

KSA Writing for Federal Applications

KSAs are also referred to as Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics (KSAOs). They are required for the selecting official to identify the best qualified candidate for the position. Most look at writing KSAs as drudgery, however it is a necessary part of your employment application, if requested on the job announcement.

KSAs are attributes needed to perform a specific job function that are demonstrate through qualifying training, education and experience.

The following definitions will help you understand what the selecting official is looking for when reviewing your submissions:

Knowledge - An organized body of information, usually of a factual or procedural nature, which if applied, makes adequate performance on the job possible.

Examples include knowledge of:

- Federal Regulations and Directives
- Operational systems and procedures
- Budget and accounting principals
- Engineering practices
- Environmental Compliance Law
- Administrative practices

Skill - The manipulation of date, things, or people through manual, mental or verbal means. Skills are measurable through testing, can be observed, and quantifiable. Often referred to expertness that comes from training, practice, etc.

Examples include skill in:

- Keyboard data entry
- Motor vehicle operation
- Computer software proficiency
- Electronic or computer repair
- Carpentry, plumbing and/or HVAC repair
- Second language proficiency

Ability - The capacity to perform a physical or mental activity at the present time. Typically abilities are apparent through functions completed on the job. Abilities and skills are often interchange in KSAs. The main difference is that ability is the capacity to perform where a skill is the actual manipulation of data, things or people. You may have the ability but unless observed through actions that ability may not transfer to a skill set.

Examples include the ability to:

- Organize and plan work (observed at work)
- Analyze situations, programs and problems
- Communicate orally and in writing
- Coach and mentor others

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Other Characteristics - Mental or physical attributes or characteristics that don't fall under the other areas.

Examples are:

- Proactive - takes initiative to get things done without prompting
- Copes well in stressful environments - handles complex tasks
- Reliability - assigned work is completed ahead of schedule and the quality of work is exceptional
- Multiple work assignments - capable of successfully handling various and sundry tasks

This factor is required for jobs that to a greater degree encounter these characteristics such as jobs with the Federal Aviation Administration in air traffic control, work at nuclear power plants, and careers in law enforcement.

Write specific and detailed descriptions of your work experiences. Include answers to the following:

- An estimate of when the experience(s) was acquired.
- A description of the problem(s) you faced or the objectives(s) you were trying to accomplish.
- A specific statement of what you actually did.
- A description of the outcome or results of the activity.
- The name and telephone number of someone who can verify the information you provided. (This does not have to be a supervisor.)