

A Guide to KSA Writing (KSA = KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES)

So you found your dream job on USAJOBS.gov. In addition to sending in a federal resume, you must submit KSA essays or complete a questionnaire. How far you get in the application process will likely be determined by your ability to convincingly address these factors. Be sure to include as much information as you can that responds to each KSA factor, even if that information is already included on your federal resume. This worksheet will help you learn how to write KSAs that will get the job.

Step 1: Practice Studying Job Announcements

Directions: Look at a random job announcement from usajobs.gov (see below). Focus on the “requirements,” “skills” or “qualifications” sections of job ads, and look for “buzzwords” and desirable credentials for your ideal job. Highlight the buzzwords or the frequently mentioned words. You’ll want to use these in your KSA. Then, circle the KSA factors. *Now, you are ready to print out a job announcement you want to apply to and highlight the buzzwords and key words. Make a list of words to use in your KSA.*

<p>Major Duties</p> <p>The incumbent in this position will establish and maintain an accurate and complete budget tracking system for Division operating funds, special grant funds and other special appropriations. Keeps a continuous record of the use of funds and status of the various accounts. Informs management concerning the status of funds, trends and projections, and identifies actual and potential problems and effects their solutions. Audits travel orders and vouchers, local reimbursements, training requests; identifies problems found; and oversees their resolution. In evaluating vouchers, applies a complete knowledge of both the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) and the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) to ensure that proper criteria have been applied in the computation of these vouchers. Maintains automated records and prepares recurring and special budget reports, as requested. Serves as a member of the Division's management team in planning and evaluating the Division's activities in terms of achieving program goals and objectives and accomplishing assigned functional responsibilities. Evaluates, improves, and documents internal operating procedures. Analyzes program management issues that span the overall management of viral products. These include: procurement, allocation of resources; plans for staff training; and existing methods for completing a variety of clerical, technical and processing functions. Researches regulations and directives, observes document flow and communications, and discusses processes with office staff to develop facts and identify needs. Identifies and analyzes bottlenecks and barriers to program accomplishments. Seeks out possible solutions or alternatives; consults functional specialists; and devises and recommends improvements in procedures and workflow to make work more efficient and timely. Prepares special reports, presentations and summaries for the Director and other Division staff. Obtains and verifies information by researching office records and references documents and by conferring with program officials within and outside the Division. Evaluates, analyzes and correlates all information relevant to the subject and drafts reports, summaries and presentations. Edits and, as necessary, rewrites these items to be sure they are complete, factually correct, and are written in an appropriate style and/or format. Edits a variety of documents prepared by Division staff, and assists professional staff in committing scientific observations and analyses to writing. These documents may include correspondence, briefing packages, program review documents, and presentation materials or galley proofs of scientific papers. Ensures that table, attachments and other related material are internally consistent; appropriately located in relation to the text; and that the references are appropriately quoted in the text and that new references are filled in where appropriate. Ensures that figures and tables validate data and are faithfully reproduce; and ensures responses to all queries by the Editor. Serves as in-house expert in office automation in order to turn the Division into a paper less environment (i.e., the automation of all documents, records, budget, forms and communications). Serves as the liaison to FDA information resources management staff in order to fulfill the Division's automation needs. May be required to write simple computer programs to process study data coming into the Division. Uses database management, work processing, graphics, e-mail and network functions.</p>
<p>Qualifications and Evaluation</p> <p>At the GS-7 level, must have 1 full year of graduate level education OR superior academic achievement OR 1 year specialized experience equivalent to the GS-5 level. At the GS-9 level, must have Master's or equivalent graduate degree OR 2 full years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to such a degree OR LL.B. or J.D. OR 1 year specialized experience equivalent to the GS-7 level. IF EDUCATION IS TO BE SUBSTITUTED FOR EXPERIENCE, TRANSCRIPTS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH APPLICATION. Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the above requirements if you can show that the foreign education is comparable to that received in an accredited educational institution in the United States. It is your responsibility to provide such evidence when applying.</p>
<p>How You Will Be Evaluated</p> <p>You will be evaluated to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications required; and on the extent to which your application shows that you possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with this position as defined below. When describing your knowledge, skills, and abilities, please be sure to give examples and explain how often you used these skills, the complexity of the knowledge you possessed, the level of the people you interacted with, the sensitivity of</p>

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the issues you handled, etc.

1. Ability to analyze, evaluate, research and interpret regulations.
2. Ability to communicate in writing.
3. Ability to communicate orally.
4. Skill in utilizing a computerized tracking system.

SELECTIVE PLACEMENT FACTOR:

In addition, this position has a Selective Placement Factor. You must meet and specifically address this SELECTIVE FACTOR to be considered for this position to include the following:

- **Candidates must have demonstrated experience in conducting studies, interpreting, and advising on pandemic influenza preparedness public health efforts.**

Step 2: Take Credit for ALL of Your Experiences

Directions: Brainstorm all the ways you gain **knowledge, skills and abilities**. Use these boxes to fill in some of your experiences that you can include in your KSA. Remember, you don't need to get paid to gain from an experience.

Class Papers, Exams, Presentations, Projects	Summer Jobs, Internships, Work Study, Volunteering	Student Government, Clubs, Hobbies, Family Life, Religious Organizations

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Step 3: Use the CCAR Method

- **CONTEXT**
Describe the specific problem you had to address (What did you have to solve, resolve, respond to, handle, etc.)
- **CHALLENGES**
Describe the factors that contributed to a particular challenge such as budget cuts, new legislation, institutional reform, new goals from upper management, etc.
- **ACTION**
Describe the steps you took to solve the problem
- **RESULT**
Outcomes of your actions- where possible, use numbers to highlight your accomplishment. Think time and money.

Sample Paragraph of a KSA

Directions: Label each sentence of this sample KSA paragraph below with its part of the CCAR method.

Ability to work with data on a computer

As a summer intern with PPS, Inc. I acted as the network controller for the company's network operations center. The company was experiencing data communication problems, including fault isolation, equipment fault detection, and circuit outages. In order to correct these problems, I attended professional training classes. The knowledge and experience I gained from the classes enabled me to decrease data communications problems within

Use CCAR to Write a KSA

Directions: KSAs include several examples, so you can put a few CCAR paragraphs together to form each complete KSA. Answer each KSA ½ to one page response. This may mean you give 2-3 example paragraphs. Write one of your KSA factors from the job announcement you are applying for on the line below and use CCAR to explain your accomplishment. You can use ideas from brainstorming in Step 2.

KSA Factor:	C	C	A	R
Paragraph 1				
Paragraph 2				
Paragraph 3 (optional)				

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Step 4: Tips for Writing KSAs

- ☑ Pay attention to keywords in the job announcement. Highlight keywords or phrases describing the position. Then use those buzz words in your response.
- ☑ Connect your experiences with 2-3 CCAR paragraphs for each KSA by selecting items that best illustrate the KSA.
- ☑ Write in the first person.
- ☑ Be concise. Each KSA should be a half a page to a page in length. Make sure the reader can quickly scan for your accomplishments. Do they jump off the page? Sell yourself from the start.
- ☑ Check that you have addressed the KSA (Did you follow CCAR?)
- ☑ Proofread your answers. Make sure they are succinct and easy to read. Use plain language and don't use acronyms.
- ☑ Use another set of eyes. 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.
- ☑ Put each individual KSA on a separate piece of paper.

Practice Writing a KSA

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, use the tips above to write out one KSA using what you wrote in Step 3 using CCAR.

FIND AND APPLY FOR FEDERAL JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS ONLINE

MakingtheDifference.org provides valuable information and resources about job and internship opportunities in the federal government. On the site you'll find more information about federal agencies, an overview of the benefits of federal service, a directory of federal internships, "hot jobs" and "cool internships," tips for finding and applying for federal jobs, and much more. Plus, you'll see how federal employees are making the difference every day.

USAJOBS.gov Jobs is a great place to begin your job search. It is administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the federal government's human resources agency, and has a regularly updated list of federal job openings. You can also build your resume and learn about the federal jobs that best match your interests.



PARTNERSHIP FOR
PUBLIC SERVICE

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works.
ourpublicservice.org