

Understanding KSAOs



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KSAOs are the **Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics** that are necessary to be successful in performing the functions of a specific job. These attributes are identified during a job analysis and are predominantly utilized in the recruitment and selection phases of the hiring process or to identify competencies for a specific professional. Below, we have identified each element of a KSAO, and a list of resources can be found here.

- **KNOWLEDGE**



Knowledge in the context of KSAOs, is a body of information that is needed for successful task performance. This information is usually fact-based or from practical experience and can be acquired through formal and informal channels. For example, knowledge of anatomy is essential for medical professionals and can be learned through medical school courses, in residency programs, and from medical colleagues. The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®) seeks to measure knowledges.

- **SKILLS**



Skills are developed capacities that facilitate successful task performance. The acquisition of skills can be deliberate or can occur as a by-product of performing tasks. Skills can be improved by repeating tasks, gaining knowledge, or applying abilities. Basic skills, such as reading a recipe, are typically comprised of a few tasks. Advanced skills, such as cooking a meal, require a greater variety of tasks and problem solving. A vehicle driving examination seeks to measure driving skills.

- **ABILITIES**



Abilities are enduring capacities that facilitate learning and successful task performance. In direct contrast to skills, abilities tend to be more innate or bound by capacity. For example, an individual may have better physical abilities compared to others if they are predisposed with natural endurance, balance, or coordination. The SATs and MCATs seek to measure aptitude.

- **OTHER CHARACTERISTICS**



“Other” characteristics represent the motivation and engagement aspect of predicting successful job performance. This may include qualities such as personality, attitude, interests, or values. Many organizations tend to place more emphasis on KSA’s rather than O’s, although the “other” characteristics are an excellent indicator as to whether the candidate would fit into the culture and climate of an organization.

KSA's	O's
Typically identified as a “competency” area for job role or profession (e.g., pilot)	Typically identified as additional attributes that do not fit into traditional KSAs
Characteristics that affect whether an individual can do a job	Characteristics that affect whether an individual will do a job
Usually emphasized in recruiting and hiring process	Usually predicts job performance once hired

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