

**Required and Preferred
Knowledge, Skills, and
Abilities (KSAs)**



What is knowledge, skills, and abilities?

Knowledge, skills and abilities is a list of special qualifications and personal attributes that you need to have for a particular job. These are the unique requirements that the hiring agency wants to find in the person selected to fill a particular job. **Knowledge** is the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. **Skills** are the proficiencies developed through training or experience. **Abilities** are the qualities of being able to do something.

Required knowledge, skills, and abilities

Required knowledge, skills, and abilities are the critical knowledge and skills/education and experience that an applicant must have to perform the core responsibilities as indicated in the job duties/responsibilities. They are the minimum qualifications a candidate must possess to be considered for a position.

- Should be measurable and realistic
- Avoid ambiguously written requirements
- Listing too many required KSAs may limit your pool of qualified candidates and can potentially create a disparate impact on underrepresented and protected group(s)
- Not listing enough or having broad statements as your required KSAs may result in a very large candidate pool and it may be difficult to narrow down your applicant pool
- A college degree may not be a required KSA for any University Staff positions
- If a valid Wisconsin drivers license is needed to perform the position, it should be listed here

Preferred knowledge, skills, and abilities

Preferred knowledge, skills, and abilities should encompass the additional competences that would be beneficial to the role. Preferred qualifications should never be used to screen candidates out. They should be used to screen candidates in and to help narrow down the selection process.

Why are they important?

The primary purpose of KSAs is to measure qualities that will set one candidate apart from the others. They are also necessary for the successful performance of a position. It is important to have enough KSA's to be able to tier and differentiate between candidates. However, too many KSA's may make it difficult to find a qualified candidate.

Using KSAs to tier candidates

Using the required and preferred KSAs, you will assign an appropriate tier to each candidate:

- 4 – Does not meet minimum requirements
- 3- Meets minimum requirements
- 2 – Meets some preferred qualifications
- 1- Meet all preferred qualifications

Sometimes, KSA's are easy to recognize in candidate's application materials and at other times, you may need to infer the information. Phone interviews are always highly encouraged when you have a large pool of qualified candidates.