

TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN WRITING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS
(DO'S AND DON'TS)

DO:

1. Before writing a position description, consider the following Four Step Method in gathering reference materials and organizing the information needed to describe the responsibilities and duties of the position:
 - a. Review available program data, work methods, existing work plans, procedural standards or guides that are relevant to the position.
 - b. Review the organizational structure and determine how changes may have affected the position.
 - c. Identify the major responsibilities of the position. Responsibility is the accountability for procedures, solution, programs, services, and decisions.
 - d. Define the duties and tasks by which the responsibilities are carried out. Duties are the component elements or actions assigned to a position. Duties are made up of tasks. Tasks are the most basic element of work. A task can be defined as an action or action sequence to accomplish an objective.
2. A good job description takes time to write.
3. Keep in mind the reasons for writing the position description.
4. Express facts in quantitative terms.
5. Position descriptions should be comprehensive; aim for a writing style that is clear and easily read.
6. Ensure that any important changes that have occurred in the position since it was last reviewed are clearly addressed (indicate reasons for the changes).
7. Frequently review the factors to be used in classifying positions and ensure their inclusion in the description.
8. Include percentages of time for each functional area in the position.

DON'T:

A position description should not:

1. Contain negative statements such as “does not answer phone while supervisor is out of the office.”
2. Contain abbreviations or acronyms; their meanings may be well known only to the position holder and the supervisor.
3. Include duties that are to be performed in the future; except in the case of a new position being established.
4. Include occasional or temporary duties. If it is necessary for some reason to do so, there should be a notation opposite these duties either stating that they are occasional or temporary and specifying percentages of time spent on them.
5. Contain generalized statements. When such statements are unavoidable, they should be followed by examples for clarifications.
6. Reference people by name (use title) and position number. Example: submits report to Budget Director (position number 02222) not to “Susan”.