

## Chapter 7

### Duties Descriptions

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## **Duties Descriptions**

Civil Service Regulations define a duties description as a document which describes “the essential characteristics and organizational location” of a position in sufficient detail to allow the Division of Classification and Compensation at the Department of Civil Service to determine the appropriate title and grade.

A duties description is a detailed document that outlines the duties to be performed by the incumbent of a position. It should list the actual activities and tasks performed by the incumbent and it should not be a reiteration of information found on the Classification Standards.

In this section of the manual, guidelines are presented that should be followed when preparing duties statements for positions established on both a decentralized basis (1A and 2A) and for those which require detailed materials at the time of submission on NYSTEP (4N and 4R).

Additional resources for use when preparing duties descriptions can be found in the following Appendices:

- Appendix H --- Ambiguous Words
- Appendix I --- Action Word Definitions
- Appendix J --- Secretarial and Keyboarding Reference Guide
- Appendix K --- Guidelines: Secretary 2 and Administrative Assistant

## Writing Duties Statements

A duties description must delineate the activities and tasks that are performed in order to get a job done. An activity statement describes a broad area of work within a job. A task statement describes a discrete part of the work that is logically related to accomplishing the designated activity. What follows are guidelines on how to write descriptive duties statements.

- Use active verbs to describe the activities and tasks. See the listing of “Action Word Definitions” in Appendix I. This is an excellent resource for choosing verbs that convey precise meanings.
- Avoid verbs or phrases that may be open to a wide variety of meanings, such as “is responsible for” or “maintains liaison with.” See “Ambiguous Words” in Appendix H for a list of verbs to avoid.
- Consolidate activities and task descriptions wherever possible.

For example, if a major role of a position is to monitor services, state “Monitors services to clients to assure compliance with program mandates and applicable laws and regulations and to evaluate program and staff effectiveness.” Do not include a separate description for each incidence of monitoring for each type of program and for every activity performed.

- Describe those duties that are most common to and characteristic of the class first, but also include duties that are significant to particular assignments or agencies.

For example, “Head Cooks usually supervise Cooks and other kitchen staff, but in the Department of Correctional Services, Head Cooks are also expected to supervise inmate workers.” This activity, although performed by only some positions in the class, should be described since it is a significant component of positions in the Department of Correctional Services.

- Focus on answering four questions when writing activities and tasks. They are:
  1. Does WHAT (the verb)
  2. To WHOM or WHAT (the direct object of the verb)
  3. WHY (for what reason or purpose)
  4. HOW (by applying knowledge of laws, rules, processes, or procedures or using machines, tools, and equipment).

HOW and WHY may be implied rather than directly stated and may be omitted in the interests of brevity or when the answers are self-evident. Because of the need for more detail, task and activity statements generally directly state answers to these questions.

For example, the following duties address the four questions:

<b><u>DOES WHAT</u></b>	<b><u>TO WHAT or WHOM</u></b>	<b><u>WHY</u></b>	<b><u>HOW</u></b>
Checks	incoming orders	to determine amounts	by counting items
Instructs	laborers	to use mowers	by demonstrating operating features
Inspects	construction sites	to assure contract compliance	by comparing work to engineering standards and contract specifications
Washes	large pots and pans	to make them suitable for re-use	using detergent solution and a scrub brush
Administers	minor medical treatments or medications (taking temperatures, treating minor cuts and bruises, giving aspirin or cough syrup)	to correct a resident's minor health problems	using knowledge of symptoms to determine need and following agency medical procedures

The following duties *imply* the HOW or the WHY:

<u>DOES WHAT</u>	<u>TO WHOM or WHAT</u>	<u>WHY</u>	<u>HOW</u>
Operates	trucks	to deliver materials	(by driving trucks)
Fills	prescriptions for patients	(to provide medicine to patients)	(using knowledge of pharmaceuticals)
Interviews	clients	to determine eligibility for food stamp programs	(by applying knowledge of eligibility requirements and interviewing techniques)

## **Complexity**

Complexity describes the range of difficulty and level of responsibility of work for the position. Complexity covers a broad spectrum ranging from the performance of simple, repetitive tasks in the context of readily available information and according to written procedures and guidelines, to the independent application of abstract information in creating solutions to real and theoretical problems and developing government policies.

Factors used to determine and describe complexity:

- Nature of the assignment or type of work performed.
- Work methods used to accomplish activities.
- Level of difficulty and originality in performing activities.
- Level of responsibility for completed work.
- Consequences of error for the work performed.
- Nature of the mental challenge required, including the degree of repetitiveness.
- Degree of analysis, judgment, initiative, ingenuity, or creativity required.
- Nature, amount, and complexity of information required and how that information is gathered, evaluated, and applied.
- Variety and scope of assignments.
- Status of work when assigned and when completed.
- Availability and nature of guidelines, procedures, and precedents.
- Kind and amount of authority vested in the position.
- Responsibility for the safety of others.
- Knowledge and skills required to perform the activities and tasks.

### **Examples**

What follows are excerpts from the “Complexity” section of the Classification Standards for the following titles.

**Clerk 1, Grade 6**

This is the entry-level title in this series. Incumbents work within and must be able to read, understand, and apply procedures, rules, regulations and laws.

**Clerk 2, Grade 9**

Work performed by Clerks 2 represents the more difficult clerical work within an organization. Incumbents of these positions are expected to understand the activities of the program area in which they work in order to answer questions, explain or clarify procedures and use independent judgment to make decisions where clear precedent does not exist. This work is distinguished from entry-level clerical work where procedures are clearly defined and/or other staff is available to answer questions or handle more difficult cases.

**Plant Utilities Engineer 2, Grade 16**

Plant Utilities Engineer 2 is the first level of supervision in the title series with responsibility for direct supervision of the operation, maintenance, and repair of highly complex equipment which must be operated in strict accordance with technical and safety policy and procedure.

Failure to exercise good supervisory judgment or follow appropriate procedures could result in personal injury or death, in damage to equipment or facilities, or in an incident having potential environmental impact or safety concerns.

## **Supervision**

Supervision affects the classification of a position when it requires a sufficient amount of time such that the focus of the job is impacted. This usually occurs when at least three full-time staff, who are performing the full range of duties of an occupation, report directly to the position in question. In such cases, the incumbent of the supervisory position usually performs an independent body of work as well as supervises three or more full-time employees.

The supervision of one or two positions does not affect the major focus of a position. In such cases the incumbent spends the majority of time performing individual job tasks and incidentally advises or supervises another person or two performing similar tasks. Such supervision does not change the major responsibilities of the position and is not, therefore, a classification factor. It is for these reasons that overseeing the activities of Work Study and Student Assistant items has not been considered a supervisory responsibility for the purposes of position classification.

In situations where an employee is designated as the “lead worker,” that individual performs assigned duties and also coordinates the work of a small group, perhaps as the most senior or experienced member of the group. This role, however, does not encompass the full range of supervisory duties and responsibilities. Performance of these limited activities does not rise to the level of “supervision” for the purposes of position classification.

The focus of a job changes to full-time supervision when direct supervision is exercised over approximately eight or more full-time positions, the incumbents of which are performing the full range of duties of an occupation. In such cases, incumbents rarely perform a body of work of their own, but spend all of their time supervising others. Such jobs are classified based on that supervision rather than the occupation being supervised.

The following are activities and tasks that are performed by typical supervisory positions. A single position may not perform all of these but the listing should be used as a guide in describing supervisory tasks.

Guides and coordinates the work operations of an organizational unit.

Plans and schedules the work operations of an organizational unit according to work priorities and volume.

Assigns work to staff members according to their abilities and the complexity of the work.

Reassigns work to adjust to emergencies, absences and deadlines.



Coordinates work with that of other units and programs.

Disseminates written instructions, policy manuals, guidelines, and supplies and materials, and explains them as needed.

Answers questions from staff regarding assigned work.

Advises subordinates regarding problem resolution, as needed.

Reviews work performance in progress and at completion for adherence to instructions, policies and guidelines.

Identifies work-related problems and staff inadequacies; plans and implements appropriate corrective actions.

Determines and directs action on technical and administrative matters.

Writes instructions, guidelines and policy explanations, as needed.

Oversees and monitors staff activities of an organization unit.

Interviews applicants for vacant positions and hires or makes recommendations for hiring the best qualified applicants.

Trains subordinate staff in the work processes and policies of the unit.

Schedules leave time according to union contracts, agency policies and work requirements. Signs time cards.

Writes employee performance evaluations and discusses with employee(s).

Counsels employees whose work performance fails to meet established standards.

Recommends disciplinary action to supervisor in those cases where counseling is ineffective.

Delivers advice and assistance to management.

Writes work reports for organizational unit stating work performed, achievement of goals, special achievements and noteworthy problems.

May compile and write the budget request and/or estimates for the organizational unit.

Recommends changes in established work methods and procedures to increase efficiency and production based on the study of unit operations.

Discusses program and production goals in light of past records and recommends changes as appropriate.

Represents organizational unit on agency committees and work groups.