

# Knowledge Skills and Abilities (KSAs)

Understanding their role in the  
Merit Promotion Process

# Lunch & Learn Objectives

- Define KSAs and understand their role in the Merit Promotion Process
- Learn the steps in the KSA development process
- Identify the components of successful KSA

# KSAs

- What are they?
- How are they developed?
- How are they used?
- Why are they important?
- How do you respond to them?

# What are KSAs?

- Special qualifications and attributes
- Qualifications and mandatory specialized experienced
- Identify the better candidates
- Demonstrated through service, education, and training
- Contained on each vacancy announcement

# What are KSAs?

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## ➤ Skill

- An observable competence to perform manual, verbal or mental functions, including manipulation of data or things.
- Can be measured by performance test (e.g. typing) and other measures such as skill in performing basic mathematical computations.

# What are KSAs?

## ➤ Ability

- Competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product, such as the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

# What are KSAs?

## ➤ Other Characteristics

- Mental or physical characteristics related to job performance.
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- ## ➤ These traits (e.g. initiative, stress tolerance) must be described in the terms of the relevance of job performance.



# KSAs are often referred to as:

- Evaluation factors
- Rating factors
- Quality ranking factors
- Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and other Characteristics
- Job elements
- Supplemental experience statement questionnaire
- Qualifications narrative.

# How are KSAs Developed?

- Job Analysis – personnel specialist and subject matter expert/selecting official
- Review of position description, performance standards, other documentation
- Used by ranking official/panel to distinguish outstanding candidates from others

# How are KSAs Used?

- Ranked in order of importance to the position to be filled
- KSAs are rated based on information contained in applicant's response

# Examples of KSAs

- Ability to communicate orally
  - Coursework; experience; Toastmasters
- Ability to communicate in writing
  - Composing documents; journalism course
- Ability to use regulatory material
  - Interprets material; applies material

# Why are KSAs Important?

- Case specific rating plans geared to the vacancy
- Narrows field to serious candidates
- Match individual to job requirements
- Significantly increase chance of being hired
- Some agencies make KSA response mandatory
- In deadline crunch – focus on KSAs



# How do I Respond?

- Read announcement *carefully*
- Pay attention to relative importance of factors (Selective Placement Factors)
- Gather information about yourself
- Gather information about the position
- Match your skills to the KSA requirements
- Write and re-write narratives – polish them

# Information About Yourself

- Employment background
- Accomplishments – Give examples
- Problems solved? New solutions?  
Results?
- Special assignments
- Publications, presentations, briefings
- Honors/awards



# Information About the Position

- Qualification requirements
- Copy of the position description
- Points stressed in the vacancy announcement
- Grade and series information

<https://www.opm.gov/qualifications/index.asp>



# Information About the Position

- Compare KSAs with body of vacancy announcement and position description
- Read KSAs in context of the job to be filled
- Forms 9686 & 4536  
<http://publish.no.irs.gov/common.html#job>
- PD  
<http://apps2.dss.swro.swr.irs.gov/spds/spds.pl?cmd=searchSpd>
- CJE's  
<http://hco.web.irs.gov/apps/cje/> (Search by Series)

# Match Your Skills to the KSAs

- List all accomplishments, awards, education that directly relate to each KSA
- Be precise and to the point
- Give specific examples, don't generalize
- Don't use wording directly from the PD
- Don't assume the reader's familiarity with acronyms and technical terms.

# Polish Your Narratives

- Look for “hole” in your narrative
- Use volunteer experience, hobbies, etc.
- List two or three accomplishment per KSA
- Don't ignore any KSAs
- Use formatting required by hiring agency
- Restate each KSA before answering
- Include your name and vacancy announcement number on each page

# More Tips

- Use action verbs – describe “how” in addition to “what” tasks were handled
- Use 12-point size and serif font throughout
- Describe accomplishments – results
- Demonstrate development and growth



# Framework for Writing KSAs

- In the opening statement, refer the reader to the KSA you are addressing
  - Give examples that clearly demonstrate your KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES
  - Take examples one step further. Look for key results. Quantify if possible.
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