

Position Classification Standard for Editorial Assistance Series, GS-1087

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series covers positions that involve editorial support work in preparing manuscripts for publication and verifying factual information in them. Such support work includes editing manuscripts for basic grammar and clarity of expression as well as marking copy for format. These positions require skill in using reference works to verify information and knowledge of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and good English usage.

This standard supersedes the standard for the Editorial Assistance Series, GS-1087, issued in December 1962.

EXCLUSIONS

Excluded from this series are:

1. Positions requiring review, analysis, and revision of manuscripts to assure that (a) the style and manner of presentation of the information suit the media in which they are to appear, (b) the subject-matter is sufficiently clear and cogent to reach its intended audience, or(c) the issuance involved fulfills its information objective. Such positions are covered by the [Writing and Editing Series, GS-1082](#), or, when the work requires substantial subject-matter knowledge in addition to knowledge of the principles and techniques of communicating information, by the [Technical Writing and Editing series, GS-1083](#).
2. Positions requiring an understanding of the substance of technical information in publications. When the requirements of such positions are different from the requirements of the Technical Writer- Editor Series, they should be classified in an appropriate subject- matter series or a related *technical support* series.
3. Positions requiring, as an incidental task, review and correction of written, dictated, or draft materials for grammar, punctuation, or spelling. Such positions should be classified on the basis of the other requirements of the assignment.
4. Positions requiring the ability to operate a typewriter or cold type composing machine as the primary qualification. Such positions are covered by the [Clerk-Typist Series, GS-0322](#), and the Cold-Type Composing Machine Operation Series, GS-0324, respectively. However, some positions in the GS-1087 series may involve preparation of copy on a typewriter or cold-type composing machine when the primary knowledge and skills required are editorial assistance knowledge and skills.
5. Positions primarily requiring either specialized or general clerical skills and knowledge other than the training and experience characteristic of the Editorial Assistance Series. Examples of such positions are those involving (a) collection and compilation of published information to be used by others in the preparation of reports, articles, and similar published materials, (b) preparation of indices or selection and distribution of

pictorial material, and(c) positions at GS-1. Such positions should be classified in the appropriate specialized series or, if no specialized series applies, to the [Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant, GS-0303](#).

6. Positions in a printing plant requiring printing trade experience are evaluated under the provisions of the [Federal Wage System](#).
7. Positions requiring application of (a) knowledge of printing and of the capabilities of printing equipment and (b) ability to manage a printing production organization. They are covered by the [Printing Services Series, GS-1654](#).
8. Positions responsible for clerical duties in connection with the control, procurement, or provision of printing services. Such positions are covered by the [Printing Clerical Series, GS-0351](#).

DISTINGUISHING EDITORIAL CLERICAL AND ASSISTANCE POSITIONS FROM OTHER CLERICAL POSITIONS

Positions which include a primary knowledge of the editorial support skills used in preparing manuscripts for publication and in verifying factual information for such documents are covered by this series.

Other clerical positions may use some of the skills, but those positions make use of such knowledge in connection with another primary skill. Cold-type composing machine operation, typist, and ns often require basic grammatical and copy preparation skills. However, the major requirement of such positions is the specified machine or manual skill. The editorial assistance knowledge is incidental.

The work of editorial clerical positions includes determining the publication's format by planning type fonts, indentation, arrangement, etc. Cold-type composing machine operation positions also require judgments affecting the publication's format; however, these determinations primarily involve questions of how to operate the equipment to produce the spacing, type size, page arrangements, etc. Similarly, typist positions are oriented toward the operation of the typewriter.

Stenographic positions include checking basic grammar. The emphasis of these positions is on the stenographic specialization. For editorial clerical positions the grammatical requirements are the primary consideration.

DISTINGUISHING EDITORIAL ASSISTANT POSITIONS FROM WRITER-EDITOR AND TECHNICAL WRITER-EDITOR

The distinction between the work of writers or editors and editorial assistants hinges on the nature of work assignments. Writers and editors prepare manuscripts by reviewing and revising the style and manner of presentation. Their concerns are: Will the document suit the intended media and audience? Does it present the substance of the subject matter clearly and cogently? Will the publication accomplish its information objective? Writers and editors deal with subject matter and style. Editorial assistants are concerned with grammatical construction and with showing specific format requirements. Some assistants do revise sentences, paragraphs, and paragraph order. The writer or editor alters content whereas the assistant does not. The assistant only changes the order of presentation.

The distinctions between higher grade-level editorial assistants and entry/developmental grade-level writers and editors are more difficult to make. In evaluating either type of position, the primary considerations are the nature of qualifications required and the purpose of the assignment. Editorial assistants use editorial support skills acquired through experience in using and preparing agency publications. Writers' and editors' positions depend more on creativity than on methodology. At GS-5 and GS-7 levels, writers and editors often perform work that is similar to that of editorial assistants GS-5 through GS-7. For the writers and editors assignments provide training in agency publications. They will "use this experience in planning, reviewing, and revising the style and manner of presentation of information for the media and the audience. On the other hand, editorial assistants use editorial support skills and knowledge to assure clarity of presentation and accuracy of grammatical construction.

NATURE OF THE OCCUPATION

Some editorial clerks and assistants work in groups and receive supervision from a supervisory editorial clerk or assistant. Others directly assist writers, editors, or subject-matter specialists. Regardless of the work setting, editorial clerks and assistants usually perform the same types of work. They perform editorial support work in preparing manuscripts for publication and verifying information in the manuscripts.

Editorial clerks and assistants edit manuscripts for basic grammar, punctuation, syllabification, spelling, capitalization, accepted English usage, and grammatical structure. They correct such errors as subject-verb agreement, use of adverbs and adjectives, and agreement of pronouns. They also suggest changes in structure. Editorial clerks and assistants do not need knowledge of the substance of the subject matter of the manuscript. They need substantive knowledge of English grammar. Their rewriting or restructuring of sentences, paragraphs, or papers is based on grammatical considerations, not the substantive subject matters.

Editorial clerks and assistants determine the publication format by marking copy, planning layout, or preparing specifications of textual or tabular manuscripts. Some assistants also place tables, charts, and other graphics in final copy. The increased use of photo offset "printing has

produced this opportunity for editorial assistants, instead of printers, to control preparation of final camera copy directly. Cold-type composing equipment has reduced the dependency on printers for preparing proofs; and, by using this equipment, employees within the agency prepare the copy which will be copied and printed. Another change brought by cold-type composing equipment is the reduced need for using printers' marks. However, editorial assistants continue to prepare specifications for preparing copy and often use an agency's equivalent of printers' marks. Some editorial clerks and assistants also need familiarity with various printing processes.

Editorial clerks and assistants correct obvious errors of fact. They observe internal factual inconsistencies in the material, such as spelling of proper names, references, and citations. They verify the accuracy of statements, figures, illustrations, and subject matter terms by referring to standard reference works, to other published material, and to the author. They compare illustrations, photographs, tables, and charts with the text to assure that they are pertinent and consistent. They also check citations with the original sources and verify such information as spelling of proper names, correct title, page references, and actual text.

Editorial clerks and assistants, at all grade levels, use many of the same grammatical references. The basic guidelines typically consist of thesauri, dictionaries, GPO Style Manual, grammar handbooks or texts, and agency guides. The actual guidelines may be the same at several levels of work, but the way in which they must be used influences the difficulty of work.

TITLES

The authorized title for nonsupervisory positions GS-4 and below is *Editorial Clerk*. Nonsupervisory positions GS-5 and above are titled *Editorial Assistant*.

Supervisory Editorial Clerk or *Supervisory Editorial Assistant*, as appropriate, is the title for positions requiring supervisory qualifications. See the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#) to determine the grade-level classification of supervisory positions in this series.

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

The classification criteria for editorial clerical and assistance positions are expressed in terms of the *Nature of Assignments* and the *Level of Responsibility*.

Discussion of the skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the work is interlaced with the other classification criteria. They are not treated separately.

Nature of assignments

This factor measures the type and difficulty of assignments. Editorial tasks range from correcting specific errors in basic grammar, spelling, etc., to restructuring sentences, paragraphs, and order of paragraphs to assure clarity of expression. Preparation of format tasks range from marking copy to establishing the specifications for a wide variety of publication styles. In verification of factual information, the work ranges from checking dictionaries for syllabification to comparing texts to see that they do not contradict or unnecessarily repeat each other.

The complexity of the subject matter of a manuscript is not a classification factor for this occupation. Editorial assistance work does not require an understanding of the substance of the subject matter. Editorial clerks and assistants must understand the use of English grammar and grammatical structure. Some must also be familiar with technical terminology or jargon. Using this knowledge, they correct grammatical errors, restructure portions of manuscripts, and detect apparent discrepancies and duplications. Some technical publications cannot be edited, even for grammar, without a knowledge of the subject matter's substance, similar to that possessed by specialists, technical editors, or technicians familiar with the subject-matter field. When working on such publications, editorial assistants typically mark up the manuscripts or check the accuracy of figures or citations. They do not edit the publications.

Level of responsibility

This factor measures the nature of the use of guidelines and the degree of supervision received. The use of guidelines ranges from checking general dictionaries to preparing procedural manuals. The supervision received varies from a detailed review to general acceptance of an assistant's advice by authors, editors, etc.

NOTES TO USERS

1. Proofreaders, including those who read printers' proofs and final "camera copy, typically finally review copy before printing. The fact that they have the last review does not justify higher grade levels for them. Proofreaders check to see that the proof or final copy follows the editorial changes and markings made by the editorial personnel. When proofreaders do more than follow exact markings and review basic grammar, they perform other editorial assistance tasks and should be classified according to the criteria of this standard.

On the other hand, proofreading does not constitute supervision. It represents the effort to ensure that the printer or the copy preparer has followed the editorial markings. Therefore, the fact that an employee's work is proofread does not, by itself, affect the classification of the position.

2. The grade-level criteria which follow reflect the core characteristics of each grade in terms of the classification factors outlined above. The examples of the work at each level are intended only to be illustrative of the grade level. It is not practicable to provide examples for the great variety of work situations found in different organizations and programs. Thus,

in making comparisons with the examples in the standard, it is important in evaluating individual positions to consider both similarities and differences in the nature and scope of work assignments and level of responsibility.

Narrative definitions are provided for grades GS-3 through GS-7. Positions above the GS-7 level are too few and too highly individualized to permit the development of useful definitions in this standard. When an editorial clerk or assistant position clearly exceeds the criteria for the GS-7 grade-level, it may be evaluated based on an extension of the criteria in this standard, on comparison with published standards for other related occupations, and on application of general position-classification principles.

GRADE LEVELS: EDITORIAL CLERK GS-1087-3

GS-3 editorial clerks receive detailed assignments which follow specific procedures and guidelines. They use a knowledge of basic English grammar (subject-verb agreement, usage of adverbs and adjectives, etc.), spelling, punctuation, and capitalization to locate errors in manuscripts, printers' proofs, or final camera copy.

Nature of assignments

GS-3 editorial clerks edit, prepare format of, and/or proofread manuscripts. In editing they check basic grammar, spelling, syllabification, and punctuation. Typically, they edit by concentrating on grammatical requirements within sentences.

GS-3 editorial clerks mark copy for format by following instructions which show type fonts, spacing, etc. The manuscript consists of textual and/or tabular material. The assignments are similar to one another, and the clerks follow established procedures.

Some GS-3 editorial clerks proofread; that is, they read proofs or final camera copy to locate errors. Assignments include both comparing the proof with the marked copy and rechecking them for basic grammar. The proofreaders assure that the printer or the preparer of final copy has followed the editorial markings. Also, they make the final check on basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

Level of responsibility

GS-3 employees use readily available guidelines, such as dictionaries, thesauri, style manuals, and staff rosters. These provide specific rules and examples of grammatical construction of sentences, requirements of punctuation, spelling and division of words, titles of staff authors, etc. Clerks also use some technical publications which provide information on spelling and syllabification of terminology which does not appear in general dictionaries.

In marking copy for format, editorial clerks follow procedures which specify the publication's requirements. Editorial clerks interpret the rules and apply them to the material in the manuscript.

In proofreading GS-3 editorial clerks use the marked copy to see that the preparers of final copy followed the editorial marks. In applying the final check on basic grammar, spelling, etc., these clerks use the same guides as other editorial clerks at this level.

Typically, supervisors thoroughly review the copy prepared by trainees. To facilitate reexaminations, they often give trainees short manuscripts. After the trainees become skilled in the work, supervisors review only editorial corrections. They check the format marking to see that the clerks mark the copy appropriately. Editorial clerks usually consult the supervisor on situations not covered by procedures.

EDITORIAL CLERK GS-1087-4

GS-4 editorial clerks apply knowledge of grammar and format to their work in preparing manuscripts. They examine the manuscript for clarity, and they search for information to verify the facts in the manuscript.

Nature of assignments

GS-4 editorial clerks edit for clarity. They read the document as a whole and note those sentences which lack clarity because of grammatical structure. Typically, the clerks do not comprehend the technical meaning of a publication. Their interest is sentence structure. GS-4 clerks refer unclear sentences to supervisors or others for rewriting. Rewriting at this level includes revision of headings to obtain parallel construction as well as making basic grammatical corrections. Typically, the section headings consist of short phrases. By comparison, GS-3 clerks correct only basic grammatical mistakes in sentences.

Some GS-4 editorial clerks also mark copy for format. The manuscript consists of textual and/or tabular material. They select the format to be used by applying a knowledge of the agency's format specifications or using established publications of a similar style. By contrast, GS-3 clerks use format instructions planned and selected by someone else.

Some editorial clerks verify factual information in manuscripts; and when the reference is specific, they correct obvious errors, such as incorrect spelling of names, accuracy of dates, figures copied from tables. The clerks use references cited in the manuscripts to locate the source of the information. For example, some manuscripts quote from another document. The clerks locate the quoted document, verify the accuracy of the quotation, and assure that the complete citation is given.

Level of responsibility

GS-4 editorial clerks use editorial references for guidance in checking sentence clarity. By comparison, GS-3 clerks look for specific rules and examples to correct basic grammatical errors, punctuation, spelling, etc.

GS-4 clerks select the guides to use in preparing format instructions. They select from general specifications or from examples of similar publications. These references show the basic layout, but the clerks decide the exact spacing, arrangement, indentations, headings, size and style of type, etc. GS-3 editorial clerks, on the other hand, follow specific procedures and instructions in marking copy.

GS-4 editorial clerks typically correct basic grammar without review. Supervisors check suggested changes in section headings. Some also spot check other editorial alterations. Clerks usually indicate those sentences and sections which are unclear. The supervisor arranges for someone to rewrite them when appropriate. The supervisor also checks format instructions to see that these meet agency requirements. When the manuscript does not show citations for verifying information, the supervisor suggests appropriate sources. Clerks correct obvious errors when references leave no doubt about the correct spelling or figures. Clerks usually refer questions about errors and incomplete or inaccurate citations to supervisor or other designated employees.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT GS-1087-5

GS-5 editorial assistants' assignments require extensive familiarity with terminology, format, and clarity of expression to assist in preparing manuscripts. Editorial assistants interpret the text to assure consistency of internal information and clarity of expression. They determine the format based on broad instructions as described below. They also locate sources to verify factual information in the manuscript when the sources are poorly identified.

Nature of assignments

GS-5 editorial assistants read through the text to locate apparent disagreements between text and charts, tables, and other graphics. They also locate inconsistencies within the manuscript.

GS-5 assistants restructure sentences to make them more understandable. This rewriting does not alter the meaning of the text, but it requires an understanding of sentence construction. By comparison, GS-4 editorial clerks only point out sentences which should be rewritten. They typically do not check the manuscript for apparent discrepancies.

GS-5 editorial assistants plan the layout of textual and/or tabular publications based on instructions which give the size and style of publication, e.g., letter size, book size; and pamphlet, booklet, or manual. Some assistants plan page reduction for photo offset publications. In doing this work they must consider the effect of different type styles and sizes on readability. When GS-6 assistants prepare the final publication, by placing proofs on the layout sheets or

planning the final camera ready copy, they determine the placement of table, charts, and other graphics or art work. This work involves such considerations as internal continuity, ease of reference between text and chart, and overall pagination. By comparison, GS-4 editorial clerks plan formats by selecting from established publication styles and specifications to determine indentations, type fonts, spacing, etc. They follow the characteristics of the models.

In verifying information the GS-5 editorial assistant's search for information sources is complicated by misinformation, such as wrong titles, erroneous spellings of authors' names, wrong publications, etc. GS-5 assistants often use a library to locate information. For example, in verifying a bibliography, they use various indices to find the actual article. These bibliographies sometimes involve foreign publications, and the author's name has more than one anglicized spelling. Because the search for sources is complicated by misinformation, GS-5 assistants must assure that the document located is the same as the source document. Some assistants use these references to resolve disagreements between facts shown in text and graphics and correct other inconsistencies. In contrast, GS-4 editorial clerks use exact citations in searching for sources. Some GS-4 clerks use the references to correct obvious errors, not to resolve discrepancies.

Level of responsibility

GS-5 editorial assistants use basic grammatical references to restructure sentences. They also use agency style manuals which specify preferred writing formats. The assistants interpret basic instructions in rewriting sentences. Some assistants contact the authors to determine what a sentence should mean. By comparison, GS-4 editorial clerks do not rewrite or restructure sentences. They use references as guides to recognize clarity.

GS-5 editorial assistants use general information about the planned publication to determine the actual layout. Typically, an editor, visual information specialist, or other publications designer has determined the general characteristics of the publication, such as size, type of publication, etc. GS-5 assistants use this information to plan the format. In placing graphics, they must be sufficiently familiar with reader interest to consider ease of reference, internal continuity, etc. By contrast, GS-4 editorial clerks apply their knowledge of agency publications and specifications to selection of the guide to follow in planning indentations, type sizes, etc.

In verifying information GS-5 editorial assistants use a number of references, some of which they find in library-like depositories. Typically, GS-5 assistants work in specific fields. (Medicine is one example.) These fields have established indices or other finding aids with which assistants become familiar. (For example, an assistant usually finds medical articles by consulting the Index Medics, which covers most of the publications in the field.) For information not available in such usual sources, assistants consult a librarian or other resource person. Assistants resolve disagreements in factual information when the references clearly indicate the correct information. They refer other disagreements and sources. By comparison, GS-4 editorial clerks follow exact citations in a manuscript and refer incomplete ones to their supervisors. They correct obvious errors between the manuscript and the source, but refer all others.

Supervisors of GS-5 editorial assistants make assignments and spot check completed work. Because the assistants make changes in manuscripts, they often forward the manuscripts to the authors or originating offices for concurrence. When GS-5 editorial assistants recognize the need for major reorganization of manuscripts, they refer such papers to supervisors, authors, editors, or other more experienced editorial assistants. GS-5 editorial clerks, on the other hand, refer all problems, other than basic grammatical corrections, to their supervisors.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT GS-1087-6

GS-6 editorial assistants' assignments require technical skills of editing in correcting manuscripts for basic grammar and clarity. GS-6 editorial assistants rewrite paragraphs by reordering sentences. Some assistants write short articles for publications. The primary skill required for such writing and editing assignments is organization of information in a clear and concise manner. To verify information, GS-6 editorial assistants require an understanding of a publication's content. They also consider the impact of an article's placement in planning layouts.

Nature of assignments

In editing manuscripts, GS-6 editorial assistants improve clarity by reorganizing the sentences within paragraphs in addition to correcting basic grammar and rewriting sentences. Some assistants write short or simple articles for publication. In this writing work, they typically use the same skills employed to reorganize sentences and paragraphs. The articles require little or no stylistic considerations. Assistants write or organize information in an established style of presentation. (For example, an assistant to the editor of an inhouse newsletter writes the articles on retirees. The assistant writes the article by organizing biographical information provided by the retiree or the personnel office.) Some GS-6 assistants also arrange for others to write articles for publications. Having learned of an activity, an event, or a new regulation, assistants request that someone knowing about the subject write an article. Assistants suggest the length and give some information about the basic style required. By comparison, GS-5 editorial assistants reorganize sentences but do not reorganize paragraphs. Since they work only on the sentence units, GS-5 assistants typically do not organize materials for writing articles.

GS-6 editorial assistants lay out publications which usually consist of three or more columns per page and present articles on different subjects. In setting up the publication, assistants consider the importance of articles as well as readers' interest. By comparison, GS-5 editorial assistants typically plan spacing and indentations of publication formats and place charts near textual references. GS-5 assistants do not need to consider the relative importance of unrelated articles and the impact of different locations in publications.

In verifying information GS-6 editorial assistants interpret the content of manuscripts and related publications. With this interpretation the assistants assure that related documents do not contradict or duplicate each other. GS-6 assistants apply similar understanding to locating sources of information. For example, GS-6 assistants use library-type finding aids as a subject index, to locate possible sources and then narrow down the sources list to find the appropriate

ones. By comparison, GS-5 assistants decide which references are the same after checking different spellings in authors' names, variations in document titles, or other misinformation. They, also have more information to use in finding references, even though some of that information is incorrect.

Level of responsibility

GS-6 editorial assistants edit manuscripts by altering sentences and paragraphs. Assistants determine the need for and method of reorganizing sentences and paragraphs. In verifying information GS-6 assistants must have a knowledge of agency subject-matter publications. They use these publications to review manuscripts for duplication and discrepancy. Assistants typically verify information in manuscripts that are not highly technical. Some assistants also verify administrative information in technical publications. In library research, assistants use reference locating guides for a field of work. Their use of guides differs from that of GS-5 editorial assistants in that GS-5 assistants have more information to begin the search.

The supervisor typically specifies the priority of work and the relative importance of articles in publications. Assistants use this information in scheduling work and laying out the publication. They arrange for others to write articles for publication, based on the supervisor's suggestions or direction. After assistants layout a publication or edit manuscripts, the supervisor reviews the work to see that it meets general specifications. Assistants often arrange to have authors review editorial changes that include rewritten paragraphs.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT GS-1087-7

GS-7 editorial assistants use editorial support skills to advise writers, editors, and others on agency publication requirements. In addition to editing manuscripts, GS-7 assistants develop procedures for the use of others in preparing documents for publication. They also suggest methods of presenting information.

Nature of assignments

GS-7 editorial assistants edit manuscripts by reorganizing them entirely or reorganizing sections of long manuscripts. They reorder the paragraphs and suggest changes in the organization of sections in addition to restructuring sentences and paragraphs. Also typical of GS-7 editorial assistant assignments is editing style of writing to conform to an agency's specified preferences. Assistants do not rewrite the manuscript to appeal to the potential audience, but they inform the originating writer or office of established stylistic requirements. Assistants edit manuscripts to assure clarity of expression through grammatical construction.

Some GS-7 editorial assistants prepare specifications and procedures for preparing manuscripts. These specifications are in the form of guides, reference sources, manuals, desk references, and other similar materials dealing with the agency's publications. These reference materials give information on agency policies, practices, and requirements for publication styles and methods of presentation. GS-7 assistants advise users of these procedures and give them information on

how to interpret the references. Some GS-7 assistants also advise manuscript producing offices on format and stylistic requirements of other publications, such as journals or magazines. Typically, GS-7 assistants provide such technical assistance on a number of publications which differ in manner and style of presentation. They advise manuscript producers before and during the writing process on possible format and styles of presentation. By comparison, GS-6 editorial assistants give recommendations based on specific types of manuscript which they have edited in the past.

Level of responsibility

GS-7 editorial assistants use a number of general style manuals and other similar references to prepare an agency's interpretations and requirements. During planning sessions on new publications, assistants advise authors, editors, or other publications personnel about requirements of current publications and problems in their use. They also recommend changes in current specifications and suggest presentation methods for new publications. Assistants base these suggestions on extensive knowledge of current publication styles and experience in the use of publication procedures.

GS-7 editorial assistants advise others on manuscript preparation. Such work receives little supervision. Assistants submit edited manuscripts to originating offices for concurrence of authors, editors, or others. This staff reviews to assure that the assistants have not altered the meaning of the manuscript. After assistants prepare specifications for new publications, the planning staff typically reviews them to assure that the specifications conform to the original intent.