

WHAT FEDERAL JOBS WOULD I QUALIFY FOR?

Like any other employer, the Federal Government expects its employees to be well qualified for the jobs they hold. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has published qualification standards to help assure that Federal employees are, indeed, well qualified. Whatever your background has been, the chances are that you are basically qualified for many different jobs, and highly qualified for some.

WHAT IF I HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE?

There are a few occupations that absolutely require a college education; and many other occupations for which college is not required, but is fully qualifying. Jobs like Engineer, Ecologist, and Accountant all require college course work in fields related to the job. However, jobs like Personnel Specialist and Budget Analyst do not require college, but you can qualify with a degree in any major.

When you have a degree but no specialized experience in a career field, you are eligible for appointment at the GS-5 pay scale. (If you maintained a B average, or met other academic credentials in college, you can start out at the GS-7 pay scale.)

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR JOBS AT HIGHER GRADES?

Generally, for jobs at GS-7 and higher, your background must have included some specialized experience. That experience must be closely related to the work to be performed in the job for which you are applying. At least 1 year of the specialized experience must have been at the level of the next lower grade in the Federal Service. That means, for example, that to qualify for GS-12, you must have had 1 year of specialized experience equivalent to GS-11.

You can also qualify for GS-9 on the basis of a master's degree, and for GS-11 on the basis of a doctorate. At these levels, however, the advanced degree must be directly related to the work of the job to be filled.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A DEGREE?

If you are just starting out, you can qualify for jobs at the GS-2 level with just a high school diploma or as little as 3 months of general work experience. General experience means that it does not necessarily have to be related to the job to be filled. At GS-3 and GS-4, you need more months of general experience. Starting at GS-5, jobs generally require 1 year of specialized experience equal to the next lower grade.

If you have been in the job market for awhile and have accumulated a fruitful work history, you may be well qualified for jobs even without a college degree. Except for certain professional jobs, college credentials are not necessary. The nature of your specialized experience is what really counts.



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WHEN WILL I HAVE TO TAKE THE "CIVIL SERVICE TEST?"

Actually, there is no single "civil service test." There are different written tests for different kinds of jobs. BUT, for most jobs, written tests are not required. OPM still uses tests for clerical jobs at GS-2, 3 and 4 and for technical aid jobs at GS-2 and GS-3. Tests are not usually used for jobs at GS-5 and higher.

HOW ARE WELL-QUALIFIED CANDIDATES DISTINGUISHED FROM BASICALLY-QUALIFIED ONES?

One way, of course, is the written test for those few instances in which OPM still uses tests. If you pass the test, you will receive a numerical score between 70 and 100.

In the majority of cases, however, you will be evaluated on how closely your background matches up to the requirements of the job. The more nearly your skills and abilities fit the competencies that have been identified for the job, the higher your score will be.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR TRADES AND CRAFTS JOBS?

The only factors that matter for trades and crafts jobs are the knowledge, skills, and abilities (commonly known as KSAs) that are required for successful performance, and the degree to which you measure up to them. You will not be required to show a specific length or quality of experience. There is no written test. Each job, however, will have a critical element. You must show that you have at least a minimum level of competence in that element to be rated eligible.



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