

# How to Write Solid Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are an essential part of hiring and managing your employees. These written summaries ensure your applicants and employees understand their roles and what they need to do to be held accountable.

Job descriptions also:

- Help attract the right job candidates
- Describe the major areas of an employee's job or position
- Serve as a major basis for outlining performance expectations, training, evaluation and career advancement
- Provide a reference point for compensation decisions and unfair hiring practices

A job description should be practical, clear and accurate to effectively define your needs. Good job descriptions typically begin with a careful analysis of the important facts about a job such as:

- Individual tasks involved
- The methods used to complete the tasks
- The purpose and responsibilities of the job
- The relationship of the job to other jobs
- Qualifications needed for the job

## **What to Avoid**

Don't be inflexible with your job description. Jobs are subject to change for personal growth, organizational development and/or evolution of new technologies. A flexible job description encourages employees to grow within their position and contribute over time to your overall business.

Every employer must have solid job descriptions. But, writing them can be a difficult task if you do not have good solid guidance. So, we are providing this template to help you further audit-secure your organization by creating solid up-to-date job description that will satisfy most auditor or investigators when it's your turn to be inspected.

## **What to Include**

Job descriptions typically include:

- Job title
- Job objective or overall purpose statement
- Summary of the general nature and level of the job
- Description of the broad function and scope of the position
- List of duties or tasks performed critical to success
- Key functional and relational responsibilities in order of significance
- Description of the relationships and roles within the company, including supervisory positions, subordinating roles and other working relationships

Additional Items for Job Descriptions for Recruiting Situations:

- Job specifications, standards, and requirements
- Job location where the work will be performed
- Equipment to be used in the performance of the job
- Collective Bargaining Agreements if your company's employees are members of a union
- Salary range

## **Proper Language in the Job Description**

Keep each statement in the job description crisp and clear:

- Structure your sentences in classic verb/object and explanatory phrases. Since the occupant of the job is the subject of your sentence, it may be eliminated. For example, a sentence pertaining to the description of a receptionist position might read: "Greet office visitors and personnel in a friendly and sincere manner."
- Always use the present tense of verbs.
- If necessary, use explanatory phrases telling why, how, where, or how often to add meaning and clarity (e.g. "Collects all employee time sheets on a bi-weekly basis for payroll purposes.")
- Omit any unnecessary articles such as "a," "an," "the," or other words for an easy-to-understand description.

- Use unbiased terminology. For example, use the he/she approach or construct sentences in such a way that gender pronouns are not required.
- Avoid using adverbs or adjectives that are subject to interpretation such as "frequently," "some," "complex," "occasional," and "several."

**In this guide we will address:**

- Describing the Position
- Delineating the Duties
- Expectation and Accountability Factors
- Knowledge and Skills Requirements

**Position Details**

This section contains, well, the details about the job:

- Internal Classification
- FLSA Classification
- Title
- Pay range
- Department
- Summary of Duties
- Related positions

**Internal Classification**

The internal classification code or descriptor is important for larger organizations. When more than 100 positions are maintained by your HR department indexing and classing the positions is helpful for defining hierarchy, benefits qualification and other particulars.

**FLSA Classification**

The Fair Labor Standards Act provides for two basic payment classes of workers, based on the job description - Exempt from minimum wage and overtime guarantees and Non-exempt. Non-exempt workers are guaranteed at least the minimum wage (the greater of federal or local pay rates) and payment of 1 ½ times the base rate when overtime is worked. During an audit, the HR or Payroll department will be required to justify all Exempt positions. Solid job descriptions are step number one in this proving-out process.

## **Title**

The position title should describe the main function or role of the job. Vague or overly specific job titles may be confusing to workers and management, alike. When creating a title, accurately describe both the level of responsibility and role this position plays in your organization. (not necessarily in that order) Here are some examples:

### **Good Titles**

HR Director  
Clinical Assistant  
Customer Support Representative  
IT Accounts Manager

### **Try Again**

Director of the HR Department at ACME, Inc.  
Assistant to the Director of Clinical Care  
Returns Rep  
New Business Manager of Accounts

## **Summary of Duties**

The summary of duties should contain the following:

- Two or more paragraphs
- A brief description of the position-holder's key responsibilities, functions, and duties; required and/or preferred education and experience; and any other important information (i.e. availability requirements, percentage of expected travel, required overtime, etc.)
- When posting a job, this summary will be used.

## **Related Positions**

List any positions in the department that have a similar role or level of responsibility. The HR Director, Payroll Manager, or Compensation Analyst will use this comparison during the internal classification process ensuring fair pay scales for all positions.

**SAMPLE POSITION DETAILS SECTION**

<b>HR Assistant</b>	
Internal Classification	<b>HR10235</b>
FLSA Status	<b>Non-Exempt</b>
Pay Range	<b>\$30,048.00-\$38,016.00</b>
Provisional Period	<b>90 Days</b>
Pay grade level	<b>3</b>
Salary Minimum	<b>\$30,048.00</b>
Salary Midpoint	<b>\$33,984.00</b>
Salary Maximum	<b>\$38,016.00</b>
<b>Position Information</b>	
Department	<b>53-Human Resources</b>
Title	<b>Human Resources Assistant</b>
Pay Category	<b>Regular, Full-Time</b>
Location	<b>Mid-town</b>
Work Months	<b>12</b>
Summary of Duties  (Note: This summary is the language that will be used in a posting to advertise the position)	<p><b>The Human Resources Assistant is responsible for assisting the HR Director in meeting federal and state employment law compliance requirements and administration of the onboarding process of new employees. This includes serving as the primary point of contact for all employees and independent contractors, preparing recruitment event materials, processing applications, coordinating the quarterly 360 review process, and preparing correspondence. Administrative support to the HR Director includes preparing general correspondence, answering phone calls, assisting with meeting preparation, making training arrangements, etc.</b></p> <p><b>A qualified candidate should have one to two years of experience in an HR support position, preferably in a corporate setting. An associate’s degree is preferred.</b></p>
Comparable Positions  <b>(If there are any comparable</b>	<b>#489ADM</b>

## Delineating the Duties

The cornerstone of the Job Description is the delineation of duties. It describes the complexity, scope, and level of responsibility. Due to the weight of this particular section, it is important to accurately, concisely, and fully describe the duties and responsibilities of the position you are developing.

**This section of the Job Description contains three main parts:**

<b>Key Accountabilities</b>	The main areas of responsibility within a job. A job description usually contains three to five Key Accountabilities.
<b>Duty Statements</b>	Sentences that provide additional information about the tasks associated with the Key Accountability.
<b>Percentage of Time</b>	Estimates the portion of the job that is spent on a particular Key Accountability.

## Writing Methods

Once your Delineation of Duties is complete, it should accurately define the complexity, scope, and level of responsibility of a job. You may wish to choose between the two methods below in order to best delineate the duties of the position:

### **Method A:**

1. Think of the job in terms of its Key Accountabilities. (main responsibilities/functions) A job will have 3 - 5 major Key Accountabilities. Here are some examples:
  - Budget Management
  - Executive Support
  - Event Coordination
2. After establishing the Key Accountabilities, generate specific job duties associated with each. These are the individual tasks or duties that correspond to the Key Accountability. For example, specific Budget Management duties might include:
  - Prepare budgetary reports
  - Analyze expenditures
  - Monitor levels
3. Condense the specific job duties into two to three concise "Duty Statements," beginning each statement with an **action verb** (see page 12 for a list).

**Method B:**

1. Brainstorm a list of all the duties required to perform the job. These are the individual tasks completed on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis.

Below is an example of a task list:

- Arrange for catering
  - Compose and types correspondence
  - Coordinate logistical support for meetings, seminars, and departmental events
  - Determine and secures the event location
  - Make travel arrangements
  - Monitor levels
  - Prepare budgetary reports
2. Review the list and group the duties based upon the specific functions and responsibilities of the position, also known as Key Accountabilities.
  3. Establish the Key Accountabilities. For this group, the Key Accountabilities may include: Event Coordination, Administrative Support, and Budget Administration.
  4. Condense the specific job duties into two to three concise "Duty Statements," beginning each statement with an **action verb** (see page 12 for a list).

**Here is an example of a well written Key Accountability Section in a Job Description:**

<b>Key Accountability</b>	<b><i>Event Coordination</i></b>
<b>Duty Statements</b>	Coordinate all Office events. This includes securing the event location, scheduling presenters, coordinating the production of event marketing materials and programs, maintaining the RSVP list, and making all catering arrangements. At the event, supervise the event staff and greet the guests.
<b>Percentage of Time</b>	20%

**In summary, here are some hot tips for delineating the Duties section of the job description:**

- The Job Duties section should contain 3 - 5 Key Accountabilities.
- Title each Key Accountability section to summarize the function / role.
- Include 2 - 3 concise Duty Statements for each Key Accountability. The Duty Statements expand upon that particular area of responsibility as well as the role and complexity of the position.
- Begin Duty Statement with an **action verb** (see page 12 for a list).
- Limit the listing of Duty Statements and Key Accountabilities to what is required to perform the job.
- Do not include duties that are no longer performed or those that may be required in the future.
- Write the duties in terms of what the position requires, **not** based upon the capabilities of any individual.
- Determine an accurate percentage of time the incumbent should spend on that particular Key Accountability over the course of a year

## Expectation and Accountability Standards

This section:

- Conveys the expectations of the job
- Depicts the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be successful in the job
- Provides a basis for measuring performance

This section is typically completed by either the supervisor, hiring manager, or designated administrator in the department. There is a Standards section associated with each Key Accountability which provides information about the performance expectations and accountability of that particular area of responsibility.

**Here is an example of an E & A Standard for the “Event Coordination” example in the Delineation of Duties Section:**

<b>Key Accountability</b>	<b><i>Event Coordination</i></b>
<b>Duty Statements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinate departmental and programmatic events</li><li>• Secure the location</li><li>• Schedule presenters</li><li>• Make travel arrangements</li><li>• Coordinate the production of program / event marketing materials</li><li>• Maintain RSVP list</li><li>• Make arrangements for catering and any necessary equipment</li><li>• Staff the event</li></ul>
<b>Expectation and Performance Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Event Coordination activities are expected to be carried out with minor supervision.</li><li>• Must be capable of setting priorities and working under pressure</li><li>• Must be able to multi-task, planning several events simultaneously</li><li>• Ability to work well with internal and external participants is essential</li><li>• Knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite is imperative</li></ul>

## **Knowledge and Skills Requirements**

This section of the job description outlines the knowledge and skills required to successfully function in the job. The K & S Requirements cover a variety of areas pertaining to the job, for example, the level of education/experience required, supervision received, and analytical skills and ability required for the job.

The necessary knowledge and skills should be completed by the supervisor, hiring manager, or departmental administrator, and, should accurately describe the general responsibility level of that position.

For example, an HR Assistant Level I would not be expected to be responsible for interviewing, selecting and hiring someone into an HR Assistant Level IV position, but may be responsible for interviewing, selecting and hiring an intern. Review the following example:

<b>Minimum Education Level Required</b>	Associates Degree or Equivalent Experience
<b>The minimum experience level required</b> (All qualifications listed <b>must</b> be job related.)	Three years of relevant administrative, marketing and/or event planning experience is preferred.
<b>The amount of supervision received by the employee</b> (What is the job classification and title of the supervisor? How, and to what extent, is the employee's work checked? Note the distinction between initial or special training and ongoing supervision.)	The incumbent reports to the Assistant Director. After initial orientation, general direction will be provided by the Assistant Director, but is expected to perform duties and responsibilities independently.
<b>The analytical skill required</b> (What is the complexity or standardization of the tasks which are performed?)	The job requires excellent analytical and communication skills as statistical and financial reporting is an essential element to this position.
<b>BOTH the level and budget volume (Dollar Amount) of financial responsibility /accountability</b> (What is the extent of the employee's responsibility for calculating and verifying figures; gathering data; typing requisitions or budget documents; monitoring or analyzing expenditures; preparing reports; approving purchases; planning and authorizing department or grant budgets, etc.)	This position is responsible for managing event budgets. This includes collaborating on budget development, monitoring and approving budgetary expenditures, and analyzing statistical and financial reports. The budget for a single event can range from \$5,000 - \$50,000.

<p><b>The impact of actions carried by this position</b> (What are the probable results of inadvertent error or mistake in judgment, interpretation, or exercise of responsibility?)</p>	<p>Poorly executed events could result in a negative image for the corporation and potentially lose new client acquisition opportunities.</p>
<p><b>BOTH the diversity and complexity of the supervision exercised</b> (List the job classification and working titles of those directly trained and/or supervised by this person).</p>	<p>This position is not responsible for supervising any staff positions.</p>
<p><b>The scope of the human resources impact of this position</b> (Explain supervisory role in hiring, firing, promoting, evaluating, increasing salaries, etc. of other employees. Does the position carry "lead" responsibility? Explain how, and to what extent, the work of others is checked by the employee.)</p>	<p>Occasionally responsible for interviewing prospective candidates and providing input into the hiring process.</p>
<p><b>BOTH the level and nature of the INTERNAL contacts</b> (What, if any, departments does the worker contact. Why are these contacts made and how frequently are they made?)</p>	<p>Regular contact with senior level staff and department heads is required. In addition, regular contact is maintained with several areas across the organization including Marketing Communications, Talent Advancement, the Special Events Office, etc.</p>
<p><b>BOTH the level and nature of the EXTERNAL contacts</b></p>	<p>External contacts include staff members at subsidiary organizations, government and industry representatives.</p>

## **Job Description Dos and Don'ts**

Before writing a job description, here are some helpful tips to consider:

### **DO:**

- Refer to this Job Description Writing Guide
- Attend a Job Description Workshop, if possible
- Use a factual and impersonal style when writing the job description
- Base the job description on the department's needs
- Write an accurate, concise, and complete job description
- Use complete sentences
- Keep sentence structure as simple as possible, omitting unnecessary words
- Begin each duty/task with an **action verb** (see page 10 for a list).
- Be consistent when using terms like "may" and "occasionally." (These should be used to describe tasks that are performed once in a while, or tasks that only some employees perform.)
- Refer to job titles rather than specific names, i.e., "Reports to \_\_\_\_\_ Manager" instead of "Reports to Kim Jones."
- Be precise. This is critical for accurate job evaluation and analysis.
- Focus on critical activities.
- Use a logical sequence in describing duties and responsibilities (Key Responsibility first, followed by the corresponding duties)

### **DON'T:**

- Use the narrative form when writing a job description
- Base the content of the job description on the capabilities, skills, and interests of the incumbent
- Write the job description based upon the desired job classification
- Write the job description as step by step guide on how to do the job
- Include minor or occasional tasks, which are not unique to a specific job.

## Action Verbs

accommodate	communicate	draft	interface	recruit
achieve	compile	edit	interpret	reduce
acquire	complete	eliminate	interview	regulate
address	compose	enforce	investigate	report
adjust	compute	establish	issue	research
administer	conduct	evaluate	lift	resolve
advise	confer	execute	maintain	review
allocate	consolidate	expand	manage	schedule
analyze	construct	explore	monitor	search
apply	consult	facilitate	motivate	select
appoint	control	formulate	negotiate	solve
approve	coordinate	furnish	observe	specify
arrange	correspond	generate	operate	strategize
assess	counsel	guide	organize	streamline
assign	create	handle	participate	strengthen
assist	customize	hire	perform	summarize
audit	delegate	identify	plan	support
augment	deliver	illustrate	predict	teach
authorize	demonstrate	implement	prepare	train
budget	design	improve	present	translate
calculate	develop	improvise	process	troubleshoot
circulate	devise	incorporate	program	update
clarify	direct	increase	provide	validate
clear	disseminate	inform	quantify	verify
collaborate	distinguish	initiate	recognize	
collect	distribute	instruct	recommend	
combine	document	interact	record	