

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities: Everything you need to know

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Most people tend to use the knowledge, [skills](#), and abilities terms interchangeably. **CONFESSION**, I also had such a tendency when it came to KSAs. However, these terms are different even though their difference is elusive. Bundled together, the KSAs give a holistic picture of a candidate's attributes. For example, when relating to a new open job listing, they help determine whether the candidate fits the new role or not.

As organisations further develop and update their replacement and succession plans, KSAs are used. It will be vital to [grasp the differences](#) when we discuss the [skills gap](#) because the methods through which we acquire knowledge, skills, and talents can differ.

Related: [Skills gap and what to do about it](#)

Globalization, new kinds of work organization, and improvements in automation and [artificial intelligence](#) (AI) all have significant ramifications for the workplace. [Knowledge](#), [Skills](#), and Abilities development is everyone's business: governments, businesses, and employees all have a stake in it. In this new competitive era, it is prudent to [ensure both the employees and employers](#) are aware of the rapid changes in the KSAs needed to ensure jobs are performed effectively. But what exactly are KSAs?

KSA definition

A KSA is a [statement of qualifications](#) that summarises their knowledge, skills, and abilities for a new role's job description. It is a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities. The KSA model was [adopted by the government as a hiring tool](#). However, it is gradually being phased out by the personnel department. It assists organizations in quickly identifying the most qualified individuals for each position based on how many of the required KSAs on the job description they possess.

KSA

Knowledge

Skills

Abilities

Related: [KSAOS: Step by step guide to understanding KSAOs](#)

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities are a set of specific [qualifications](#) and [personal characteristics](#) that are required for a specific job. These are the specific requirements that the employing agency is looking for in the person chosen to fill a specific position. One of the main goals of KSAs is to [identify the characteristics](#) that will set one candidate apart from the rest. KSAs are described as the qualities that identify the best candidates from a group of people who are all qualified for a job. If an applicant can demonstrate that they meet the job's established KSAs, that individual will be seriously evaluated for the post.

A background check will be done to verify whether a candidate meets the job requirements or not. The [background check process](#) is a series of steps done together with the reference checks. Employers' primary means of obtaining information about potential hires from sources other than the candidates themselves are background checks and reference checks. A [successful background check process](#) helps the employer establish if an applicant is unqualified for a position due to a criminal background, motor vehicle offences, poor credit history, or educational or employment history deception. Employers usually conduct a comprehensive background check process before considering the candidate depending on the nature of the job.

Related: [Everything you need to know about background checks](#)

Other terms used by employers are Professional Technical Qualification and Quality Ranking Factors. All of these refer to the specialized experience required by the employer. Other government agencies still employ a written essay or narrative assessment as part of the [hiring process](#). Some businesses require a full-form KSA to find the top candidates for open roles. The KSA is frequently used to supplement a [job application](#) and requires candidates to write one-page essays in response to work-specific questions. Each response is rated on a scale of one to one hundred for how well it fulfils the [job requirements](#). This gives the employers a clear picture of which candidates possess the specialized experience they require for the new role.

KSA Example

You can think of knowledge, skills, and abilities as [increasing in difficulty](#). The challenge increases from being aware of something or comprehending a concept to using that information as a skill to combining skills into a capacity to perform tasks, activities, or work. This can be tough, especially in these challenging times. For example, when you think about driving a car;

- You need to be fully aware and **know** the road rules and what each control in the car does.
- You need first to practice your driving **skills** in a controlled environment
- Lastly, you need to be certified by getting your license to demonstrate your **abilities**– thus combining the knowledge and skills to drive safely in an uncontrolled environment

Thus, it is important to demonstrate the specialized experience as mentioned in the car driving example outlined above whenever interview questions are asked.

Below is an infographic showing example of knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

KSA EXAMPLE

This is a very simple example to demonstrate clearly the difference between knowledge, skills and abilities.

1

Knowledge

You need to be fully aware and **know** the road rules as well as what each control in the car does.



2

Skills

You need to first practice your driving skills in a controlled environment.



3

Abilities

Lastly, you need to be certified by getting your license to demonstrate your abilities – thus combining the knowledge and skills to drive safely in an uncontrolled environment



KSAs are a group of individual attributes and qualifications that one needs to perform their job duties effectively.



Most people tend to use the knowledge, skills and abilities terms interchangeable. However, these terms are different even though their difference is elusive. Bundled together, the KSAs gives a holistic picture of an individuals attributes.

Source
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Another KSA example includes operating personal computers. However, it is important to specify the type of personal computers you can operate. Alternatively, you can specify the type of software programs you can operate. Other KSA examples include perceptual skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills, communication skills etc.

What is Knowledge?

The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject is referred to as [knowledge](#). It focuses on conceptual comprehension. The term "knowledge" refers to a collection of information that is usually factual or procedural. A person may have a [basic comprehension of a topic or tool](#) and some textbook knowledge but no practical experience. For example, just because someone has read hundreds of papers on health and nutrition does not mean they are equipped to give nutritional advice.



There are several knowledge levels which can be evaluated through qualifications e.g. certificates etc. According to [Bloom's Taxonomy](#), there are six knowledge levels which are:

1. Create
2. Evaluate
3. Analyse

4. Apply
5. Understand
6. Remember

Having the ability to master the knowledge levels required for a job role is critical for the candidates. Additional knowledge or understanding can be gained by applying what one already knows and [learning from that experience](#). But, it is important to note that knowing something does not mean the individual can implement it effectively and efficiently. Some typical examples of knowledge include:

- Steps in a process
- Workplace safety rules
- In the event of an emergency, what should you do?
- Engineering practices
- Document preparation practices

What are Skills?



The capacities or proficiencies acquired through training or hands-on experience are referred to as [skills](#). They relate to the skilled manipulation of data or objects using manual, verbal, or mental means. Skills are the actual [application of knowledge](#). They are easily quantified by a [performance](#) test, which assesses both quantity and quality of performance, usually within a certain time limit.

Skill in typing or driving a car are two examples of skilled manipulation of things. Competence in decimal computation, skill in editing for transposed numbers, and so on are examples of proficient [data manipulation](#). Skills can be further developed through training or with hands-on experience. They can either be hard skills or [soft skills](#).

Soft Skills

Personality traits and activities are referred to as [soft skills](#). Unlike hard skills, soft skills are concerned with one's attitudes in diverse contexts rather than one's knowledge. They are any skill or trait that can be identified as a personality trait or habit. Interpersonal and communication skills are two more basic sorts of soft skills that many businesses look for in job seekers. Typical examples of soft skills are:

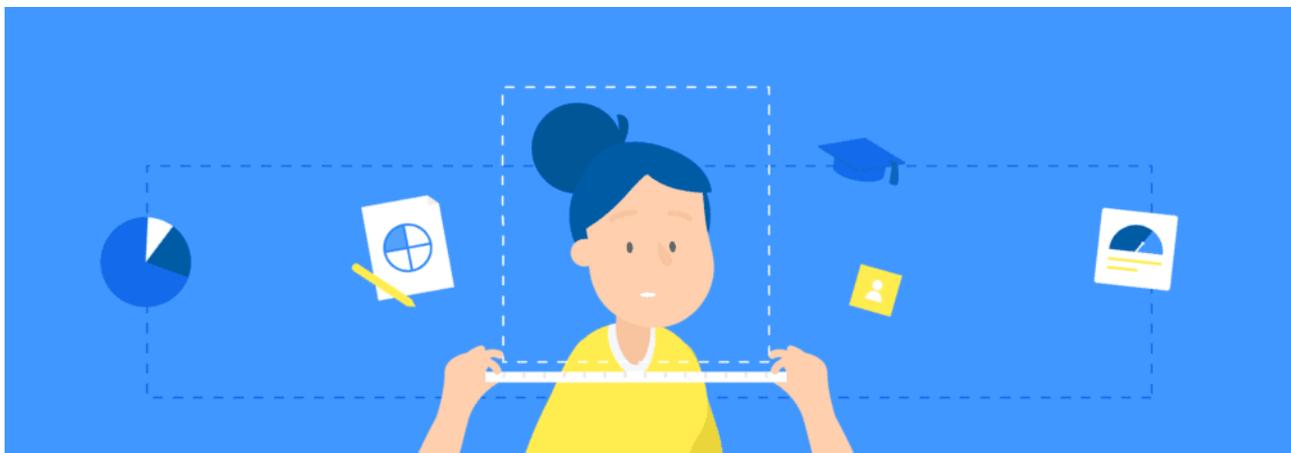
- Public speaking
- [Leadership](#)
- Problem-solving skills
- Adaptability

Hard Skills

Hard skills are easily quantifiable skill sets that can be taught. These are also known as technical skills. They are typically [learned in the classroom, via books or other training materials](#), or on the job. These hard skills are frequently stated in your cover letter and CV, and they are easy to spot for an employer or recruiter. Hard skills allow you to handle job-specific tasks and duties outlined in a job description. Courses, vocational training, and on-the-job training are all options for learning technical skills. These skills are [frequently centered on specific tasks](#) and procedures, such as tool, equipment, or software use. The following are examples of technical skills:

- Typing
- Operating machinery
- Programming software programs
- Carpentry

What are abilities?



The ability to accomplish an activity or task is defined as the power or capacity to do so. Although they

are frequently confused with skills, there is a minor but significant difference. The [intrinsic features](#) or talents that a person brings to work or situation are referred to as abilities. Many people can learn to negotiate well by gaining knowledge and exercising the necessary skills. Because they have the innate traits to persuade, a select few are excellent negotiators.

Abilities are natural characteristics that a person possesses without being taught, and they include things like talent and [emotional intelligence](#). When compared to knowledge skills, they are more difficult to teach, test, and even measure. Typical examples of abilities include:

- Quick thinking
- [Empathy](#)
- [Planning and organization](#)
- Analyse issues
- [Communicate](#) verbally and in writing

What is the difference between skills and abilities?

As discussed in the first paragraphs, many people tend to use skills and abilities interchangeably even though there is a difference between them. Below is a table showing the comparison between skills and abilities:

Area	Skill	Ability
Definition	Efficient and effective use of a person's knowledge and abilities in performance.	A person's innate characteristics or talents.
Description	The ability to do something very well.	General ability to do something.
Etymology	Scele is a late Old English word that comes from the Old Norse word skill, which means "discernment, knowledge."	Late Middle English: from Old French ablete, which comes from Latin habilitas, which comes from habilis 'ability.'
Measurability	Can be measured and quantified.	Very difficult to measure or quantify.
Source	Developed through experience and training.	Developed without formal training or instructions .
Applicability	Can be taught and tested.	Difficult to teach or test.
Type	The behaviour is learned or acquired.	The behaviour is natural or innate.
Stability	Less stable.	More stable.
Examples	The ability to solve a math problem.	Develop a theory of physics on your own.
	To be great at singing, running, dancing, and drawing.	Having the ability to sketch, sing, dance, and run.

To be able to [operate a vehicle](#).

To be able to process information fast and react to other drivers.

To be able to cut hair.

To be able to [keep the hand steady](#).

Advantages and disadvantages of KSAs

Advantages of KSAs

For the following reasons, a KSA is still necessary for applicants:

- Some of the [talents and qualifications](#) that may not be adequately highlighted on the resume might be solidified using the narrative or essay format.
- A KSA that closely resembles the job requirements might help you stand out from the crowd and increase your chances of being chosen for an interview.
- **Clarity:** [By considering the job requirements](#), one can evaluate which are the most significant and which to highlight in job interviews, cover letters, and resumes. To explain the talents needed for the job, KSAs can be divided into desirable and essential skills.
- **Insight:** They are detailed and give one a good idea of the candidate's entire skillset. Whereas some businesses focus solely on candidates' credentials and job experience, the KSA model takes a broader approach.
- **Results:** This approach is primarily concerned with outcomes and how a candidate's past experiences have led to their current position.

Disadvantages of KSAs

For a variety of reasons, the KSA model has been criticised as an evaluation metric, including:

- It is a long document with some redundancy.
- It adds to the [application process's aggravation](#) and complexity, which should be streamlined.
- The names are frequently used interchangeably, making it difficult to distinguish between them.

Conclusion

Training activities that combine theoretical learning and hands-on application of essential concepts and technologies are the most effective way to build knowledge, skills, and abilities. A person who wishes to be a [project manager](#), for example, must comprehend not only the role's core principles, such as scope, work breakdown structure, and critical path but also get experience applying such concepts to real projects.

It is never a good idea to let things get stagnant or static, which is why businesses must give continual training for their employees and opt for [life-long learning](#) for the employees. People can benefit from training to extend their knowledge, learn new skills, or improve their current ones. Keep in mind that an employer may more easily influence and increase an employee's [skills and knowledge](#), but one cannot build skills without ability.

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