

Position Classification Standard for Telephone Operating Series, GS-0382

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes one grade interval work that involves operating or supervising the operation of telephone switchboard equipment to connect incoming and outgoing calls. The work involves routing the calls to their proper destinations and providing telephone and organizational information to callers.

This standard supersedes the standard for this series issued in April 1965 (TS-56).

EXCLUSIONS

1. Classify positions that involve operating a switchboard as an incidental duty to other work of a clerical nature in the appropriate series for the clerical work.
2. Classify positions in the [Fire Protection and Prevention Series, GS-0081](#), when they require knowledge of firefighting and, in addition, involve operating telephone equipment primarily for transmitting fire and emergency alarms.
3. Classify positions in the [Police Series, GS-0083](#), when they require knowledge of police work to explain regulations, rights, and procedures; involve answering calls about emergencies, complaints, and requests for assistance; and involve transmitting pertinent information to police officers.
4. Classify positions in the [Information Receptionist Series, GS-0304](#), when they involve providing information to telephone callers and visitors but do not require operating switchboard equipment.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Telephone operating work in Federal agencies requires knowledge of telephone regulations and procedures and skill in operating telephone equipment and lines to route incoming and outgoing calls. It requires the use of telephone courtesy and tact in dealing with a diversity of callers, sometimes under very difficult and stressful circumstances. The work also requires speed and accuracy, and in some locations it requires observing strict security measures.

Telephone operators typically perform combinations of some or all of the following tasks:

- operating a console telephone switchboard;
- placing and receiving local calls;

- placing and receiving regular and special long distance calls over commercial circuits, tielines, or other systems and networks, such as a wide area commercial system, a military system, a civilian Federal system, or a Federal overseas exchange;
- providing organizational information to callers using computerized or printed directories;
- keeping records of calls for computing charges;
- providing primary routing or alternative routing service for high priority calls;
- handling calls of varying priority and preempting circuits if necessary;
- keeping statistics on system use to inform managers of trends concerning capacity and utilization; and
- operating associated equipment, such as radios, alarms, paging systems, and secure voice equipment.

TITLES

Telephone Operator is the title for nonsupervisory positions.

Lead Telephone Operator is the title for positions that meet the criteria in the [General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide](#).

Supervisory Telephone Operator is the title for positions that meet the criteria in the appropriate [supervisory evaluation guide](#).

GRADING POSITIONS

Evaluate full performance positions using the criteria in this standard. Establish trainee and developmental positions using the grade level criteria in the FES [Primary Standard](#) and in related standards. See the instructions for the Factor Evaluation System in [The Classifier's Handbook](#) for more information on evaluating trainee positions.

Evaluate positions on a factor-by-factor basis using the factor level descriptions provided. Factor levels not described may be used if warranted. The full range of factor levels is found in the FES Primary Standard. More complete instructions for evaluating FES positions are in [The Classifier's Handbook](#).

Evaluate supervisory positions using criteria in the appropriate supervisory evaluation guide. Evaluate lead positions using criteria in the [General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide](#).

GRADE CONVERSION TABLE

Grade Range

Grade	Points
3	455-650
4	655-850

FACTOR LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

FACTOR 1, KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

Level 1-2 -- 200 Points

The work requires--

- knowledge of telephone courtesy techniques;
- knowledge of telephone procedures to operate a telephone switchboard, answer recurring kinds of telephone calls, use printed or computerized directories, and connect local calls and regular or special long-distance calls to their proper destinations;
- knowledge of the organization served to connect incoming calls to the appropriate office or individual;
- skill in dealing politely with people who are emotional or discourteous;
- skill in using standard procedures to place outgoing calls through various circuits and networks, such as military networks, other Federal networks, wide area systems, and other commercial circuits;
- skill in placing conference and collect calls; and
- thorough knowledge of the telephone system to inform customers of how best to use the system, for example, how to make particular types of calls.

Illustration:

The employees operate a telephone switchboard on a military base. When working with other operators who may answer questions or take calls by referral, telephone operators answer and place the full range of calls, including some complex calls requiring a high degree of operator

involvement. They place local and long-distance calls using Government or commercial lines as appropriate, and make sure that callers are authorized to make outgoing long-distance calls. They answer police, fire, or other emergency calls; monitor alarm systems; and notify the proper military and civilian authorities. The operators keep track of the whereabouts of key personnel, route high priority calls to them, and locate other personnel for emergency calls. They may serve as sole operator on nights, weekends, or holidays when complex calls are unusual.

Level 1-3 -- 350 Points

The work requires--

- thorough knowledge of large, frequently changing organizations with complex subdivisions to direct incoming calls;
- skill in dealing calmly and courteously with people who are extremely upset or irate;
- skill in questioning callers, who often can provide only sketchy information, in order to direct them to the proper organizational component;
- knowledge of alternative routing options and procedures to make efficient outgoing connections and to connect high priority or emergency calls when ordinary methods fail; and
- knowledge of the capabilities of the telephone system and skill in the procedures necessary to connect a number of parties on one or both ends of complicated conference calls, and to arrange two-party or conference calls by appointment.

Illustration:

The employees operate a telephone switchboard for a large hospital. When working with others, they specialize in answering and placing the more complex calls. They may work as the sole operator, at night, on weekends, and during holidays when complex or emergency calls are common. They take calls by referral from less experienced employees when extensive questioning of the caller is necessary to make the proper connection, a sensitive explanation to the caller is required, or the caller is extremely upset or angry. Telephone operators place calls to other hospitals, laboratories, or universities when alternative routing, preempting circuits, or constant attention to the connection is needed. They also place or assist others in placing conference and overseas calls.

FACTOR 2, SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

Level 2-2--125 Points

The supervisor provides general instructions concerning established practices and policies, and oral or written instructions concerning special circumstances and changing priorities. The supervisor provides more specific instructions on new procedures, usually in training sessions, and as necessary on unusual assignments.

Employees work independently, carrying out recurring duties without specific instructions, especially when serving as sole operator without a supervisor readily available. Employees consult the supervisor when normal approaches and procedures do not solve problems. The supervisor reviews the work by occasional monitoring for quality and by spot-checking logs for adherence to established procedures.

FACTOR 3, GUIDELINES

Level 3-1--25 Points

Employees use detailed technical manuals that show how to operate the telephone system, agency and local instructions and procedures, and directories. Instructions and procedures typically show how to handle recurring problems step by step. Directories contain detailed organizational and employee listings and provide a ready reference for directing calls. Such directories cover relatively small organizations having clearly delineated components that change infrequently.

Employees follow the guidelines closely and refer situations requiring deviation from the guidelines to the supervisor for assistance and approval.

Level 3-2--125 Points

Employees use established procedures, a variety of manuals concerning operating the telephone system, and directories that cover individual organizational components and/or names.

Employees must choose the appropriate manual or directory and may make minor adaptations in established procedures. Employees recognize and refer to the supervisor unprecedented problems not covered by the guidelines, such as inability to access through normal procedures telephone trunks needed for high priority calls.

FACTOR 4, COMPLEXITY

Level 4-1--25 Points

Employees operate a telephone system to connect local and routine long-distance calls.

Employees follow standard procedures when answering and connecting routine calls.

Decisions are based on clear instructions, directories, and manuals.

Level 4-2--75 Points

Employees operate a telephone system to direct local and routine or complicated long-distance calls of various precedence and security levels using related sets of procedures. Employees may also monitor alarm systems and use radios to transmit information in emergency situations.

Employees frequently must interview callers to determine where to route the calls. Decisions depend on such things as the destinations and priority levels of calls, security levels, and system capabilities.

FACTOR 5, SCOPE AND EFFECT

Level 5-1--25 Points

The purpose of the work is to connect routine telephone calls.

The work consists of helping the staff of the organization in day-to-day telephone communication.

Level 5-2--75 Points

The purpose of the work is to operate a telephone system to connect the more complicated calls in accordance with established procedures.

The work affects the accurate and reliable transmission of national defense, medical, or other important messages.

FACTOR 6, PERSONAL CONTACTS AND FACTOR 7, PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

Match the level of regular and recurring personal contacts with the purpose of the contacts and credit the appropriate point value using the chart below.

Persons Contacted

1. Contacts are with employees in the unit and with callers in routine situations. Some of the callers may be emotional or impolite. The operators may refer complicated calls to more experienced telephone operators.
2. Contacts are with users of the telephone system, with Government and commercial operators in other locations, and sometimes with contractors for repairs. Some of the contacts occur regularly and others only as problems occur, such as failure of calls to go through the system. Some of the callers may be distraught or abusive.

Purpose of Contacts

- a. The purpose of the contacts is to exchange information necessary to connect callers with the appropriate organizations or individuals.
- b. The purpose of the contacts is to work with others in solving problems, such as with telephone operators in other locations to make difficult connections or with repair technicians to locate telephone equipment and line problems.

C O N T A C T S	P U R P O S E	
	a	b
1	30	60
2	45	75

FACTOR 8, PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Level 8-1--5 Points

The work is usually sedentary but may involve some standing and walking to consult directories and manuals.

FACTOR 9, WORK ENVIRONMENT

Level 9-1--5 Points

The work is normally performed in a well-lighted, temperature-controlled room. Normal safety precautions are required.