

WORKING FOR THE U.S.A.



*applying for
a Civil Service job*

*what the Government
expects of Federal workers*

U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Pamphlet 4

August 1960

encl(1)

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CIVIL SERVICE



What It Is

Federal employees are at work in offices and laboratories, machine shops and hospitals, all over the United States.

They deliver your mail. They make weapons for the Armed Forces. They take care of disabled veterans. They protect the public against counterfeiters. They inspect foods and drugs to see that they are pure. They improve the quality of fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products. They maintain our national parks. They forecast the weather. They perform research in the fields of electronics, radio, and radar.

In hundreds of other ways, Federal employees perform essential public service.

Where They Work

The headquarters offices of most Federal agencies are located in Washington, D.C.; "field establishments" of the agencies are scattered throughout the United States and its possessions, and some are in foreign countries.

Out of approximately 2,300,000 Federal employees, only about one-tenth are stationed in Washington. The great majority work in field establishments—for example, in navy yards, arsenals, quartermaster depots, post offices, veterans' hospitals, laboratories, and research centers. Still others work in foreign countries.

Of the ones working in the United States, nearly 1 out of every 4 is a woman. Out of every 100

civil service employees, 24 work in the Postal Service and 44 work for the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force. The remaining 32 are in various other agencies.

The Civil Service Merit System

In this pamphlet, we are discussing only jobs under the civil service merit system, the majority of which are in the executive branch—that is, in agencies under the direction of the President, like the Post Office Department, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Federal Aviation Agency, and so on. We are not discussing jobs outside civil service, such as most jobs in the legislative branch (Congress and its employees), or in the judicial branch (the courts and their employees), or in the agencies that have merit systems of their own (Tennessee Valley Authority, Foreign Service, etc.).

Under the civil service merit system, appointments to jobs are made on the basis of ability to do the work—ability demonstrated in competitive examinations—without regard to other considerations such as politics, race, religion, or national origin.

These positions are called *competitive* positions, because applicants compete for them in civil service examinations. Taken all together, they make up the *competitive*, or *career*, service. This pamphlet tells only about these jobs.

The Civil Service Commission

Civil service examinations are given by U.S. Civil Service Commission offices and boards of U.S. civil service examiners in other agencies.

Like most other Federal agencies, the Commission has a central, or headquarters, office in Washington, D.C. It gives nationwide examinations, publicized in all parts of the United States, to

fill positions in Washington and, in some cases, throughout the country and overseas.

Outside Washington, the Commission carries on its work through regional offices. Each regional office, and boards of examiners under it, furnish civil service information to the public and give examinations to fill positions within the region.

The location of the civil service regional offices, and the States making up each region, are shown on page 23 of this pamphlet.

APPLYING FOR A JOB



Almost all types of occupations found in private industry are also found in the Federal civil service. However, the Civil Service Commission does not accept applications for *all* kinds of jobs all the time. There must be jobs to fill before it will open an examination and accept applications. When this happens, it issues an examination "announcement" which tells about the jobs—what experience or education you must have before your application will be accepted, whether a written test is required, where the jobs are located, what the pay is, and so on.

Keeping Posted

Boards of United States Civil Service Examiners are maintained in over 1,000 post offices throughout the country. There are also Civil Service Information Points at 1,600 other post offices. These offices furnish information about examinations that are open and give out application forms. Your local post office can give you information about examinations or tell you the location of the nearest post office where this information can be obtained.

If you live in a city in which there is a regional office of the Commission, go to that office for information. Regional offices are listed on page 23 of this pamphlet.

You may prefer to write for civil service information. If you do, a good general rule to follow is this:

If the job you are interested in is in Washington, D.C., write to the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D.C.

If the job is in a Federal establishment outside of Washington, D.C. (for example, a certain veterans' hospital, or agricultural research center, or navy yard), write to the headquarters of the civil service region in which the establishment is located.

The following also have civil service information: State Employment Service offices, Veterans' Information Centers, national and State headquarters of veterans' organizations, placement officials and veterans' counselors at colleges, and personnel officers and boards of U.S. civil service examiners at Government agencies.

Closing Date

When an examination is announced, applications are accepted as long as the examination is "open." In some instances, the closing date for acceptance of applications is stated in the announcement. In other instances, the closing date is not stated in the announcement; instead, public notice of the closing date is given later.

Most applicants have to send in their applications while an examination is open. However, persons who cannot file applications on time because they are in military service may file them after the closing date, but not later than 120 days after honorable discharge. Also, persons who cannot file applications on time because of working outside the United States for a Government agency

or for an international organization (such as the United Nations) may also file late under certain conditions.

Certain veterans and their relatives may also file applications for closed examinations. They are persons who have been granted "10-point veteran preference" by the Civil Service Commission. Pamphlet 48, available from the Civil Service Commission, tells about veteran preference and who is entitled to it.

If you think that you are entitled to send in an application for a closed examination, write to the office that issued the examination announcement and describe the circumstances. That office will let you know whether your application can be accepted.

Meeting the Requirements

Before you file an application, read the examination announcement carefully. It gives information about the jobs to be filled and what qualifications you must have to fill one of them.

If the announcement says that applications will be accepted only from persons with 1 year of experience along certain lines and you don't have that experience, don't file an application. If the announcement says that the jobs to be filled are all in a certain locality and you don't want to work in that locality, don't file an application. Many disappointed applicants would have been saved time and trouble if they had only read the announcement carefully.

Some Things To Watch for

You won't have to have any particular education or experience in order to file for many examinations, but there will still be some general requirements you will have to meet.

How old are you? You must be at least as old as the minimum age specified in the examination announcement. That is usually age 18, but if different, the announcement will show it. There is no maximum age limit.

Are you an American citizen? Examinations are open only to citizens or to people who owe permanent allegiance to the United States.

What is your physical condition? You must be physically able to perform the duties of the position. This does not mean that a physical handicap will disqualify an applicant so long as he can do the work efficiently without being a hazard to himself or to others. If special physical requirements are called for because of the duties of a position, they will be described in the examination announcement.

Filling Out the Application Forms

If you are satisfied that you meet the requirements listed in the announcement, the next step is to fill out the application forms mentioned. At this time you may have to fill out only a small card, but sooner or later you will have to fill out a 2-page or a 4-page application. It is very important to do this carefully.

Answer every question in the application. If you don't, the Civil Service Commission will have to write to you to get the missing information. This will take time and delay action on your application. You will ordinarily be given only one opportunity to send in this information. If you don't reply promptly, your application will be canceled.

For many positions, the examinations are not written tests, and civil service examiners rate applicants on their training and experience. Tell the whole story. You can't get credit for experience and training which you don't claim on your application.

Follow the instructions in the examination announcement as to when and where to send your application. Be sure to send it to the right office before the closing date of the examination.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION



If the announcement said that a written examination would be given, you will receive a card through the mail telling you when and where to report for the test.

The examination will be practical. It will test your ability to do the job that you applied for, or it will test your ability to learn how to do it.

If you apply for an examination that does not involve a written test, your grade will be assigned on the basis of the experience and training you describe in your application and any additional evidence secured by the Commission. Your qualifications may also be verified with your former employers and supervisors.

In examinations that cover several grades or salary levels, you will be rated for those for which you are qualified, but you will not be rated at any grade level if the pay for that level is less than the minimum acceptable pay that you show in your application.

If you fail an examination, you can usually take it again as long as applications are being accepted for it. If you pass it but want to try to improve your grade, you can take it again after a year has passed provided it is still open.

You will be notified whether you passed or failed the examination by the office that announced it. If you change your address be sure to send that office a notification.

YOU BECOME AN "ELIGIBLE"



People who pass an examination are called "eligibles." Their names are put on a "list of eligibles." An eligible's chances of getting a job depend on how high he stands on this list and how fast agencies are filling jobs from the list.

Federal agencies can also fill jobs in several other ways—for instance, by promoting an employee or by hiring an employee from another Federal agency who wants to change jobs. But when a job is to be filled from a list of eligibles, the agency asks the Civil Service Commission, or one of its offices, for the names of people on the list of eligibles for that job.

When the Commission receives this request, it sends to the agency the names of the three people highest on the list. In identifying the three names at the top of the list, anyone who has said that he would not accept appointment in the place where the job is located is, of course, not considered. Also, the appointing officer can limit his choice to only men, or only women, to fill a job. If he specifies men only, for instance, then the names of the three men with the highest grades are sent, even if women with higher grades are on the list.

The appointing officer makes a choice from among the three people whose names were sent to him. If that person accepts the appointment, the names of the eligibles who were not chosen are put back on the top of the list. They will be considered again for the next job that is to be filled.

That is the rule in hiring from all kinds of eligible lists, whether they are for typist, carpenter,

chemist, or something else. For every vacancy, the appointing officer has his choice of any one of the top three eligibles on the list. This explains why the person whose name is on top of the list sometimes does not get an appointment when the ones lower on the list do. If the appointing officer chooses the No. 2 or No. 3 eligible, the No. 1 eligible doesn't get a job at once, but stays on the list.

Veterans Get Preference

If you are a veteran, you receive additional benefits in getting a Government job and also in keeping it after you are hired. For example, "veteran preference" will add extra points to the passing grade you get in an examination.

Honorably discharged war veterans get 5 extra points. Those who get 10 points are disabled veterans or their wives, the widows of veterans, and the widowed or divorced mothers of veterans who lost their lives while in the Armed Forces or who were totally disabled while on active duty.

The Commission's Pamphlet 48, "Your Civil Service Veteran Preference," gives more information about who is entitled to veteran preference and what its benefits are. You can get a copy by writing to the Civil Service Commission in Washington or to one of its regional offices, which are listed on page 23.

Kinds of Appointments

If you are offered a job, the letter or telegram will show what kind of appointment is involved. Appointments are either temporary, career-conditional, or career. You should know what these terms mean.

A temporary appointment does not last more than 1 year. This is the only type of appointment that can be given an applicant over 70, but his ap-

pointment can be renewed. A temporary worker can't be promoted and can't transfer to another job. He is not under the retirement system.

A career-conditional appointment leads after 3 years' service to a career appointment. For the first year, the employee serves a probationary period, which is part of the examination. During this time, he must demonstrate that he can do a satisfactory job and may be dismissed if he fails to do so. A career-conditional employee is on a par with career employees as far as promotions are concerned, and after 3 months he has transfer privileges. After a career-conditional employee completes his probation, he cannot be removed except for cause. However, in reduction-in-force (layoff) actions, career-conditional employees are dismissed ahead of career employees. After 3 years of continuous service, a career-conditional employee becomes a full career employee.

Most new appointees in the field service of the Post Office Department, and a few others, receive career appointments at the beginning. A career employee serves a probationary period, as described above, and has transfer and promotion privileges. After he completes his probation, he is in the last group to be affected in layoffs.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS



After you have been offered a job, and have accepted it, you must meet certain requirements over and above the requirement that you be able to do the work.

When the appointing officer of an agency has selected you for appointment, you will be asked to go to his office, or to the office of someone who

represents him, where you will be informed of these requirements in detail. At the same time, you will be informed of certain rules which, as a Federal employee, you will be expected to observe.

Affidavits

You must be prepared to swear to certain statements (or affirm them) before you can be put on the payroll. If you swear to statements that are not true, you may be dismissed as a result.

Oath of Office

You must swear (or affirm) to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Loyalty

You must swear that you are not a Communist or a Fascist, and that you do not advocate, or belong to any organization that advocates, the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force or violence.

Striking Against the Government

You cannot be appointed unless you swear that you will not strike against the Government or join any organization of Federal employees that claims the right to strike against the Government.

Bribes

You will be asked to swear that you did not pay, or offer to pay, any money or anything of value to get your appointment. Anyone who purchases or sells a public office is subject to fine or imprisonment, or both.

Holding State or Local Office

If you have a State, county, or city job, you will probably have to resign before you can be appointed to a Federal job. There are a few exceptions, but not many. You will not be allowed to accept such jobs while you are a Federal employee.

Investigation

In connection with your appointment, an investigation will be made to determine whether you are reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States. When the investigation is completed a determination will be made as to whether your employment in the Government service would be clearly consistent with the interests of the national security.

Reporting for Duty

If you must travel in order to report for duty, you ordinarily pay your own way. The Government pays these travel expenses for only a few hard-to-fill positions.

Physical Examination

You will be given a physical examination by a medical officer before appointment. If he finds that you are not physically qualified for the position, you cannot be appointed and your expenses in returning home cannot be paid by the Government.

Fingerprints

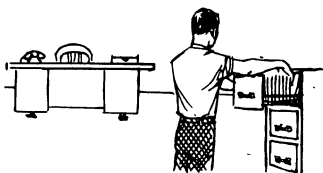
Your fingerprints will be taken when you report for duty, and will be sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for checking against their records. If you were ever arrested (for anything other than a

minor traffic violation), and you did not admit the arrest on your application form, you may be dismissed.

Political Activity

You will not be allowed to take any active part in politics while you are a Federal employee. You may, of course, vote as you please and express your opinions as a private citizen. The Commission's Pamphlet 20 tells exactly what kinds of political activity are permitted and what kinds are prohibited.

ON THE JOB



After selecting its employees on the basis of merit, the Government pays them, and promotes them, on the same basis.

Employees are paid according to the principle of "equal pay for equal work." When jobs in the higher grades become vacant, or new ones are set up, the general practice is to fill them by promoting employees in lower grades who are qualified to perform the more difficult duties.

You will want to know more about these matters, and about other features of Federal employment. As you learn about them, you will find that the Government, the largest employer in the United States, is also a progressive employer.

Pay

In general, the Government pays good salaries. In the lower grades, salaries are the equal of, or higher than, pay for similar work in private in-

dustry. At the higher levels, the Federal pay scale becomes less competitive with private industry.

Pay, however, is not the only thing to be considered. The Government employee has liberal vacation and sick-leave privileges. His pay is steady—a factory may close down because business is slow, but the Government has work that has to be done in good times and bad. Also, a great sense of satisfaction may come from serving the American people.

The Government has several pay plans. For most trades positions, wages are set from time to time to bring them into line with wages paid in the same locality by private industry.

Postal employees have a pay system of their own, which is fixed by law. Examples of entrance salaries are \$2.16 an hour for substitute clerk in first- and second-class post offices, and carrier in the city delivery service.

A few Federal agencies and a few classes of employees have still other pay plans. The Tennessee Valley Authority, the Foreign Service (Department of State), and physicians, dentists, and nurses in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery of the Veterans Administration are in this group.

Taken all together, these special pay plans apply to more than half of all Federal employees.

The others (43 percent) are paid under a law called the Classification Act. It provides a pay scale called the General Schedule (GS) for most white-collar employees and for protective and custodial employees such as guards and messengers. Positions are graded by number according to how difficult the work is, starting with grade 1.

GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS)

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Entrance salary</i>	<i>Periodic increase</i>	<i>Maximum salary</i>
1	\$3,185	\$105	\$3,815
2	3,500	105	4,130
3	3,760	105	4,390
4	4,040	105	4,670
5	4,345	165	5,335
6	4,830	165	5,820
7	5,355	165	6,345
8	5,885	165	6,875
9	6,435	165	7,425
10	6,995	165	7,985
11	7,560	260	8,860
12	8,955	260	10,255
13	10,635	260	11,935
14	12,210	260	13,510
15	13,730	325	15,030
16	15,255	260	16,295
17	16,530	260	17,570
18	18,500	-----	18,500

You will be interested in knowing how jobs get to be in one grade or another. Position classifiers study the duties of the jobs. They find out how difficult the duties are, how much responsibility the person holding the job has, and what knowledge or experience or skill goes into performing the duties. Then they put the jobs in appropriate grades.

The periodic pay increases shown in the table refer to automatic "step" increases which employees receive if their job performance is satisfactory. For the first 10 grades, the increases occur every 52 weeks. For grades GS-11 through GS-17, the increases occur every 78 weeks. Increases above the maximums shown in the table are given under certain conditions to employees who serve a long time in the same grade.

Hours of Work

The usual Government workweek is 40 hours. The salary schedule above is for this amount

of work. Most Government employees work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, Monday through Friday, but in some cases the nature of the work may call for a different workweek.

As in any other business, employees sometimes have to work overtime. If you are required to work overtime while a Government employee, you will either be paid for overtime or given time off to make up for the extra time you worked.

Advancement

Many of the men and women in top jobs in the Government began their careers "at the bottom of the ladder." They did their jobs well, and prepared for the job ahead. They learned more and more about the work of their agencies. As they became more useful on the job, they were promoted to one more important position after another.

Most agencies fill vacancies, whenever possible, by promoting their own employees. Promotion programs in every agency are designed to make sure that each promotion goes to the employee best qualified to fill the higher position. How fast an employee is promoted depends upon openings in the higher grades, and upon his ability and industry.

Many Federal employees study in night school to prepare themselves for better jobs. In Washington, D.C., a number of universities and schools offer courses of special interest to Government workers.

It is not always necessary to move to a new job in order to advance in grade. Sometimes an employee's work assignments change a great deal in the ordinary course of business. His job "grows." When that happens, it is time for a position classifier to study the job again. If he finds that the

job should be put in a higher grade because of the increased difficulty or responsibility of the duties, the change is made, and the employee gets the salary of the new grade.

Another kind of advancement—periodic “step” pay increases—is discussed under “Pay.”

Transfers

Transferring to other civil service jobs for which an employee is qualified is another way of getting a better job.

Agencies consider the qualifications of an employee for promotion as higher grade positions become vacant. However, for transfer to positions in other agencies, an employee would have to “find his own job,” by such means as interviews with officials in those agencies. If he can find a vacant position in another agency, and if the hiring officer is impressed with his qualifications, arrangements may be made to transfer him.

Efficiency Counts

At intervals, employees are rated on their job performance. In most agencies, the ratings are “Outstanding,” “Satisfactory,” and “Unsatisfactory.”

Employees with “Satisfactory” or better ratings receive periodic pay increases (these are discussed under “Pay”).

An employee whose rating is “Unsatisfactory” must be dismissed or assigned to another position with duties which he can be expected to learn to do satisfactorily.

Incentive Awards

Government agencies encourage their employees to suggest better ways, or simpler ways, or more

economical ways, of doing their jobs. They may give a cash award to an employee for a suggestion or invention that results in money savings or improved service. They may also reward outstanding job performance or other acts that are particularly meritorious and deserving of recognition.

Vacation and Sick Leave

Most Federal employees earn annual leave, for vacation and other purposes, according to the number of years (civilian plus military) they have been in the Federal service. They earn it at the rate of 13 days a year for the first 3 years and 20 days a year for the next 12 years. After 15 years, they earn 26 days of annual leave each year.

Sick leave is earned at the rate of 13 days a year. You can use this leave for illnesses serious enough to keep you away from your work, and for appointments with a doctor, dentist, or optician. Sick leave that is not used can be saved for future use. It is one of the best forms of insurance an employee and his family can have in case of extended periods of illness.

New Year's Day, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are holidays for Federal employees.

Group Life Insurance

As a Federal employee, you will have the privilege of buying a low-cost term life insurance without taking a physical examination. This program provides two kinds of insurance—life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment insurance. The amount of insurance you can buy will approximate your annual salary. The Government pays part and you pay 25 cents per \$1,000 of insurance every 2 weeks through payroll deductions.

If you leave the Government service, you will be allowed to buy an individual life insurance policy at standard rates without medical examination. If you retire from the Government on an annuity, your insurance will be continued in effect at no cost to you, but after your 65th birthday your coverage will be reduced 2 percent each month until the reduction is 75 percent. The remaining 25 percent will stay in effect. The reduction will not begin until you retire, even though you pass your 65th birthday.

Layoffs

In Government, layoffs are called reductions in force, and may be caused by a cut in appropriations, a decrease in work, or some similar reason.

In a reduction in force, the four things which determine whether an employee goes or stays are: Type of appointment (career, career-conditional, temporary); whether he is a veteran (veterans receive preference); seniority (how long an employee has worked for the Government); and job performance.

Unemployment Compensation

Federal employees who are separated in layoffs or whose appointments are terminated are entitled to unemployment compensation similar to that provided for employees in private industry. They are covered by the unemployment insurance system under conditions set by the State in which they worked.

Health Benefits

The Government sponsors a health benefits program for Federal employees. The program offers a variety of plans to meet individual needs, including basic coverage and protection against the

crippling financial burdens of unusually costly illnesses. The Government contributes part of the cost of premiums and the employee pays the balance through payroll deductions.

Retirement

Six and a half percent of a career or career-conditional employee's salary goes into a retirement fund. This 6½ percent comes out of every paycheck. This money, together with the interest it earns and a sum added by the Government, assures the employee an income in later years.

If you leave the Government before you are entitled to an annuity, the money you put into the retirement fund can be returned to you. If you leave after at least 5 years of service, you have the choice of having your money returned or leaving it in the fund. People who leave their money in the fund will get an annuity starting when they are 62.

The Government has a very liberal retirement system. For example, if you work for the Government for 30 years, and if your average salary during any 5 consecutive years was \$8,000, you can retire at 60 and get \$4,500 a year for the rest of your life. Also, an employee who becomes disabled after at least 5 years of Government service may retire on an annuity at any age.

Employee Unions

There are a number of unions of Federal employees. Some of them are for special groups, such as postal employees. Others have general membership among Government employees. Their main objective is to improve the working conditions of Federal employees.

Federal employees are free to join such unions, but are not required to join any organization.

And, as mentioned before, they may not join a union which asserts the right to strike against the Government of the United States.

Getting Additional Information

Information about Federal civil service examinations can be obtained from the United States Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D.C.; from any of the following regional offices of the Commission; and at many post offices.

CIVIL SERVICE REGIONAL OFFICES

First Region—Post Office and Courthouse Building, Boston 9, Mass.: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

Second Region—News Building, 220 East 42d Street, New York 17, N.Y.: New York and New Jersey.

Third Region—U.S. Customhouse, Second and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia 6, Pa.: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

Fifth Region—Peachtree-Baker Building, 275 Peachtree Street NE., Atlanta 3, Ga.: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands.

Sixth Region—Post Office and Courthouse Building, Cincinnati 2, Ohio: Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

Seventh Region—New Post Office Building, Chicago 7, Ill.: Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

Eighth Region—1114 Commerce Street, Dallas 2, Tex.: Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas.

Ninth Region—New Federal Building, Twelfth and Market Streets, St. Louis 1, Mo.: Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Tenth Region—Building 41, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colo.: Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and Arizona.

Eleventh Region—302 Federal Office Building, First Avenue and Madison Street, Seattle 4, Wash.: Montana, Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and Alaska.

Twelfth Region—128 Appraisers Building, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco 11, Calif.: California, Nevada, and Hawaii.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1960—O-565741

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. Price 15 cents