



Job Description Toolkit

A **job description** defines the duties and responsibilities of a position, identifying the actual work accomplished or to be accomplished by the person in the job. It's a useful tool that serves several purposes. It helps the employer efficiently divide up the tasks that are necessary for the organization to operate. It helps managers evaluate employee performance. It helps employees to understand what's expected of them. And it helps HR to attract and keep new talent. What to include in a job description is at the discretion of the employer, but we recommend it at least include the title and FLSA status of the position, the essential functions of the job, the skills needed to complete the work, and the physical demands and work environment description. Sections about supervision and pay grade are also nice to have and strongly recommended, as are disclaimers and a section for the employee's acknowledgement.

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FLSA Status

A job description should state whether the position is classified as exempt or non-exempt from overtime, but it does not need to identify the specific exemption or the reasons behind the classification. Nevertheless, management should know which exemption applies if the role is classified as exempt, and the job description should reflect the classification in terms of job duties. For example, an advanced degree is a minimum requirement for an exempt “Learned Professional.” If you do not know which exemption may apply to the job, we recommend further analysis.

Position Summary

This section is a nice-to-have, and provides a succinct overview of the primary functions of the job. It usually consists of a short paragraph summarizing the position and its role within the company.

Essential Functions

Essential functions—also known as essential duties and responsibilities—are the tasks that are critical to the job. There are typically ten to fifteen of them listed in the job description. If any of them were removed, the job would nearly cease to function or be unable to function as needed. These functions cannot be eliminated as a reasonable accommodation, although an eligible employee with a disability may need an accommodation to perform one or more of them.





Minimum Qualifications

A job description should identify what capabilities and expertise are needed to hold the job—sometimes called knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). This section itemizes the characteristics that an individual must have to perform the job duties. Without these qualifications, the job cannot be done. Minimum qualifications are different than helpful skills that are preferred, but are not required. The latter characteristics, if mentioned, should be clearly differentiated in the job description. They're often listed as desired qualifications. For example, previous work experience in the same or a related field may be required, while two years of supervisory skills are preferred.

Physical Demands and Work Environment

This section of the job description outlines the job's working conditions, its physical requirements, noise levels, temperature, and any relevant Americans with Disabilities (ADA) impact. Details might include hardware and software used for communication, the degree to which the employee is stationary or mobile, or the amount of weight the employee will frequently move.

Supervision Provided or Received

A job description can indicate how the position is supervised or to whom the person in this position will report. If the role has supervisory responsibilities of a department, job or group, it should be listed in this section or as an essential function.

Pay Grade or Range

Some job descriptions note the job's pay grade or pay range, if applicable and depending on the organization's wage transparency strategy. One consideration here is how often such pay ranges are adjusted—if they are adjusted often, it may be best to leave them off of the job description and share with employees individually or in an employment offer letter instead.

Notes, Legalese, and Disclaimers

A job description should have some basic disclaimers. Our job description template has language to use or adapt. We recommend language addressing at-will employment. It is a good idea (but largely symbolic) to mention that the company is an Equal Opportunity Employer, drug free workplace (if applicable) and complies with ADA regulations. A job description should also state that the contents are not the only duties to be performed by the employee in this position and that the job description is subject to modification or adjustment to accommodate individuals with disabilities.



Acknowledgment

In this section, the employee acknowledges that they have read the job description and that they understand the job, their designation, and what is expected of them. Ideally, the employee's supervisor would also sign the job description, noting that they'll hold the employee accountable to the job's requirements and expectations.

Is a job description a recruiting ad or a workforce management tool?

A job description is not the same as a job posting or advertisement, although an ad will often include details from the job description. A job posting or advertisement is placed where it will be seen by prospective applicants to entice them to apply for the job. The job description is primarily a workforce management tool that can also be used or adapted for recruitment purposes. However, it is important that the job description is reviewed by a candidate as part of the recruiting and hiring process so that the company's expectations are made clear. Waiting until the individual's first day of work to share the full position details poses a risk for failure to meet expectations because they weren't made clear in the hiring process.



Who can write a job description?

Anyone can write or edit a job description, but management has the ultimate authority to determine the content of a job description and what is required of a job. The direct supervisor of a position often will write the job description based on what they expect the incumbent to do or what skills they expect the role to have. It is often a good idea to involve the employee in the development, updating, or review of their job description. The current incumbent of a job tends to know what their position entails more than anybody and can ensure accuracy with day-to-day tasks. Additionally, the current incumbent can assist with documenting "institutional knowledge" related to the position not already included on the job description.

Updating a Job Description

Job descriptions should be viewed as living documents and updated regularly. Be sure to update an employee's job description if the role changes. We recommend that job descriptions are reviewed annually either as part of the company's performance review process or as a separate annual review. This will help to be sure they capture the most relevant information for the position at the current point in time. Additionally, it's recommended to carefully review a job description when there is turnover to be certain that expectations are clear for the hiring process and for a new employee joining the company. Here in the HR Support Center, we're happy to assist you with developing and/or reviewing your job descriptions. You may either use our existing templates as a starting point for your own internal job descriptions, or you can ask us directly to create a job description from scratch.



Job Description Library

To access our robust Job Description Library, hover over the "Tools" tab. Alternatively, by hovering over the "HR On-Demand" tab and selecting "Document Customization," you can send us a message with the pertinent details about the position you'd like a job description drafted for or attach a document you'd like reviewed. We'll be happy to create one or review yours within three business days.