

# Writing for “Knowledge, Skills & Abilities” or KSA

Apply the same rules when writing KSAs that you would in submitting an essay response or writing sample — use the active tense, don’t ramble, and make sure you are answering the question being asked. Most importantly, don’t forget to read it over before submitting your responses!

## KSA TIPS

---

- Read the job announcement carefully, highlighting key words or phrases describing the position responsibilities so you remember to address those points in your KSA responses.
- Go back to your résumé and outline a list of experiences you’ve had that address each KSA. Review each list and select the items that best illustrate a link between your experience and each KSA as you compose your responses.
- Add information relevant to each KSA that may not be included in your resume — such as any specialized training, publications, leadership roles, student activities, and awards. Make sure you take credit for your entire range of experiences including volunteer work, internships, school projects, and extracurricular activities.
- Link all these different examples explicitly to the KSA questions. Whether you’ve worked as a waitress or cashier, served as a student club officer, or volunteered at a nursing home, the key is to tie these experiences back to the KSAs in a way that demonstrates that you are the best candidate for the job being advertised.
- Write your KSAs in the first person, and use concrete examples to illustrate your skills. This is your opportunity to more fully elaborate on skills and responsibilities outlined in your resume, and examples are much more compelling than simple assertions.
- Be sure to include examples that demonstrate your ability to take initiative.
- Focus on any outcomes to which you directly contributed, citing quantitative data where possible. For example, use data that measures how much (like how much money or time you generated or saved), or how many (like how many people attended, how many units you produced), and point to positive change (percentage growth or savings) wherever possible.
- Make sure your answers reflect your level of responsibility. Similarly, clearly identify who you interacted with and how (e.g., providing key information to a manager, working with a group of peers, or supervising a team).
- Tailor each KSA answer to read between half a page and a page in length. Remember that a busy person will be reading through your application, so it is important to find the right balance between providing compelling information and information overload.
- Review your answers to ensure they are succinct and easy to read. Always use plain language and don’t use acronyms. Focus on content, and don’t forget to proofread.
- Ask a friend who knows you well to read over your finished answers. Your reader should make sure that you have included all of your relevant experiences, that your responses flow well, and that the answers don’t contain any typos or grammatical errors.

# Writing for “Knowledge, Skills & Abilities” or KSA

## A SAMPLE KSA

---

Below are examples of answers to a common KSA, “skill in written communication.” It should be clear to you which are the stronger responses.

---

### Example of a Poor Response

My communication skills are excellent. I am often asked to help out in this regard and have been commended for my work.

---

### Example of a Better Response

In the past 10 months, I have taken over a number of writing assignments previously held by my supervisor:

- I have been drafting monthly reports on leasing activities under the purview of our office. These are routinely approved by my supervisor without change and are circulated to 10 field offices and Regional Directors.
- I have assumed the responsibility of reporter for the quarterly meeting of the bureau’s Research Directors. Reports of these meetings are reviewed by the Director’s Office prior to distribution to all participants.
- In January, I completed the course, “Writing Analytical Reports,” offered through the National Independent Study Center. This was a six-month course involving 24 hours of training and covering such areas as: planning an analytical report; collecting and analyzing data; identifying possible solutions to problems addressed in the report; and organizing, writing, and editing the report.

In addition, while I was a student in college I developed and was recognized for my strong written communication skills in a variety of capacities:

- After my junior year, I was selected for a summer internship with my state representative, for whom I drafted constituent correspondence and press releases. Though I was an intern, the majority of the letters and press releases I wrote were sent out without modification.
- During my senior year, I served as the chapter president of my honor society, and routinely wrote progress reports to send to the headquarters of the honor society.
- Throughout college I was a staff writer for the student daily newspaper. As a reporter I wrote both short news stories as well as in-depth feature articles on a weekly basis, and was selected for the feature writing award by the editorial board my junior year.