialist, I have been required to present technical information in a variety of settings. I chair meetings with managers of various departments, providing information and guidance regarding changing policies and procedures. I prepare and deliver presentations to senior executives, anticipating questions and objections, and addressing these issues in a thorough and favorable manner. I have served as a training officer, conveying highly technical information regarding methods, policies, and procedures in a manner that helps the audience understand, retain, and utilize the knowledge presented. I have received advanced training in public speaking, and have been designated as a representative for my office during high-profile policy changes, representing my organization to all inquirers.

At the GS-14/15 level: As director of financial management for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I am responsible for representing my agency in a variety of arenas, including Senate budget hearings. I must convey highly technical information regarding financial management policies and structures, budgetary requirements, and the overall mission of HUD in a manner that will foster support among Federal lawmakers. I must compile and review documentation and anticipate and address questions and objections. My success rests in large part on my ability to consider and respond to questions under fire. This requires an ability to coolly and logically consider the issues in light of available facts and concerns (economic and political considerations, for example) and present clear and concise responses. I have represented my organization in press conferences and before the media and am able to clearly present our mission and objectives in a favorable manner.

KSA 2: Ability to Communicate in Writing

Example of a poor response: In my time as a student, I have written many, many papers and letters which often communicate terribly complex information for the edification of the readership. I am a good writer and have no trouble making sure that what I write says what I want it to.

Example of responses that convey specific information about an applicant:

At the GS-5/7 level: As an undergraduate student at the State University, I was required to produce a minimum of five research papers each semester. These were technical papers that present and support a thesis statement, providing detailed documentation to justify my position. In my senior year, I produced a 25-page paper which explored the issue of public health systems in Europe and their possible application in this country. The paper received a grade of 98 and was published in the School of Public Administration's newsletter.

At the GS-9/11 level: For the past five years I have served as a free-lance writer, preparing text for publication in technical manuals, magazines, and other publications. I have written and edited materials in such subject areas as medicine, the arts, politics, and law enforcement. I am able to conduct research

and select the appropriate level of complexity for the target audience. In addition to the technical writing and editing that I have performed, I have published a collection of essays and several short stories. I am a member of the Washington Area Writers Guild and have been a guest speaker for American University's Professional Writers Seminar.

At the GS-12/13 level: As a program manager with the Maryland State Correctional Administration, I have been required to prepare detailed written reports and regulations on the development and management of correctional programs throughout the state. I have created procedural manuals and policy guidelines that are now accepted standards for all Correctional Administration operations. These written materials are clear, concise, and detailed and convey highly technical matter that could be vital to the safety and well-being of the staff as well as the prison populations. My manual on the proper search of inmate living space (shakedown procedures) provides detailed guidelines for securing individuals while safely searching for contraband. The manual provides thorough descriptions of unusual and innovative methods of concealment and has resulted in a 72% increase in the seizure of contraband since its implementation.

At the GS-14/15 level: As director of development with General Dynacon, I was responsible for directing the creation of all marketing materials for Federal defense industry marketing. I created complex technical proposals, often comprising many volumes and thousands of pages of highly technical data. I prepared the introduction and abstract portions of these proposals, synthesizing the information to create an informative overview of the contents in order to convey the information to non-technical management officials. These proposals were instrumental in securing new corporate business, and I consistently received bonuses based on my performance.

Sample KSA Responses

Below are four brief job descriptions and select KSAs needed for each job. Note that the sample responses illustrate different approaches but always satisfy the need to be specific and to give examples. Read each response thoroughly, regardless of the occupation or subject matter of the KSA. Review of these samples should help to prepare you to respond to any KSA you come across.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

National Archives and Records Administration MERIT PROMOTION

VACANCY NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	CLOSING DATE

POSITION: Museum Curator, GS-1015-13

DUTIES: Incumbent serves as museum curator for Japanese art with duties related to the identification, acquisition, preservation, exhibition and interpretation of objects in the collection. Incumbent develops plans to expand the collections, design exhibitions and related programs and performs scholarly and original research in the field; participates with other museum staff in developing plans for exhibition catalogues and scholarly and commercially oriented publications; serves as expert adviser to colleagues, scholars, the general public and professional research and educational institutions.

KSA REQUIRED:

Ability to conceptualize and develop museum exhibitions in areas of expertise.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

As assistant curator with the Denver Museum of Art, I directed all exhibit planning actions for two-dimensional art forms. I remained current in all developments in the art world, interacting with dealers, collectors, and scholars to identify areas of possible interest to our patrons. I administered a budget in excess of 2 million dollars annually, directing financial planning for proposed exhibits.

I was responsible for selecting themes and subjects, specific artists, as well as the individual works of art. I designed layouts for new exhibits and coordinated with building maintenance staff for lighting and structural modifications. I created text, selected illustrations, and coordinated production of exhibit materials, including brochures and catalogues. In order to support public awareness of museum offerings, I developed marketing strategies and interacted with local media to promote new exhibits. Finally, I coordinated opening events, directing planning for formal gatherings to celebrate major exhibit openings.

I was responsible for all aspects of the Asian Arts Exhibit from conception through opening. I coordinated with collectors to secure valuable works of art; I worked with decorators to redesign galleries to support an "oriental" motif and supervised contractors in renovations to prepare for exhibit displays. I appeared on local television and radio programs to announce the exhibit and secure prime placement of ads in local print media. My 75-page, full-color catalogue received the Denver Star's Artistic Achievement Award and the exhibit itself received glowing reviews, as well as breaking existing attendance records.

KSA REQUIRED:

Ability to develop collections in specific areas of art.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

While with the Denver Museum of Art in the 1980s, I initiated a collection of American Indian Art. At this time this was considered a craft industry, not art. I prepared a proposal and received authorization to begin a collection that has since grown to become a standard for the industry. To support collection development, I prepared a comprehensive acquisition plan that detailed types of works ranging from pre-Columbian through the modern works of Indian artists. I secured a budget for this collection, defining financial requirements and documenting all expenditures.

I interacted with private collectors, national museums, academic institutions, and corporate collectors to identify potential sources and secure works of art. I began the painstaking collection of pieces, tracing the development of the Indian culture from prehistory to today. The resulting exhibit was mentioned favorably in the Journal of American Art Museums and I was promoted to assistant curator in recognition of my contribution and capabilities.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

National Archives and Records Administration MERIT PROMOTION

VACANCY NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	CLOSING DATE

POSITION: Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-12

DUTIES: Incumbent provides advice and guidance for a range of personnel functions involving administrative, professional, engineering, scientific and clerical positions at all grade levels. Also serves as the resident expert for position classification and administration of the pay and hours of duty programs. Position classification duties will require approximately 40 percent of time.

KSA REQUIRED:

Knowledge of Federal position classification sufficient to classify a variety of positions.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

As a human resource director with Peoples Airlines, I developed a comprehensive merit personnel management system based upon the system used by the Federal government. I created detailed position descriptions and a framework for the classification of new positions, utilizing the classification standards developed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In order to successfully complete this project, I studied this massive document thoroughly and interacted with OPM's Office of Standards Development to ensure a precise understanding of the systems and procedures used by Federal classification specialists. The system was implemented in 1979 by the airline and remains in effect. Since its implementation, there have been no successful challenges to its validity or integrity.

KSA REQUIRED:

Skill in written and oral communication to effectively provide direction to a variety of individuals and organizations regarding sensitive and controversial issues.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

As a consultant specializing in Federal employment practices and procedures, I have developed communication skills that enable me to convey highly complex information regarding trends and practices in Federal employment to first-time Federal job seekers. I have written detailed instructional manuals, prepared informational materials, and drafted correspondence to advise individual clients and organizations in matters regarding Federal personnel statutes, policies, regulations, and procedures.

In addition to preparing and providing written products for my clients, I provide counseling and conduct seminars to explain the intricacies and mysteries of the Federal application, evaluation, and hiring processes. I

develop presentations to address the needs of the target audience and deliver up to eight-hour seminars to large groups. I anticipate questions and provide necessary information and guidance.

I am often called upon to provide assistance in matters involving disciplinary actions, grievances, EEO complaints, and separations. I must provide advice and support for the individuals involved, explaining the intent and terms of the regulations in question in order to assist them in devising effective job search strategies. I must utilize tact and diplomacy to provide practical advisory services in potentially volatile situations.

I currently serve as a consultant to several trade organizations and write a regular column for the foremost Federal Times publication in my field.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

National Archives and Records Administration

MERIT PROMOTION

VACANCY NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	CLOSING DATE

POSITION: Personnel Staffing Specialist, GS-212-11/12

DUTIES: Incumbent serves as senior personnel staffing specialist in providing technical advice and assistance to federal managers and program officials on personnel management programs; performs technical reviews and provides consultative services related to authorities delegated to federal agencies under the Civil Service Reform Act; reviews recruiting and examining functions.

KSA REQUIRED:

Knowledge of civil service laws, rules, regulations, and practices relating to competitive recruiting and examining and related programs such as EEO, selective placement, veterans preferences, etc.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

As a personnel specialist with the Department of Energy, I worked within the framework for staffing actions as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Federal Personnel Manual (FPM) of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. I served as a technical expert coordinating diverse recruiting and staffing issues within this complex system, which included both competitive staffing programs and special placement programs serving more than 3,200 employees.

Competitive placement actions required the review, interpretation, and implementation of numerous statutes, policies, systems, and procedures that governed the selection process. Determinations were made regarding the proper classification of the vacancy, and a responsive recruiting plan was devised. I was responsible for establishing the area of consideration and the "open" window for receipt of applications. I reviewed and interpreted qualification requirements, reviewed or developed a position description, and created a vacancy announcement. I worked with subject matter experts to devise a ranking schedule, defining the evaluation criteria for the examination process. Throughout all of the stages of the recruiting, examination, and selection processes, I advised senior managers regarding the proper interpretation of applicable laws and regulations for the management of the competitive process.

I was responsible for directing a significant portion of a major recruiting program to meet agency expansion mandated by Executive order. This was the initial creation of the Department of Energy as a separate entity during the energy crisis of the 1970s. I was assigned to recruit a large administrative support staff for this newly created organization. I worked

with senior executives to determine staffing requirements and devised recruiting programs to quickly bring qualified individuals on-board within the framework of the competitive process of the merit system.

During this time, I became quite familiar with the special hiring programs of the Excepted Service. I have used numerous excepted hiring schedules as defined by CFR Part 213. In order to acquire the needed expertise in a timely manner, it was necessary to utilize all available programs to streamline a sometimes unwieldy competitive process. I utilized Schedules A (handicapped, etc.), B (student programs and executive training programs), and C (politically sensitive positions) to bring in temporary and permanent employees. Proper procedures were then employed to convert those with temporary status to full-time competitive status.

In addition to special hiring programs in response to critical need, I have coordinated special hiring programs in response to agency policies and Federal statutes. I have participated in the development and implementation of recruiting programs to meet EEO requirements and Affirmative Action objectives. This has included special recruiting at minority and women's colleges and universities, as well as the identification of appropriate advertising vehicles for minority recruiting.

I have also interpreted and implemented the Veterans Readjustment Act and related veterans preference programs through numerous incarnations. This program has been used for entry- and mid-level hiring.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

National Archives and Records Administration

MERIT PROMOTION

VACANCY NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	CLOSING DATE

POSITION: Supervisory Librarian, GS-1410-13

DUTIES: Manages the collections care program, including preventive conservation and construction of protective enclosures. Determines goals, policies, procedures, and techniques related to physical treatment and storage of collections. Analyzes procedures for protection, security and economy.

KSA REQUIRED:

Knowledge of preservation treatment techniques and technologies as applied to library materials.

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE:

As a materials preservation specialist with the University of Virginia Library, I was responsible for the management of preservation activities for a collection of rare and antique materials in print, manuscript, audio recording (foil, was, tape, and CD), film, and video. I am aware of the variables that might impact on the condition of potentially fragile items within the collection, including exposure to light, heat, humidity, or atmospheric pollutants. My duties require that I develop systems and procedures to safeguard materials from potential damage or destruction. This includes the development and maintenance of facilities with stringent environmental controls, the introduction of protective sleeves and covers, and the decision to remove materials from general circulation (or to greatly restrict access and exposure to possible harmful elements).

In addition to preventive systems and procedures, I have served as a technical expert in the field of repair and preservation. I am familiar with the application of adhesives and fabrics to restore aging and damaged books and manuscripts. I have successfully restored materials from the 16th and 17th centuries, employing techniques that safeguard the historic significance of the material.

KSA conversation with Beverly Leftbridge

Do's	Don'ts
Send a cover letter	Send information that was not asked for Don't send books, letters, they will be trashed.
If you don't have all of your information, mention that in the cover letter and the reason why it has not been included.	Don't send sloppy applications or KSAs
Ask someone you trust to review your application and KSAs.	
Make sure that your information is on each page of your KSA. Name, Vacancy announcement, SS#	
Number the pages of your KSAs	
Respond to the advertised KSA. Don't send KSAs from similar jobs. Some will send a KSA to HR of a job of the same but it has different KSAs.	
Take your time doing your KSAs,	
No typos, grammar, punctuation, writing and spelling.	
Don't misrepresent yourself, employer expects you to be able to do your job once you get selected.	
Add classes, training and education to your KSA.	

Use Your Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) to Your Advantage in the Federal Job Application Process

Introduction

Like other employers, federal agencies are moving to automated application and screening systems with the goal of simplifying the application process and expediting hiring decisions. There are still some aspects of applying for a federal job, however, that you may find unfamiliar. One area that can be particularly confusing for applicants is the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) questions required by many agencies.

This tool is a general guide designed to help you in applying for jobs that require KSAs by demystifying the KSAs and explaining the role that they play in the federal job application process. As with all aspects of the federal application and recruitment process, it is of utmost importance to do research on each specific agency of interest to learn about any special standards, guidelines, or style requirements. For more detailed information on KSAs and other mechanics of the federal job application process, please refer to the resources listed at the end.

What ARE KSAs?

"KSAs," an acronym for Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, are a set of questions to help determine if you are a good fit for the job, based on, you guessed it, your combined set of job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some agencies may refer to KSAs using other names, such as quality ranking factors or supplemental statements. In some cases you may see questions that refer to job "competencies," which encompass knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as attributes such as leadership potential and initiative. Typically, you will be asked to respond to anywhere from three to six KSAs. Take advantage of the opportunity the KSAs offer you to fully describe the skills you would bring to the job.

One federal agency Web site best describes why KSAs are important. *"A primary purpose of KSAs is to measure those qualities that will set one candidate apart from the others. . . How well an applicant can show that he or she matches the position's defined KSAs determines whether that person will be seriously considered for the job."*

If you still find the KSAs a daunting prospect, equate them to something you are familiar with – a traditional set of interview questions. This way you can look at the KSAs as an opportunity to use real life examples to sell the experiences, education, and activities listed on your resume (and as an added bonus you get to edit your answers before you

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management breaks down the definition of each component as follows:

Knowledge: A body of information applied directly to the performance of a function.

Skill: An observable competence to perform a learned psychomotor act.

Ability: Competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product.

submit them!). Below are examples of real job openings and accompanying KSAs from the federal government's official job site, www.usajobs.opm.gov, matched with an equivalent question that an interviewer might ask to get at the same information.

A Job Announcement For:	... Includes a KSA That Reads:	... Which is Like an Interviewer Asking:
Investigative Assistant, GS 5/6	Ability to gather facts and communicate findings clearly, both orally and in writing.	"Tell me about a project you worked on in school or in a previous job in which you had to write a report and present the findings to an audience."
Accountant, GS 5-12	Professional knowledge of accounting methods, principles and procedures in order to evaluate, design, implement, and modify systems for adequacy and accuracy of accounting information.	"What accounting methods and principles have you learned that will enable you to evaluate or modify accounting systems? Also, can you tell me about any internships or school projects in which you utilized accounting methods and principles, and how you used them?"
Park Ranger, GS 7	Knowledge of recreation site operation and maintenance techniques and ability to apply them to work.	"I see you volunteered regularly at the regional nature center during your four years, and that you worked as a life guard for a few summers. What did you learn in those experiences and how would you apply it to this job?"
Microbiologist, GS 7-9	Knowledge of safety procedures and safe handling of hazardous biological agents.	"What experience do you have working in a lab with hazardous biological agents? If somebody in your lab accidentally knocked over a hazardous sample, what procedures would you follow?"
Intelligence Specialist, GS-9	Skill at making presentations in front of a group.	"Tell me about a time when you had to make a persuasive argument, perhaps for a class project or internship. Tell me about another time when you had to make a presentation for a large audience and the tools and techniques you used."

Isn't My Resume Enough?

A resume is an important component of the job application process since it conveys your general experience, education, activities, and other accomplishments. However, addressing the KSAs listed in the job opening is essential, because the KSAs provide you with an opportunity to draw attention to and expand upon the specific factors the agency is looking for – and an opportunity to spell out why you are the best candidate for the job. In addition, don't leave something out of your KSA responses just because you assume they will see it on your resume – redundancy is not a bad thing here. On the flip side, references to any significant experiences in your KSA responses should reflect points made on your resume.

So . . . How Do I Write a KSA?

Apply the same rules when writing KSAs as you would in submitting an essay response or writing sample – use the active tense, don't ramble, and read it over to make sure you are answering the question being asked. Naturally, as with any job you apply for, make sure you do thorough research on the agency to which you are applying. Writing KSAs isn't rocket science, but below are some pointers!

1. Read the job announcement carefully, highlighting key words or phrases describing the position responsibilities so you remember to address those points in your KSA responses.
2. Go back to your resume and outline a list of possible experiences you've had that address each KSA. Review each list and select the items that best illustrate a link between your experience and each KSA.
3. Add information relevant to each KSA that may not be included in your resume – such as any specialized training, publications, leadership roles, student activities, or awards. Make sure you take credit for your whole range of experiences, including volunteer work, internships, school projects, and extracurricular activities.
4. Link all these different examples explicitly to the KSA questions. Whether you've worked as a waitress or cashier, served as a student club officer, or volunteered at a nursing home, the key is to tie these experiences back to the KSAs in a way that demonstrates that you are the best candidate for the job being advertised.
5. Write your KSAs in the first person, and use concrete examples to illustrate your skills. This is your opportunity to more fully elaborate on skills and responsibilities outlined in your resume, and examples are much more descriptive and memorable than an assertion that you have certain knowledge, skills, or abilities. Be sure to include examples that demonstrate your ability to take initiative.
6. Focus on any outcomes to which you directly contributed, citing quantitative data where possible. For example, use data that measures how much (like how much money or time you generated or saved), or how many (like how many people attended, how many units you produced), and point to positive change (percentage growth or savings) when possible.
7. Make sure your answers reflect your level of responsibility. Similarly, clearly identify who you interacted with and how, such as providing key information to a manager, working with a group of peers, or supervising a team.
8. Target each KSA answer to read between half a page and a page in length. Remember that a busy person will be reading through your application, so it is important to find the right balance between providing compelling information and information overload.
9. Review your answers to ensure they are succinct and easy to read. Always use plain language and don't use acronyms! Focus on content, and don't forget to proofread!
10. Ask a friend who knows you well to read over your finished answers. Your reader should make sure that you have included all of your relevant experiences, that your responses flow well, and that the answers don't contain any typos or grammatical errors.

A Sample KSA: Skill in Written Communication

Below are examples of answers to a common KSA, "Skill in written communication." After reading through this guide, it shouldn't be difficult for you to see why one answer is much stronger than the other!

Example of a poor response:

My communication skills are excellent. I am often asked to help out in this regard and have been commended for my work.

Example of a better response:

In the past 10 months, I have taken over a number of writing assignments previously held by my supervisor. These include:

1. Drafting monthly reports on leasing activities under the purview of our office. These are routinely approved by my supervisor without change and are circulated to 10 field offices and Regional Directors.
2. I have assumed the responsibility of reporter for the quarterly meeting of the bureau's Research Directors. Reports of these meetings are reviewed by the Director's Office prior to distribution to all participants.
3. In January, I completed the course, "Writing Analytical Reports," offered through the National Independent Study Center. This was a six-month course involving 24 hours of training and covering such areas as: planning an analytical report, collecting and analyzing data, identifying possible solutions to problems addressed in the report, and organizing, writing, and editing the report.

In addition, while I was a student in college I developed and was recognized for my strong written communication skills in a variety of capacities. These include:

1. A summer internship with my state representative, for whom I drafted constituent correspondence and press releases. Though I was an intern, the majority of the one- to two-dozen letters and press releases I wrote each week were sent without modification.
2. During my senior year, I served as the chapter president of my honor society, and wrote monthly progress reports to send to the headquarters of the honor society.
3. Throughout college I was a staff writer for the student daily newspaper. As a reporter I wrote both short news stories as well as in-depth feature articles on a weekly basis, and was selected for the feature writing award by the editorial board my junior year.

Select Additional Resources on KSAs and the Federal Job Application Process

Bureau of Prisons Web site: <http://www.bop.gov/hrmpg/ksa/hrmksahndbk.pdf> "KSA Handbook: A guide to presenting your Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities when applying for positions."

Centers for Disease Control Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/hrmo/ksahowto.htm>

Department of Labor Web site:
http://wdsc.doleta.gov/jobs/Federal_Application_Process/Knowledge_Skills_Abilities/

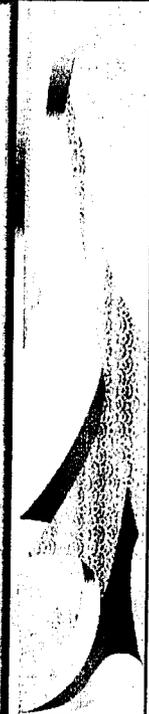
Kraemer, Kathryn. "Career Corner: The Lowdown on KSAs," Government Executive Magazine Web site, July 13, 1999. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0799/071399cc.htm>

OPM's USAJOBS Web site: www.usajobs.opm.gov/EI64.htm

Troutman, Kathryn Kraemer. *Ten Steps to a Federal Job: Navigating the Federal Job System, Writing Federal Resumes, KSAs and Cover Letters with a Mission. The Resume Place.* Baltimore: 2002.

“The soul is dyed the color of its thoughts. Think only of those things that are in line with your principles and can bear the full light of day. The content of your character is your choice. Day by day, what you choose, what you think and what you do is who you become. Your integrity is your destiny . . . It is the light that guides your way.”

Heraclitus Greek Poet, Philosopher



Writing Effective KSAs

The skill most valued by employers in today's job market according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2002 is communication skills. This is true for nearly all job categories and levels. An important way to demonstrate proficiency in written communication skill is by presenting strong KSA statement responses.

Sharyn C. Alvarez
National Federal Women's Program Manager



Developing responses to KSAs ²

Leadership

Environmental Context

Complexity / creativity

Pertinence to the position

Impact or outcome

Other tips on responding to KSAs

Do

- Specific & measurable
- Explain your role
- Show + or -
- Use strong action verbs
- Proofread, proofread
- List training/education
- Type your responses
- Bullets or paragraphs not both
- Spell out all terms prior to using acronyms
- Do not refer reviewers to other parts of your application
- Be objective, state the facts
- Get to the point
- Use lots of examples

Don't

- Lie, try to snow,
- Borrow language PD
- Use clichés
- Use philosophy
- Use flowery language
- Ramble

More Tips . . . Details Field/Area

- ☐ Number of days you worked there
- ☐ Number of people you supervised
- ☐ County size/ acres
- ☐ Population
- ☐ Clientele – diverse communities
- ☐ Farm ranch size
- ☐ Level of complexity/scope of work assigned, contacts
- ☐ Resources issues you worked on
- ☐ What was unique about your detail and what you learned
- ☐ How did you help them meet their goals?

More Tips . . . Details, SO/NHQ

- ☐ Number of days you worked there
- ☐ Number of people you supervised
- ☐ Project you were assigned
- ☐ Level of complexity/scope of the work assigned, contacts
- ☐ Resources issues you worked on
- ☐ What was unique about your detail and what you learned
- ☐ How did you help them meet their goals?

KSAs . . .

Limit them to 2 pages

Have your package reviewed by a
colleague you trust

Write your responses for the position
you are applying for not the one you
are in.

Taylor your KSAs to the vacancy you
are applying for.

KSAs . . .

Lack of experience?

mention training or education

Font size

no smaller than 11

Mention licenses or certificates you
hold

Computer programs you know

Additional Information About KSAs

- ☐ Give examples that show:
- ☐ **Initiative:** You saw a problem and resolved it.
- ☐ **Innovation:** You developed a new system; used software for a new purpose.
- ☐ **Leadership:** You mentored less experienced employees.
- ☐ **Complexity:** You experienced challenging times on the job.
- ☐ **Scope:** You were involved in a variety of work that covered many functional areas (e.g., personnel, budget, information technology, etc.).
- ☐ **Teamwork:** You were part of a team activity whose members possessed different skills and abilities, shared a common purpose, and worked together to achieve clearly identifiable goals (remember when showing team activity to identify YOUR role in the team, not the role of the team).

“I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he or she has overcome while trying to succeed.”

Booker T. Washington

