



University of San Diego

GUIDE TO WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS

University of San Diego - Human Resources
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INTRODUCTION

The following guide to writing job descriptions outlines the general model used in developing job descriptions that comply with Federal guidelines such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The following elements are included in each job description:

1. PAY GRADE TITLE

The title should be brief, descriptive, and consistent with other titles in the classification plan.

2. DIVISION

The division is the largest level of the organization with which the position or class specification is identified. It is identified by the cognizant vice-president or president.

3. DEPARTMENT

Department is a level within a division which is titled to more specifically describe the specialized function(s) performed by an occupational group.

EXAMPLE:

Position Title:	Administrative Assistant II
Department:	Human Resources
Division:	Vice-President for Finance & Administration

4. GRADE NUMBER

The grade number is the end result of the Point Factor job evaluation and analysis. It is the number used to express the equitable relationship which exists between that position and all other positions and classes, based on difficulty and responsibility of work performed, etc.

5. EXEMPT / NON-EXEMPT

Non-exempt employees. Employees who are required to be paid overtime at one and one-half times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked beyond eight hours in a work day or forty hours in a workweek, in accordance with applicable state and federal wage and law hours.

Exempt employees. Employees who are not required to be paid overtime, in accordance with applicable federal wage and hour laws, for work performed beyond forty hours in a workweek. Executives, professional employees, and certain employees in administrative positions are typically exempt.

6. DATE

The date is the date the description is officially approved.

7. GENERAL PURPOSE

The general purpose should be a brief paragraph which serves as a summary description or overview of the position. This capsule description identifies the position. It should be definitive to differentiate this position from all others and will generally start with "Performs...." followed by the level and kind of work.

Kind of Work: Although there is no set terminology, the kind of work should be defined as briefly as possible by terms similar to the examples listed below to describe the general group of work, followed by the occupational field when necessary. For example:

- Labor and Trades
Manual labor
Maintenance Work
Repair work
- Supervisory and Administrative.
These terms define both level and kind of work. The above items should be modified when it is necessary to indicate a specialization within a group. For example: "Performs supervisory and complex legal clerical work"; or "Performs administrative and professional civil engineering work". These terms should not be modified unless absolutely necessary to distinguish between classes in a series, and then modification should usually be restricted to words such as "light, heavy, routine or complex". If two or more levels of work are involved, the higher level or the most common level should usually be stated first, e.g. "Performs supervisory and complex...", or "Performs administrative and professional...."

Occupational Field. The inclusion of the occupational field is useful if it clarifies unusual working conditions, hazards or other classification factors not denoted by the level and kind of work.

8. SUPERVISION RECEIVED

The statement generally starts with "Works under...", followed by the type of supervision received and the type of class exercising the supervision. The following terms, and no other, should be used for indicating the type of supervision received:

Immediate supervision
Close supervision
General supervision
General guidance and direction
Broad policy guidance and direction

NOTE: The reference attachment in the back of this guide defines the supervision terms listed above.

9. SUPERVISION EXERCISED

The clause "Exercise supervision over...personnel as assigned" should be used to indicate a situation where supervision is not necessarily present or continuous. If the position does not have supervisory responsibility, then "None" should be indicated. The following phrases are most frequently used to indicate the type of supervision exercised over other personnel:

- Exercises supervision over (department, division, etc.) personnel directly or through subordinate supervisors.
- Exercises supervision over (technical, clerical, professional, etc.) personnel.
- Serves as lead worker over other personnel as assigned.

For example: A manager would very often supervise all the time. However, an executive assistant or lead worker might exercise supervision over another in the absence of a manager or the regular supervisor.

10. EXAMPLES OF WORK

Examples of duties are descriptive. It is neither necessary nor advisable to attempt to write an exhaustive position description; only sufficient examples to present a clear picture of the work performed and the responsibilities of the position.

- Sentences listing examples of duties usually start with a verb of the present tense, such as, "Performs...", "Inspects..", etc.
- Closely related duties should generally be grouped in one paragraph and separated by a semicolon.
- The first example of duties should contain information concerning any supervision exercised over other personnel.

The last examples of work can include duties of related but non-essential importance. These examples should identify duties that are not "essential functions", but are typically undertaken or expected of the employee. These are generally duties which may be performed by other positions and thus may not be an essential duty of this position. An example may be serving on an employee committee, or duties related to backing-up or filling-in for other positions when the employee in that position is absent.

11. ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The essential duties and responsibilities of the job represent those basic duties for which the job was created which cannot normally be transferred to another position without disrupting work flow.

When writing the job description, it is helpful to number the examples of work discussed in the previous section. This allows the essential duties and responsibilities to be referenced by number. For example, if the first 6 of 13 examples of work are essential, then this section would simply read:

Essential Duties and Responsibilities
#s 1-6 in Examples of Work.

An essential function is one that:

Is so critical to the position that it cannot be eliminated from the description of the job without significantly changing that position's role and contribution to the organization, Regardless of the frequency of performance, an essential function cannot be assumed by another employee; or would significantly impact the description of a position that it would require a change in classification and/or pay grade.

Phrases like, "Performs related work as required" or other duties as assigned, are not recommended. **Such a listing may be considered discriminatory.** The following alternative language should be listed at the end of every job description:

The duties listed above are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.

12. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

This section describes the lowest level of education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities that would be eligible for consideration in the event of this position becoming vacant. ***It is not intended to be the hiring level.*** Generally, the successful candidate will exceed the minimum requirements.

A. EDUCATION:

The following terminology should normally be used:

- High School - "High school diploma or GED (General Education Diploma) equivalent."
- Some College - " years of college with course work in "
- "Graduation from a college with an Associate degree in...."
- College - "Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor's degree in"
- College plus - "Graduation from a college of law", or "Graduation from a college or university with a Master's degree in "

B. EXPERIENCE:

If none is required, "None" should be listed. The statement of experience should usually be shown as "X years of experience...."

C. SUBSTITUTION:

This section should be used to indicate specific instances where related education and/or experience can serve in place of those listed in either the education or experience sections. NOTE: when substitutions or equivalencies are used **there is some thought that such a listing may be considered discriminatory** because it can be too subjective. Alternative language such as the following is recommended if you use substitution criteria:

Or any equivalent combination of education and experience.

You may want to further define an acceptable and bonafide equivalency, such as "one year of full time experience may substitute for a year of the required education".

13. PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

This section can be used as a guide for developing recruitment and selection procedures, including testing. They are listed in one paragraph for each level, with knowledge first, skills second, and abilities last.

A. KNOWLEDGE.

Level of knowledge required should be indicated as follows:

- *Some* knowledge - Enough familiarity to know elementary terminology and principles and their application to simple problems.
- *Working* knowledge - Enough knowledge to understand everyday terminology and principles and their application to everyday problems.
- *Considerable* knowledge - Enough advanced knowledge to understand terminology and principles and their application to problems beyond the everyday level; a level expected to be obtained through experience at the "working" level that has provided for the increasingly difficult and independent application of principles.
- *Thorough* knowledge - Nearly complete knowledge acquired through considerable experience in the application of principles and techniques in solving unusual and difficult problems and in developing operational policies.
- *Extensive* knowledge - The most advanced degree of knowledge likely to be found, implying complete mastery and understanding of the subject field. Use the term extensive sparingly and only for exacting technical and professional level positions.

Refer to examples below.

B. SKILLS.

Skill requirements should be specified only when the skill is in a measurable area or field. Skills required should be phrased, "Skill in..,"

Refer to examples below.

C. ABILITIES.

Abilities required should be phrased, "Ability to...". Certain abilities appear in almost all class specifications.

Refer to examples below.

For example: the knowledge, skills, and abilities section of a job description for an office assistant might read as follows:

(A) Working knowledge of computers and electronic data processing; working knowledge of modern office practices and procedures; some knowledge of accounting principles and practices.

(B) Skill in operation of listed tools and equipment.

(C) Ability to perform cashier duties accurately; ability to effectively meet and deal with the public; ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing; ability to handle stressful situations.

Performance expectations applicable to almost all jobs are listed below. Most job descriptions will have about 8-10 of these statements. If there are performance expectations unique to the job or department, then these expectations should be listed first.

Be able and willing to represent the University in the most positive manner with prospective, former and current students, clients, suppliers and the community we serve.

Possess the ability to meet and deal effectively with faculty, staff and other customers; learn and use operating practices of the department and the University.

Possess the ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

Possess excellent human relations skills.

Cooperate as a team member with all departments performing duties essential to the achievement of efficient delivery of education.

Be able to provide service in a courteous, prompt and efficient manner.

Establish and maintain strong working relationships with colleagues, staff, administrators, students and the general public.

Must have excellent teaching, human relations, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Must possess the ability to get along with diverse personalities and populations.

Must possess flexibility and versatility in order to contribute to evolving work situations.

Use independent judgment to accommodate the needs of the University by determining proper corrective action or by referring the problem to other appropriate personnel.

Have thorough knowledge of general office practices and procedures and good business English and proofreading.

Ability to access, input and retrieve information from a computer system for word processing, design and other uses.

Assume responsibility, deal effectively with problems, and exercise independent judgment when making decisions.

Read, understand and express oneself clearly and effectively in written and oral form and request clarification when needed.

Possess good organizational skills.

Ability to develop and use empathetic listening skills, communicate with clarity and maintain an attitude that conveys respect, assistance, honesty and resourcefulness.

Ability to handle confidential client and employment information with tact and discretion.

14. SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

This section may be used for required licenses, certification or registration, or other requirements and special conditions unique to the position.

Desirable membership in associations or professional societies should not be included.

15. TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT USED

This section may be used to describe the tools and equipment which the employee will normally use to undertake the essential functions of the job. This is useful in the recruitment and selection process, and in considering reasonable accommodations which may need to be made for persons with disabilities.

16. PHYSICAL DEMANDS

This section should describe:

how much on-the-job time is spent in a variety of physical activities, such as: stand; walk; sit; talk or hear; use hand to finger, handle, feel or operate; climb or balance; stoop, kneel, crouch or crawl; reach with hands and arms; taste or smell; what weights must be lifted or be exerted, how much and how often; any special vision requirements to perform the essential functions of the job, such as:

- close vision (20 inches or less)
- distance vision (clear vision at 20 feet or more)
- color vision (ability to identify distinguish colors)
- peripheral vision (ability to observe an area that can be seen up and down or to the left and right while eyes are fixed on a given point)
- depth perception (three-dimensional vision, ability to judge distances and spatial relationships).

The understanding of physical demands is useful in the recruitment and selection process, and in considering reasonable accommodations which may need to be made for persons with disabilities.

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by the employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform these essential functions.

17. WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Work Environment section describes how much exposure the employee has to environmental conditions, such as: wet, humid conditions (non-weather); work near moving mechanical parts; work in high, precarious places; fumes or airborne particles; toxic or caustic chemicals; outdoor weather conditions; extreme cold (non-weather); extreme heat (non-weather); risk of electrical shock; work with explosives; risk of radiation; vibration.

The Work Environment section also describes how much noise is typically encountered on the job. This may vary for positions which have both office and field duties. General categories include: Very quiet (forest trail, isolation booth), Quiet (library, private office), Moderate Noise (open office with office equipment running), Loud Noise (manufacturing processes, earth-moving equipment, congested traffic), Very Loud Noise (jack hammer, front row of rock concert).

The understanding and description of work environment is useful in the recruitment and selection process, and in considering reasonable accommodations which may need to be made for persons with disabilities.

The following paragraph should be included in the Work Environment section of every job description. The language of the paragraph is intended to fulfill requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

ATTACHMENT 1
Description of Various Levels of Supervision

The following section addresses 5 levels of supervision received. This section should also be used when determining supervision exercised.

- 1) IMMEDIATE SUPERVISION
- 2) CLOSE SUPERVISION
- 3) GENERAL SUPERVISION
- 4) GENERAL GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION
- 5) BROAD POLICY GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION

1. IMMEDIATE SUPERVISION. This phrase indicates the greatest amount of supervision and control from above, the least personal independence of action, and the least breadth of matters upon which the employee makes decisions. It is particularized supervision that is recognized by its specificity and its application to details. The supervisor has not only the responsibility for assignments, flow of work, production, discipline and other management functions, but also the responsibility for proper instructions as to objectives, plans, policies, procedures and office methods, including specific responsibility for matters which are out of the ordinary or unusual when compared to the routine work performed.

The employee's assignments, objectives and sequence of detailed steps in the work are prescribed through manuals, policies, directives, etc. Little opportunity is given the employee for the exercise of personal initiative, discretion or judgment, or for the assumption of any real responsibility for results alone.

Generally, the employee is held personally responsible for accurate and proper application of steps in a well-recognized technique. If the employee has followed this technique and the instructions, his or her responsibility ends, because the responsibility for results rests with the supervisor. The employee is given no assignments requiring the exercise of experienced judgment except that gained by experience in a well-recognized, standard, or conventional routine such as following procedures outlined in manuals or directives.

When conditions such as those described above are encountered, the employee is said to be under "immediate supervision".

2. CLOSE SUPERVISION. The employee under "close supervision" is familiar with the routine and with the methods or procedures affecting the particular position. It is presumed that the employee will be able to recognize instances which are out of the ordinary and which do not fall within existing instructions. The person is then expected to seek advice and further instructions. Reviews and checks of the employee's work are applied only to an extent sufficient to keep the supervisor aware of progress and to insure that instructions are being followed.

3. GENERAL SUPERVISION. This phrase indicates that the control from above is not a particularized supervision, but a general control, not intimately bearing upon the details of the employee's work. The assignments and objectives are prescribed for the employee, but the person's work methods are seldom supervised, reviewed or controlled while the work is in process. The employee is expected to plan the sequence of detailed steps by using experienced judgment and discretion. The person is expected to solve through initiative, most problems of detail that come up in the course of the work. With problems of an unusual nature, the employee is expected to revise the procedures and methods to accommodate these conditions. There is substantive and personal responsibility for results.

The principal elements of general supervision in relation to the technical aspects of a position are personal accountability for accomplishing prescribed results and objectives, and considerable freedom while the work is in process.

In those cases where general supervision is found in both management and technical functions, the following indicators are also usually present: considerable freedom from control over sequence of assignments, a fair degree of responsibility for determining what shall be done next and a substantial degree of independence in planning and organizing assigned work activities,

4. GENERAL GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION. This phrase indicates a general and somewhat removed control which manifests itself directly only on limited occasions. Such phases as planning and organizing the details of work and deciding the methods to produce a given result are completely in the hands of the employee. The employee is expected to carry out not only all the ordinary duties of the position, but to meet unusual situations and provide proper interpretations without advice or instruction other than that afforded by the general plans, policies and procedures applicable to all work in the department or division.

Active control from a higher level is manifested only where matters of broad policy and coordination, long range plan, expenditure of funds and related items are involved. And even in such matters, the employee generally participates by making recommendations or developing ideas in conference with superiors. Actual contact between the employee and superior is rather limited in terms of frequency and matters covered, when compared to the whole scope of the employee's duties and responsibilities.

5. BROAD POLICY GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION. This phrase is characterized by a heavy personal responsibility on the part of the employee and broad authority for accomplishing the mission, as well as for making policy and developing plans for carrying out work programs. There is practically complete freedom and relative infrequency of reference to others for advice and instructions, even when unusual problems are involved. These are the highest level positions, normally reporting to a Vice-President, President, or Board of Trustees.

JOB ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Job Title: _____ Department: _____

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

1. How much on-the-job time is spent in the following physical activities? Show the amount of time by checking the appropriate boxes below.

Physical Activity	Amount of Time			
	None	Up to 1/3	1/3 -2/3	More than 2/3
Stand				
Walk				
Sit				
Talk or hear				
Use hands to finger, handle, or feel				
Climb or balance				
Stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl				
Reach with hands and arms				
Taste or smell				

2. Does this job require that weight be lifted or force be exerted? If so, how much and how often? Check the appropriate boxes below.

Amount of Weight Lifted	Amount of Time			
	None	Up to 1/3	1/3 - 2/3	More than 2/3
Up to 10 pounds				
11 to 25 pounds				
26 to 50 pounds				
51 to 100 pounds				
More than 100 pounds				

3. Does this job have any special vision requirements? Check all that apply.

- ~ Close Vision (clear vision at 20 inches or less)
- ~ Distance Vision (clear vision at 20 feet or more)
- ~ Color Vision (ability to identify and distinguish colors)
- ~ Peripheral Vision (ability to observe an area that can be seen up and down or to the left and right while eyes are fixed on a given point)
- ~ Depth Perception (three-dimensional vision, ability to judge distance and spatial relationships)
- ~ Ability to Adjust Focus (ability to adjust the eye to bring an object into sharp focus)
- ~ No Special Vision Requirements

4. List any other physical demands not listed above that your job requires.

5. Make notes on the specific job duties that require the physical demands selected above.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

1. How much exposure to the following environmental conditions does this position require? Show the amount of time by checking the appropriate boxes below.

Environmental Conditions	Amount of Time			
	None	Up to 1/3	1/3 -2/3	More than 2/3
Wet, humid conditions (non-weather)				
Work near moving mechanical parts				
Work in high, precarious places				
Fumes or airborne particles				
Toxic or caustic chemicals				
Outdoor weather conditions				
Extreme cold (non-weather)				
Extreme heat (non-weather)				
Risk of electrical shock				
Work with explosives				
Risk of radiation				
Vibration				

2. How much noise is typical for the work environment of this job? Check the appropriate level below.

- ~ Very Quiet (e.g. forest trail, closed private office)
- ~ Quiet (e.g. library, private office)
- ~ Moderate Noise (e.g. business office with or computers, light traffic)
- ~ Loud Noise (e.g. Heavy traffic, large contractor equipment)
- ~ Very Loud Noise (e.g. jack hammer work, front row at rock concert)

3. List any other environmental conditions not listed above that you are exposed to while performing required job duties.

4. Make notes on the specific job duties that are affected by the environmental conditions selected above.