

Writing Competencies

You know the knowledge, skills, and abilities you want applicants to have, but how do you capture that? By writing the required competencies correctly, you can increase your chances of finding the perfect candidate.

However, the good news is you may not need to write a competency from scratch - please be sure to check out the listing of [MOSAIC competencies](#) for your use.

QUICK TIPS FOR WRITING COMPETENCIES

Sometimes, it may be necessary to write a competency. Here are a few helpful tips to keep in mind:

- ☑ **Define competencies simply and clearly.** Anyone reading the competency should be able to easily identify what the competency is.

Example Competency – Conflict Management

Incorrect: Manages the conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements of all types in a variety of situations regarding personnel at various levels as well as external customers and resolves these conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner consistent with organizational guidelines in order to minimize any potential negative personal impact on employees, customers, or the organization.

Correct: Manages and resolves conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal impact.

- ☑ **Make sure competencies embody a single, readily identifiable characteristic.** For example, Oral Communication is different from Written Communication; therefore, both characteristics should not be included in one competency.

Example Competency - Written Communication

Incorrect: Writes and speaks in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

Correct: Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

- ☑ **Avoid making the competency too specific.** For example, it's better to have a competency that encompasses computer skills in general rather than highlighting one particular computer program.

Example Competency – Computer Languages

Incorrect: Knowledge of Java and C++ and their applications to enable a system to perform specific functions.

Correct: Knowledge of computer languages and their applications to enable a system to perform specific functions.

Writing Competencies

- ✎ **Make the competency definition behaviorally-based.** This ensures the competency can be verified (such as on the applicant's resume) and assessed through measurable behaviors. One way to do this is to incorporate action verbs (e.g., "Recognizes", "Identifies", "Organizes") into the competency definitions.

Example Competency – Reasoning

Incorrect: Ability to draw accurate conclusions based on available information.

Correct: Identifies rules, principles, or relationships that explain facts, data, or other information; analyzes information and makes correct inferences or draws accurate conclusions.

- ✎ **Remove unnecessary qualifiers** (e.g., "Thorough Knowledge," "Considerable Skill," or "Basic Understanding"). They do not help to clearly distinguish examples of performance and can cause applicants to second-guess their ratings.

Example Competency – Leadership

Incorrect: Successfully influences, motivates, and thoroughly challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of difficult situations.

Correct: Influences, motivates, and challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations.

- ✎ **Once you have finished writing your competencies, you should have them reviewed by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to verify their accuracy.** That way, you can be sure your competency (and competency definition) makes sense. If an SME reviews your competency for 'Problem Solving' and thinks it sounds more like 'Creative Thinking,' you'll be able to make those corrections prior to the competency being used.
- ✎ **Remember, [OPM's MOSAIC competencies](#) are available for you to use.** All MOSAIC competencies are free and available as examples and/or for your use.



Did you know?

Although the definition of 'KSAs' and 'Competencies' are not exactly the same, they serve the same function, and therefore, are often used interchangeably.