

SUBCHAPTER S6

JOB-GRADING SYSTEM

S6-1 General

The job-grading system includes:

- (1) An orderly grouping of the occupations covered by the system;
- (2) A grade framework to establish the basic pegpoints of the grading system;
- (3) Job standards to provide the criteria for determining the relative worth of jobs in terms of grades; and
- (4) A job-grading method to assure consistency in the application of job standards.

S6-2 Occupational Grouping

a. **Establishing and defining occupations.**

- (1) After consultation with agencies and labor organizations, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) establishes and defines individual occupations for use. Generally, each occupation includes the inspector and supervisory jobs and all levels of nonsupervisory work.
- (2) The boundaries of an occupation are determined by the set of basic skills and knowledge required to do the work. Each job family has a general occupation category designed to include:
 - (a) Lines of work characteristic of the job family but not identifiable with any specific occupation in the family; and
 - (b) Lines of work with employee populations too sparse to merit treatment as separate occupations.
- (3) Occupations are formally established in the Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations. Agencies have a continuing responsibility for advising OPM of their needs for the establishment and revision of occupational definitions.

b. **Titling jobs with occupations.** OPM provides guides for uniform application of titles. Job titles are as brief and as broad as possible, consistent with the need to distinguish one occupation from all other occupations.

S6-3 Key Ranking Jobs

The 39 key ranking jobs listed below provide the framework for the first 15-grade nonsupervisory structure of the Federal Wage System. They are descriptions of commonly found kinds of nonsupervisory work in the Federal Government which serve as the pegpoints for determining the relative worth of different lines of work and levels within lines of work. They control the alignment of the grade levels in all nonsupervisory job-grading standards. Appendix I of the Operating Manual contains job descriptions for these key ranking jobs.

KEY RANKING JOB TITLE		GRADE
1.	Laundry Worker	1
2.	Janitor (Light)	1
3.	Janitor (Heavy)	2
4.	Food Service Worker	2
5.	Laborer (Light)	2
6.	Laborer (Heavy)	3
7.	Sales Store Worker	4
8.	Fork Lift Operator	5
9.	Warehouseman	5
10.	Helper (Trades)	5
11.	Truck Driver (Light)	5
12.	Truck Driver (Medium)	6
13.	Packer	6
14.	Stockroom Attendant	6
15.	Sewing Machine Operator	6
16.	Bindery Worker	7
17.	Office Appliance Repairer	7
18.	Truck Driver (Heavy)	7
19.	Truck Driver (Trailer)	8
20.	Cook	8
21.	Machine Tool Operator	8
22.	Waterplant Operator	9
23.	Painter	9
24.	Carpenter	9
25.	Plumber	9
26.	Motor Grader Operator	10
27.	Automotive Mechanic	10
28.	Aircraft Mechanic	10
29.	Welder	10
30.	Pipefitter	10
31.	Sheet Metal Worker	10
32.	Electrician	10
33.	Machinist	10
34.	Electronic Equipment Mechanic	11
35.	Radar Mechanic (Ground)	12
36.	Tool, Die, and Gage Maker	13
37.	Diesinker	14
38.	Modelmaker	14
39.	Instrument Maker	15

a. **Currency of key ranking jobs.**

- (1) OPM initiates special studies of the key ranking jobs when it determines that these studies are needed to assure their currency. The possible need for these studies may be

indicated by:

- (a) A review of data from Federal Wage System surveys or other sources to analyze pay relationships among private sector jobs comparable with Federal Wage System key ranking jobs.
 - (b) Findings of occupational standards studies or information from any other source which indicates changes in knowledge and skill requirements.
 - (c) Recommendations by agencies or labor organizations for changes to the key ranking jobs.
- (2) Changes in the key ranking jobs are made only on the basis of these studies and after careful consideration of changes in knowledge and skill requirements, as well as the effect of a change on related jobs.
- b. **Procedures to change key ranking jobs.** Because the key ranking jobs are basic policy determinations, possible changes are handled in the following manner:
- (1) OPM informs the agencies and labor organizations of any intention to study or make any changes, or both, in the key ranking jobs.
 - (2) Prior to the factfinding and study of a proposed change to a key ranking job, an OPM occupational specialist asks interested parties to discuss with him or her any occupational facts, problems encountered, and any other views on the key ranking job to be studied.
 - (3) The agencies and labor organizations may request, in exceptional instances, to have a representative accompany the OPM staff member during the factfinding visits. When OPM determines that such an arrangement is feasible and warranted by the situation, OPM establishes the conditions for the conduct of the factfinding visits.
 - (4) OPM writes and issues any proposed change to the key ranking job list for review and comment by the labor organizations and agencies. If an interested party desires to discuss the proposed change, a meeting is held for that purpose.
 - (5) The proposed change to the key ranking job is sent to the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee for review, upon request by a member of that Committee. The Committee forwards its recommendations to OPM for a decision.

S6-4 Job-Grading Standards

- a. **Grade determination.** OPM develops and publishes job-grading standards that provide the criteria for assigning grades to jobs. The standards are based on factfinding studies conducted in selected work situations. For jobs not covered by published OPM standards, grades are determined by comparison with standards published for related occupations.
- b. **Development of standards.**
 - (1) OPM periodically furnishes to agencies and labor organizations a schedule of standards projects to be started and welcomes any recommendations concerning special priorities which should be considered in deciding on standards.
 - (2) Prior to the factfinding, an occupational specialist asks the agencies and labor organization representatives to discuss with him or her any problems they have encountered in the occupation, occupational facts, and other viewpoints that they would like OPM to consider in planning and carrying out the standards project.
 - (3) OPM writes and issues a tentative draft standard for review and comment by the agencies and labor organizations. If an interested party desires to discuss its views on the tentative draft, a meeting is held for this purpose.

- (4) OPM fully considers the comments of labor organizations and agencies on the tentative draft to determine necessary revisions before the standard is prepared for final printing. When there is disagreement with the grade levels for the representative work situations described in the standard, a formal meeting is held between the technical staff of OPM and representatives of the parties concerned in an attempt to resolve the differences.
- (5) If significant differences still remain after the formal discussion of the proposed standard, an interested party may submit its position in writing to OPM for a decision by the Director.

c. **Content of standards.**

- (1) Because of the many differences in duties, skills, knowledges, and other aspects of trades and labor jobs, the standards are developed mainly along occupational lines. Most job-grading standards are applicable to specific occupations. OPM, however, may issue broad standards for functional areas which cross occupational boundaries. Examples of possible broad standards are those for Helper, Inspector, Supervisory, and Leader jobs.
- (2) The different grade levels within lines of work are described in terms of the particular occupation covered by each standard. These grade levels in the standards are aligned with the grades of the key ranking jobs.
- (3) The grade definitions indicate the key characteristics which distinguish different levels of work within an occupation. The standards do not try to describe every work assignment of each position in the occupation covered. Rather, based on factfinding and study of selected work situations, the standards identify and describe those key characteristics of occupations that are significant for distinguishing different levels of work. They define these key characteristics in such a way as to provide a basis for assigning the appropriate grade levels to all positions in the occupations to which the standards apply.

S6-5 Job-Grading Method

a. **Grading nonsupervisory jobs.**

(1) *Basic method.*

- (a) Jobs are graded by use of a job comparison method without points. Under this method, individual jobs are placed in their correct grades by comparison with grade definitions in appropriate standards.
- (b) The method of grading involves consideration of the total job. Four factors are used to identify the nature of the occupational facts to be considered in comparing jobs with grade definitions in standards. These factors, defined below under Factor Definitions, are:
 - (i) skill and knowledge;
 - (ii) responsibility;
 - (iii) physical effort; and
 - (iv) working conditions.

Because of the many possible relationships among significant elements of a job, all pertinent job facts related to the four factors are analyzed.

- (c) In all cases, when comparing jobs with the factor information and grade level definitions in the standards, a determination is made for the most appropriate grade value, overall, of the total job rather than a mechanical addition of individual factor judgments. Any one factor is not considered by itself.

- (2) *Mixed jobs.* In grading a job requiring the performance of work in two or more different occupations on a regular and recurring basis, the whole job is considered, including the full range and level of skills, knowledge, and qualifications required, as well as all other relevant job facts. Such a mixed job is graded in keeping with the highest skill and qualification requirements of the job, even if the duties involved are not performed for a majority of the time but are regular and recurring.
- (3) *Factor definitions.* The following four factors are used in grading nonsupervisory jobs.

Factor I: Skill and Knowledge

Covers the nature and level of skills, knowledges, and mental application required in performing assigned work. Positions vary in such ways as the kind, amount, and depth of skills and knowledges needed, as well as in the manner, frequency, and extent to which they are used. Elements covered under this factor include, but are not limited to:

- Knowledge of work practices, methods and processes, and their levels of difficulty.
- Knowledge of shop mathematics (such as arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, algebra).
- Practical knowledge of the principles underlying the work, or other special or technical knowledge (e.g., electricity, electronics, processing characteristics of materials).
- Knowledge of other trades.
- Skill in specific trade operations, and the degree of manual dexterity or precision required.
- Ability to read and write, to interpret blueprints, work instructions, and other technical guides of varying degrees of complexity.
- Ability to use or operate tools, equipment, or machines of varying difficulty.
- Mental abilities needed, such as memory, judgment, and ingenuity.
- Mental application required (e.g., in planning and laying out work, in maintaining alertness and concentrated attention, or because of the nature of muscular and visual coordination needed).

Factor II: Responsibility

Covers the nature and degree of responsibility involved in performing work. Positions vary in responsibility in such ways as the complexity and scope of work assigned, the difficulty and frequency of judgments and decisions made, the kind of supervisory controls, and the nature of work instructions and technical guides used. Such as:

- Complexity of work (e.g., whether the work involves simple, repetitive actions, or responsibility for a variety of different operations and machines to complete assignments; whether work sequences are simple or complex; whether the work requires a low or a high degree of accuracy and precision; whether assignments involve a low or high degree of care and skill to prevent damage to tools and materials, and injury to others).
- Scope of work (e.g., whether assignments involve responsibility for part of an

operation or for a complete process; whether assignments include responsibility for planning and laying out work; whether the worker is responsible for advising management and engineering personnel on practical trade aspects of the work, such as techniques, fabrication detail, and work sequences).

- Nature and degree of responsibility for making judgments and decisions (e.g., whether the work is performed under close supervision, or with considerable independence from supervisory controls; whether the work instructions are complete and specific, or general in nature; whether guides such as technical manuals and work precedents can be applied directly, or must be modified; whether the worker has authority to deviate from instructions and work precedent without prior approval; whether assignments involve the need to make decisions and judgments which affect the quality and adequacy of work performed).

Factor III: Physical Effort

Covers the physical effort exerted in performing assigned work. Positions vary in such ways as the nature, degree, frequency, and duration of muscular effort or physical strain experienced in work performance. Elements considered under this factor include, but are not limited to:

- Physical exertion related to actions such as lifting, pushing, pulling, or carrying objects of varying weights, sizes, and shapes.
- Physical effort related to movements such as walking, running, climbing, crawling, bending.
- Strain related to lack of movement such as standing in place, crouching, or stopping for extended periods of time.

Factor IV: Working Conditions

Covers the hazards, physical hardships, and working conditions to which workers are exposed in performing assigned work. Positions vary in such ways as the nature of the work environment; the extent to which it includes unpleasant, disagreeable, or hazardous conditions; the degree to which such conditions are experienced; the frequency and duration of exposure; the adequacy of protective clothing and gear, safety devices, and safe trade practices; and the possible effects on the worker. Elements considered under this factor include, but are not limited to:

- Lighting, heating, and ventilation in a work area.
- Weather conditions to which exposed when working outdoors.
- Temperature to which exposed in the work area.
- Dust, grease, and soiling of clothing and skin surfaces.
- Noise and vibration.
- Gases.
- Hazards in working above ground level, on slippery surfaces or in crowded areas near moving vehicles or cutting tools.

b. **Grading supervisory and leader jobs.**

- (1) Supervisory employees are covered by a separate grading plan which provides for placing each supervisory job in its proper grade through consideration of the volume, kinds and levels of work involved, and the nature of supervision exercised.
- (2) Leaders also are covered by a separate grading standard. Leader jobs are graded taking into consideration the kinds and levels of work involved.

S6-6 Job Descriptions

- a. **Authority.** Each agency has the authority to create, change, or abolish jobs and to assign or reassign duties and responsibilities to employees. OPM standards do not prescribe agency organization of work or the content of jobs.
- b. **Development of job descriptions.** In carrying out its responsibilities under the Federal Wage System, each agency prepares a written description of the duties and responsibilities of each job, and grades the job that the description represents. Job descriptions are kept up to date to reflect significant changes in duties and assignments. Each agency designs its own job description forms and determines who prepares its job descriptions.
- c. **Availability of jobs.** Whenever an employee is appointed, promoted, changed to lower grade, or transferred, there must be a job available which has been described and identified according to occupation, title, and grade. This is necessary so that the proper rate of pay and qualifications required to perform the work may be determined.
- d. **Requirements for content of descriptions.** Each job description contains sufficient information on the following four grading factors to allow proper grading when OPM standards are applied:
 - Skill and knowledge
 - Responsibility
 - Physical effort
 - Working conditions
- e. **Order of Presentation.** To facilitate the analysis of the job and its comparison with job-grading standards, each description, to the extent possible, presents the relevant factor information in the same order and sequence as found in the applicable grading standard.
- f. **Additional information.** An agency may provide for the addition of information in its job description as desired for other personnel or management purposes.