

## WRITING A KSA

Agencies commonly require essays as part of the application to address characteristics they seek. These essays are sometimes called “KSA’s.” KSA is an acronym for “Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.”

In general, KSA’s:

- are used to determine the best qualified candidates
- vary depending on the job, but examples include: skilled in written and oral communications; demonstrated technical ability; knowledge of specific subject matter
- are written in complete sentences in first person using concrete examples
- vary in length. Usually 2-3 example paragraphs. Use online application box word limits if possible.

If you need to write a KSA, the application prompt will look like this:

**HOW YOU WILL BE EVALUATED:**

**What Knowledge, Skills and Abilities are Required for this Position?**

The following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's) are required for this position:

**GS-07:**

- Ability to communicate orally.
- Ability to communicate in writing.
- Ability to work with data on a computer.
- Ability to organize the work flow of clerical and administrative support functions.

To preview questions please [click here](#).

“CCAR” is the recommended method for outlining your KSA essay which should end up being about 2-3 paragraphs when you are done. CCAR stand for:

★ **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. Stay away from the ordinary — be extraordinary in your response!

★ **Result**

Describe the outcomes of your actions — use %, #s, grades. What was the difference you made — highlight THE BEST.

KSA sample prompt:

*Ability to communicate in writing.*

KSA sample response (SAMPLE ONLY - DO NOT COPY!):

**Context-** As the Newsletter Editor in my living-learning community, I was responsible for writing articles and editing all submissions published in our monthly newsletter.

**Challenges-** Our community wanted to use the newsletter as a means for reaching out to alumni of the program with the goal of increasing their involvement in the community. Before I started as Editor, we had never had a submission from an alumus/alumna.

**Action-** I decided to focus the first newsletter of the year entirely on accomplishments of our alumni, with a message throughout encouraging alumni to submit articles and pictures.

**Result -** Over the course of the academic year when I was Newsletter Editor, we received an average of five alumni submissions per newsletter. Additionally, alumni and program participants rated the quality of the newsletter higher than any other year.

Tips for KSA essays

- ★ Address key words/phrases mentioned in the position description
- ★ Tie your experiences to each KSA with an illustrative example
- ★ Focus on outcomes to which you directly contributed
- ★ Use plain language, without acronyms
- ★ Review your answers (with outside help) to ensure they are succinct, easy to read, and grammatically correct
- ★ Save your essays to reuse on other applications

For more tips and information, visit [makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/ksawriting.shtml](http://makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/ksawriting.shtml).

