

Writing Job Descriptions using US DOL's JobWriter

The first step that you need to take to begin the **hiring process** for a position is to have a clear list of tasks the employee(s) will be doing, skills, knowledge and abilities that they will need to accomplish the job. The clearest way to do this is to have a solid written job description. This has the added benefits of both you and your candidates knowing what you are looking for and your employee(s) knowing exactly what is expected of them. **NOTE:** *There are some capabilities within O*Net for writing job descriptions but JobWriter picks up the same data and is generally more user-friendly and results in a more professional job description document.*

O*Net is the US Dept. of Labor's Occupational Network... they compile information about jobs annually and it creates a "national" job information database for each recognized job title/SOC code. Sometimes the challenge is finding out what they call a job and sometimes it is that your job is somewhere in between two of theirs. Choose whichever is the closest to describing the bulk of your work. You may need to choose a primary code and pick up some tasks, etc., from other job codes.

US Dept. of Labor's O*Net site (Occupational Network): <http://www.onetonline.org>

JobWriter: <http://www.careerinfonet.org/jobwriter/default.aspx>

US DOL's Employer Toolkit guide is (2Mg): http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/Toolkit/Toolkit_screen.pdf

Go to JobWriter (link above). Enter the SOC code in the box at the top of the pale blue section "Enter an Occupation." Under "Location," select "Oklahoma" in the drop-down box; "Search." All of the information in O*Net for the job title that you selected will be populated on screen.

- **Purpose**—the broad statement of the job description
- **Education and Experience**
 - Be sure to differentiate between a minimum education requirement and a preferred level of education
 - The program self-populates with a list of standard certifications and licenses for the SOC code and there is also a "Certification Finder" and a "License Finder" to identify others you may be looking for
- **Knowledge**
- **Skills** Skills marked with an asterisk (*) are considered important for this occupation
- **Work Context**
- **Tasks**
- **Activities**
- **Tools & Technology**

You can now get your job description. You do have the option to edit online but it easier to edit as a Word document.

Using the browser scroll bar on the far right of the screen, scroll down to and click on "Review & Download Final Job Description." It gives you their final draft to review—scroll to the bottom and in the "Download" box, select Word.

BEFORE you begin to edit anything, select "File" "Save As". **BE SURE TO CHANGE THE FILE TYPE TO "WORD DOCUMENT"**—it defaults to "Web Page" (even though the download box said it was a .doc file) which has LOTS of hidden html formatting! ¹

Read all entries carefully to determine if the entry is a part of this job at your business. Delete unnecessary items and add tasks that are unique to your business. Determine which tasks are **Essential Job Functions** as defined by the US Department of Labor:

Essential functions are the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation. You should carefully examine each job to determine which functions or tasks are essential to performance.

Edit to include your logo, business name, etc. Be sure to run your spelling/grammar checking program.

Best Practices:

- Always have a date on your job descriptions.
- If there is a change in the essential job functions, qualifications or training required, revise your job description. At minimum, review job descriptions every two years; check for new equipment and/or technology, tasks assigned, etc. When completed, at the bottom indicate "Reviewed [date]" or "Revised [date]."
- Include the supervisor and an incumbent employee in writing the job description or **at least** in final review.
- Best practice is to use the same format and style for all your job descriptions.
- List the Essential Job Functions first.

¹ You may wish to save the file as a text document to strip out **ALL** formatting, especially if you want to copy and paste text into a standard job description format that you use. If you wish to do this, in MS Word's "Save As" dialog box, select **Plain Text**. You will need to close the file and re-open it in Word or a text editor to get the "clean" (stripped) text before editing.