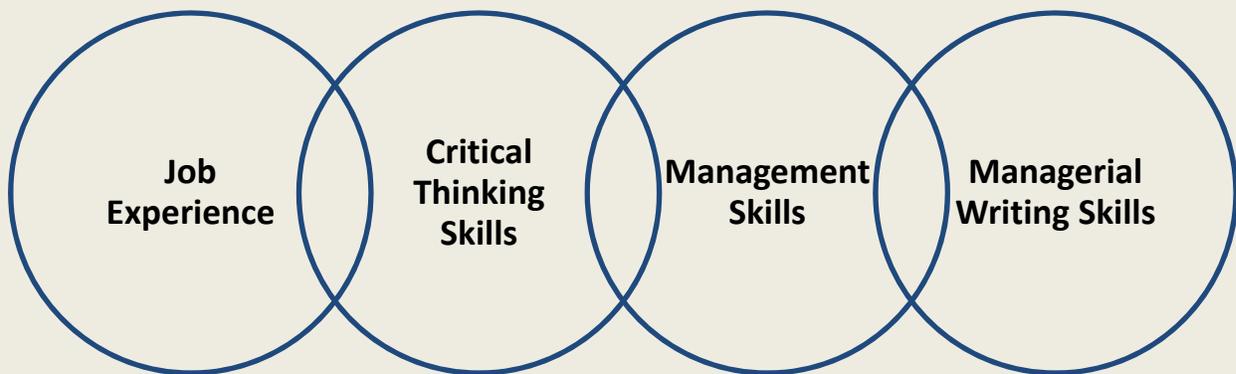


# ***COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENTS FOR PROMOTION***

## **Developmental Resource Guide**



**U. S. Customs and Border Protection  
Office of Human Resources Management  
Personnel Research and Assessment Division  
2013**

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## ***OVERVIEW***

Recently you participated in the Competency-Based Assessments for promotion. You completed a series of assessments designed to measure competencies identified as critical for being an effective supervisor or manager in positions covered by the Competency-Based Assessment system. Although the primary purpose of the assessment process is to make promotion decisions, the assessment results can also be used to help you understand your strengths and your areas to target for improvement. This information is encompassed in the Competency-Based Assessments for Promotion Feedback Report that was prepared for you.

This booklet is called the *Developmental Resource Guide*. It contains “general tips” and recommended readings for improving your abilities in the three general competency skill areas of the assessment process. The three general competency skill areas covered in this booklet correspond to the sections shown on your feedback report. The tips and readings are activities that you can complete on your own time at little or no cost. The books are available in libraries and bookstores and are relatively inexpensive. All books can also be ordered via the Internet by accessing an on-line bookseller.

## ***Critical Thinking Skills***

*Ability to make correct inferences from available information; ability to discover or select rules, principles, or relationships between facts and other information.*

### **GENERAL TIPS**

- Carefully examine the information or evidence that is available before drawing conclusions. Use all of the available evidence when drawing conclusions.
- Be aware that there are two kinds of incorrect conclusions that an individual can draw from evidence. The first occurs when the individual has a sufficient amount of evidence but simply draws the wrong conclusion. The second occurs when there is not an adequate amount of information, but the individual draws a conclusion rather than seeking more evidence.
- Be aware of the difference between conclusions that are certain - conclusions that must be true if the evidence is true - and conclusions that are uncertain, which only have a degree of probability of being true.
- Note that you can draw a conclusion that is certain only when you have complete information. For example, from the statement *All of the evidence against Suspect B can be used against Suspect C*, you have enough information to draw the conclusion that *Some of the evidence against Suspect C can be used against Suspect B*. However, you do not have enough information to draw the conclusion that *All of the evidence that can be used against Suspect C can be used against Suspect B*.
- Be aware that when you have incomplete information you can never be 100% certain about the conclusion. Such a conclusion has only a specific probability of being true. A good uncertain conclusion may still be wrong. Weather forecasts are examples of uncertain conclusions. When drawing an uncertain conclusion, you should be sure to assign to that conclusion only the degree of probability that is justified by the evidence.
- Use information about probabilities correctly. For example, from information that nine in ten members of a particular crime gang are illegal aliens, you could conclude that there was a 90% chance that any member of that gang who was arrested was an illegal alien. However, you could not generalize this conclusion to other crime gangs. Furthermore, you could not draw a conclusion about the probability that any particular illegal alien was a member of a crime gang.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

*The Elements of Logic.* Barker, S.F. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002. ISBN# 978-0072832358

*Manual of Job-Related Thinking Skills.* Office of Human Resources Management, Personnel Research and Assessment Division, U.S. Customs and Border Protection. See description below.

*Problem Solving and Comprehension.* Whimbey, A., Lochhead, J. & Narode, R. New York: Routledge, 2013. ISBN# 978-0415502238.

***Manual of Job-Related Thinking Skills***

The Personnel Research and Assessment Division of the Office of Human Resources Management has prepared a self-administered training course in job-related reasoning and decision making. It is called the *Manual of Job-Related Thinking Skills*. By working through this self-administered training manual, you can enhance your reasoning skills used in the performance of your job at DHS. The manual is available on the Internet at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) under the Careers section, Study Guides/Preparation Manuals, CBP Officer and Agriculture Specialist Study Guides, and Promotion Study Guides.

## ***Managerial Writing Skills***

*Ability to organize ideas, present facts logically, and use correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling when drafting and editing written materials, position papers, reports, etc.*

### **GENERAL TIPS**

- Consider your audience when preparing written communication. What do your recipients already know? What additional information do you want to provide to them?
- Outline your memos and letters before you begin to write.
- When you write memos and reports, summarize key points or conclusions on the first page, and provide details on subsequent pages.
- Make your correspondence as straightforward as possible.
- Use a variety of sentence structures—simple, complex, and compound—to add interest to your writing.
- Use charts or tables whenever possible to present numerical information.
- When you write for a nontechnical audience (e.g., a Congressional letter, a letter to a special interest group), have a nontechnical person review your correspondence for jargon.
- If procrastination is a problem, write a first draft as soon as possible after receiving an assignment. Leave sufficient time for editing and revising.
- Be sure to edit and proofread your correspondence for spelling and grammatical correctness. Remember that a computer's spell check, while a useful tool, does not detect errors in which correctly spelled words are in the wrong context.
- If you have time, reread correspondence a few days after writing it. Often, editing memos or reports becomes easier after you have not looked at them for a while.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

***Better Sentence Writing in 30 Minutes a Day.*** Campbell, D. Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press, 1995. ISBN# 978-1564142030.

***Business English: The Writing Skills You Need for Today's Workplace.*** Geffner, A. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 2010. ISBN# 978-0764143274.

***The Business Writer's Handbook.*** Alred, G., Brusaw, C. & Oliu, W. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011. ISBN# 978-1250004420.

***The Classic Guide to Better Writing.*** Flesch, R. & Lass, A.H. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. ISBN# 978-0062730480.

***Effective Business Writing.*** Piotrowski, M.V. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. ISBN# 978-0062733818.

***The Elements of Style.*** Strunk, Jr., W. & White, E.B. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000. ISBN# 978-0205313426.

***E-Mail: A Write It Well Guide—How to Write and Manage E-Mail in the Workplace.*** Chan, J.F., Oakland, CA: Write it Well, 2008. ISBN# 978-0963745590

***Manager's Portfolio of Model Memos for Every Occasion.*** Barnes, C.A. Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997. ISBN# 978-0132425209.

***Writing That Works: Communicating Effectively on the Job.*** Oliu, W., Brusaw, C. & Alred, G. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. ISBN# 978-1457611131.

***CBP Style Manual.*** Office of the Executive Secretariat, U.S. Customs and Border Protection. <http://cbpnet.cbp.dhs.gov/xp/cbpnet/oc/oes/> click Correspondence, Reference Documents when Drafting Correspondence.

***The Chicago Manual of Style.*** Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. ISBN# 978-0226104201. A 30 day trial version can be viewed online at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

***U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual.*** U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, DC: 2008. ISBN# 978-1470054991. An electronic version can be found online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008/content-detail.html>.

## ***Management Skills***

*Ability to identify a need for information, determine its importance and accuracy, and communicate it by a variety of methods.*

*Ability to identify problems and to gather, interpret, and evaluate information. Ability to generate and evaluate alternatives. Ability to make sound and well informed decisions and commit to action to accomplish organizational goals.*

*Ability to organize work, set priorities, and determine resource requirements. Skill in determining objectives and strategies to achieve organizational goals. Ability to monitor and evaluate progress against goals.*

*Ability to show initiative. Skill in setting well-defined and realistic personal goals. Ability to monitor progress. Motivation to achieve. Effectiveness in managing own time and in dealing with stress.*

### **GENERAL TIPS**

- Keep your work space uncluttered and organized. Keep only frequently used files and supplies on your desk.
- Organize your files so that others can locate and use them easily when you are out of the office.
- Archive or throw away infrequently used reports, files, and other materials.
- Check your in-basket, e-mail, and postal mail daily.
- Sort your in-basket according to priority and work on high-priority items first.
- Organize your paperwork into groups of items that require action, items to be read and passed on or filed, and items that can be thrown out.
- Determine whether immediate action is required before you make a hasty decision.
- Consider alternatives rather than choosing the first solution to a problem.
- Analyze issues and alternative solutions to determine how they will affect all of the key constituents involved.
- Look for practical, workable solutions that will be possible to implement.

## *Management Skills*

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- Weigh the benefits and potential consequences of each alternative before you choose a solution to a problem.
- Be flexible and willing to change your mind if additional information becomes available.
- When discovering a problem, approach your manager with an analysis of the problem as well as a recommended solution.
- Identify routine decisions that occur frequently. Where appropriate, empower others to make these decisions.
- Start each day by planning. List all the tasks you must accomplish that day. Set priorities, ranking tasks in order of importance.
- At the onset of a project, develop a plan that identifies the steps, timelines, and needed resources and equipment/supplies. Ensure that all project team members review and provide input into the plan.
- Make sure that your plans are consistent with the priorities of your organization.
- After developing a plan, ask others to review it to identify potential problems. Refine your plan accordingly.
- Take time to explain to each person how his or her piece of the plan fits into the overall picture.
- On a regular basis, review your progress against your plan. Revise your plan, when necessary.
- When taking on new responsibilities, set deadlines with your supervisor/manager and keep him or her informed of your progress.
- Plan ahead for what can go wrong; identify the critical factors and devise alternative plans to cope with them.
- Record meeting times, assignment due dates, and other deadlines on your calendar. Leave yourself reminders to ensure that you do not leave things until the last minute.
- Designate others to represent you at meetings when appropriate.
- Return telephone calls early in the day or near the end of the workday to increase your chances of getting through on the first try.

## **Management Skills**

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- Before leaving work each evening, list the things that you need to do the next day. Prioritize these tasks and estimate how long it will take to complete each task.
- On long projects or tasks, record your ongoing progress each week.
- Avoid over-committing yourself. Do not spend a great deal of time on low priority activities.

### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

***The Business-Savvy Project Manager.*** Heerkens, G.R. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005. ISBN# 978-0071443074.

***Harvard Business Review on Making Smart Decisions.*** Harvard Business Review. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011. ISBN# 978-1422172391.

***Judgment in Managerial Decision Making.*** Bazerman, M.H & Moore, D.A. New York: Wiley, 2012. ISBN# 978-1118065709.

***The Little Black Book of Project Management.*** Thomset, M.C. New York: American Management Association, 2010. ISBN# 978-0814415290.

***Managing Your E-Mail: Thinking Outside the Inbox.*** Cavanagh, C. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2003. ISBN# 978-0471457381.

***Taming the E-Mail Beast.*** Dean, R. Gilbert, AZ: Sortis Publishing, 2009. ISBN# 978-0977202553.

***The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Stop Feeling Overwhelmed and Win Back Control of Your Work.*** Gleeson, K. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008. ISBN# 978-0470371312.

***Ready for Anything: 52 Productivity Principles for Work and Life.*** Allen, D. New York: Viking Press, 2003. ISBN# 978-0670032501.

***Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.*** Covey, S.R. New York: Free Press, 2004. ISBN# 978-0743269513.

***Smart Choices: A Practical Guide to Making Better Decisions.*** Hammond, J., Keeney, R., & Raiffa, H. New York: Broadway, 2002. ISBN# 978-0767908863.

## ***Management Skills***

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***Taming the Paper Tiger at Work.*** Hemphill, B. Washington, DC: Kiplinger Books, 2005. ISBN# 978-0938721987.

***The Thinker's Toolkit: 14 Powerful Techniques for Problem Solving. Revised Edition.*** Jones, M.D. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998. ISBN# 978-0812928082.

***Thinking for a Change: 11 Ways Highly Successful People Approach Life and Work.*** Maxwell, J.C. Nashville, TN: Center Street. 2005. ISBN# 978-0446692885.

***The Time Trap: The Classic Book on Time Management.*** MacKenzie, A. & Nickerson, P. New York: AMACOM, 2009. ISBN# 978-0814413388.

***Results-Based Leadership.*** Ulrich, D., Zenger, J., & Smallwood, N. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999. ISBN# 978-0875848716.