



HOW TO WRITE A KSA RESPONSE

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Many federal vacancy announcements require applicants to provide written responses to specific KSA statements. These KSA statements are great opportunities for the applicant to round out his or her application/résumé by providing detailed examples of their experience and qualifications.

KSA responses should be written in narrative form. In other words, your response should have an introduction and conclusion and should be comprised of well written paragraphs. The expected length of a KSA response is half a page to one full page per KSA statement.

The Office of Personnel Management has developed a formula to write an effective KSA response. This formula is called the CCAR approach. CCAR stands for: Context, Challenge, Action and Result. When using the CCAR approach, start by determining a specific example (or two) from your experience that best addresses the KSA statement.

The following is a breakdown of the CCAR approach:

Example

A typical KSA Statement requested for a firefighting position is: Ability to maintain written records. It is important to think of a examples that illustrates your accomplishments or re-enforces your qualifications for the position. It helps if your example has quantifiable results – numbers and statistics look great to hiring officials and show tangible contributions to the agency.

An *Example* to respond to this KSA Statement might be something like this:

- ✧ As a crew Lead EMT, you developed injury/illness logs that helped to streamline the process of filling out CA-1 and CA-2 forms and helped keep track of annual injury/illness statistics for the crew. By developing and maintaining this written record, you hoped that the form might aid in determining ways to prevent crewmembers from getting sick or injured in the future.

Context

Once you have identified your example, begin writing your response by first introducing the *context* of that example. The *Context* effectively sets the scene in order for you to tell your story.

Establishing the *Context* might read like this:

- ✧ As the Lead EMT on the ABC Hotshots, I realized that the crew needed a way to document injuries and illnesses on the fireline. At the beginning of the season last year, the crew EMT's were producing inconsistent records and I felt that it was important to produce professional documentation to track accidents and illustrate our desire to prevent future injuries and illness among crewmembers.



Challenge

Once the picture of your example has been painted by the *Context*, the *Challenge* should be written in clear language and should simply describe what obstacles or hurdles you were faced with. The *Challenge* of your example should be connected back to the Knowledge, Skill or Ability that is being assessed by the agency.

Revealing the *Challenge* might read like this:

- ✧ Due to the nature of firefighting work, carrying multiple CA-1 and CA-2 forms on the fireline is impractical. Additionally, these required forms do not have space for EMTs to take SOAP notes nor log patient assessments over multiple days. Because we get spiked-out on the line, and/or perform long shifts, the crew EMTs needed a practical, compact form that could be carried in the EMT belt kit as well as provide space for all of the information needed to adequately document and assess minor injuries and illnesses. The form also needed to be readable by others in the case of a major injury that might require the form to be sent with the patient during an evacuation.

Action

This is probably the easiest part of the KSA response to write. After describing the *Challenge* that your example presented, simply illustrate what you did to address the *Challenge*. Define what *Action* you took in order to move forward.

The *Action* part of the CCAR approach might read like this:

- ✧ In order to address these problems, I developed a two-sided form that was both practical and efficient on the fireline. After multiple trial runs, the final format of the form had four sections per side which served two purposes: the page could be folded in quarters and easily fit into an EMT kit or linegear, and it became a compact writing surface that EMTs could use on their knee or canteen on the fireline. I requested that the crew invest in tear-proof, water resistant paper so that the form could withstand a season of use. I also trained all of the crew EMTs in the proper use of the form and ensured that all supervisors knew how to extract information off of the form to correctly fill out CA-1 and CA-2 forms.

Result

To wrap up the CCAR approach, write what positive *Results* were obtained as a direct consequence of your *Actions*. Ensure that you focus on you, the applicant. If your example was a team effort, direct the reader to only your efforts. Additionally, make certain to focus on quantitative results, if applicable.

The *Result* section might read like this:

- ✧ Upon implementation, the form I created turned out to be very effective. Not only did it provide new consistency in our documentation, we were able to calculate accurate statistics that included types of injuries/illnesses by percentage and time-lost stats. From these numbers, I developed protocol that outlined prevention for dehydration and developed recommendations for additional first aid supplies to be included in our kits. Because I created the form as a user-friendly Microsoft Word template, our documentation was very professional in appearance and functionality. Finally, the form was released by the ABC Hotshots to over 100 other Hotshot crews across the country during an annual workshop – in order to help other crews address the same problems I had faced.



Introduction & Conclusion

As far as the content of your introduction paragraph, you might state your broad abilities as well as the specific skills that you hold in regards to the KSA statement. For example, you might highlight the types of records you maintain on a regular basis, as well as the software programs you are proficient at using, and then segue into your example, etc.

The tone and content of your conclusion should insist that you are the most qualified applicant and that your example illustrates exactly why they should hire you. Don't be shy. Of course, your conclusion should re-emphasize any skills that you highlighted in your introduction. However, make sure to conclude your response by directly addressing the KSA statement.

In the above example, the following might be appropriate for one of the final sentences in your conclusion:

- ✧ Not only am I able to successfully maintain written records, I am constantly striving to develop innovative, efficient ways to streamline written documentation.

PLEASE CHECK OUT THE FULL EXAMPLE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

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Happy Job Hunting!



SAMPLE KSA RESPONSE USING THE CCAR APPROACH

ABILITY TO MAINTAIN WRITTEN RECORDS

As a Senior Firefighter on the ABC Hotshots, I have experience maintaining written records for a variety of crew functions. I am familiar with the day-to-day administrative forms and documents, including: CA-1's, CA-2's, Fire Time Reports, manifests, operational reports, leave request forms, requisition forms, reconciliation documentation, fleet management forms, etc. Furthermore, I am able to use the technology and software needed to maintain these documents, including: word processing, facsimile, email, electronic forms, etc. I also prepare reports such as inventories and supply requests while performing as the equipment cache manager for the crew.

Additionally, I have experience developing recordkeeping forms and protocol. For example, as the Lead EMT on the ABC Hotshots, I realized that the crew needed a way to document injuries and illnesses on the fireline. At the beginning of the season last year, the crew EMT's were producing inconsistent records and I felt that it was important to produce professional documentation to track accidents and illustrate our desire to prevent future injuries and illness among crewmembers.

Due to the nature of firefighting work, carrying multiple CA-1 and CA-2 forms on the fireline is impractical. Additionally, these required forms do not have space for EMTs to take SOAP notes nor log patient assessments over multiple days. Because we get spiked-out on the line, and/or perform long shifts, the crew EMTs needed a practical, compact form that could be carried in the EMT belt kit as well as provide space for all of the information needed to adequately document and assess minor injuries and illnesses. The form also needed to be readable by others in the case of a major injury that might require the form to be sent with the patient during an evacuation.

In order to address these problems, I developed a two-sided form that was both practical and efficient on the fireline. After multiple trial runs, the final format of the form had four sections per side which served two purposes: the page could be folded in quarters and easily fit into an EMT kit or linegear, and it became a compact writing surface that EMTs could use on their knee or canteen on the fireline. I requested that the crew invest in tear-proof, water resistant paper so that the form could withstand a season of use. I also trained all of the crew EMTs in the proper use of the form and ensured that all supervisors knew how to extract information off of the form to correctly fill out CA-1 and CA-2 forms.

Upon implementation, the form I created turned out to be very effective. Not only did it provide new consistency in our documentation, we were able to calculate accurate statistics that included types of injuries/illnesses by percentage and time-lost stats. From these numbers, I developed protocol that outlined prevention for dehydration and developed recommendations for additional first aid supplies to be included in our kits. Because I created the form as a user-friendly Microsoft Word template, our documentation was very professional in appearance and functionality. Finally, the form was released by the ABC Hotshots to over 100 other Hotshot crews across the country during an annual workshop – in order to help other crews address the same problems I had faced.

In conclusion, I am not only able to successfully maintain written records, I constantly strive to develop innovative, efficient ways to streamline written documentation and record keeping.

