

Position Classification Flysheet for Illustrating Series, GS-1020

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions which supervise or perform work involved in laying out or executing illustrations in black and white or in color, and with retouching photographs. The work requires artistic ability, the skill to draw freehand or with drawing instruments, and the ability to use art media such as pen-and-ink, pencils, tempera, acrylics, oils, wash, watercolor, pastels, air brush, or computer-generated graphics. It also requires knowledge of the subject matter being depicted sufficient to create accurate visual representations. Knowledge of basic art principles such as color, line, form, and space is required to produce appropriately composed illustrations.

This series coverage standard supersedes the position classification standard for this series, issued in September 1979.

EXCLUSIONS

1. Classify in the [Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-0326](#), positions that involve the use of computer graphics software packages to produce illustrations, charts, or graphs, or to lay out printed material, where established formats and ready-made images in the software offer little opportunity for the exercise of artistic judgment or skill beyond deciding the proportions and placement of ready-made visual elements on the page, poster, or transparency. Work of this kind is often performed in conjunction with typing and word processing duties.
2. Classify in the [Visual Information Series, GS-1084](#), positions that are primarily concerned with using visual materials such as photographs, illustrations, charts, diagrams, typography, and exhibits as tools for communicating information. Such positions focus on planning the effective use of visual material to achieve public information objectives as opposed to laying out and executing illustrations.
3. Classify in the [Engineering Drafting Series, GS-0818](#), positions where the primary and preponderant duty is engineering or architectural drafting which does not require the rendering of life-like or realistic illustrations using artistic illusion, but does require some knowledge of architecture or engineering.
4. Classify in the [Office Drafting Series, GS-1021](#), positions that involve drafting work for charts, diagrams, floor plans, office forms, and other graphic presentations of statistical, administrative, or related data, which does not require artistic knowledge, skills, and abilities.
5. Classify in either the [Cartography Series, GS-1370](#), or the [Cartographic Technician Series, GS-1371](#), positions that involve professional or technical work in mapping the earth's surface or in representing geographic or navigational information.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Illustrators in the Federal Government create visual products covering a broad range of subject matter areas. They execute illustrations to make a written text attractive and interesting, to enhance or symbolize an idea that has been described in words, to produce an emotional effect, or to present information that cannot be expressed adequately in words alone. Illustrators also use the air brush, oils, or other media to touch up photographs to bring out certain features of an object.

Illustrations for the covers of reports and brochures may be executed in a variety of artistic styles ranging from completely abstract to photo-like realism. Regardless of their style, these illustrations serve mainly to attract the attention of potential readers and induce them to read the material. Textual illustrations may be designed to do little more than attract the eye; more often they epitomize and reinforce the ideas expressed in the text and aid in communicating a message to the reader.

Medical, scientific, and technical equipment illustrations showing pathological, diagnostic, morphological, or operating characteristics are used to present information to the reader that words alone cannot convey. In many cases, the words and illustrations are interwoven to such an extent that neither can stand alone. Most illustrations are used in publications, but they also appear in exhibits, filmstrips, charts, and other means of communication.

Artistic Ability

Illustrators generally bring to the job knowledge of art methods, techniques, and materials; skill in drawing and painting freehand and with instruments; and ability to visualize designs. They combine these with sufficient subject matter knowledge to produce accurate and aesthetically composed illustrations.

Illustrating work varies widely in the degree of artistic ability required. Renderings based on the illustrator's interpretation of a subject generally require greater skill than illustrations that depict things exactly as observed or specified. Some illustrating assignments require only the ability to copy a drawing exactly as it has been done before. Others may require the ability to retouch a photograph to create the illusion of photographic exactitude and at the same time bring out features of the subject to a degree not possible by photography. Illustrations that depict scenes and situations typical of everyday life must be presented in a style that is acceptable to the intended audience. Illustrations designed to show the scientific details of a botanical specimen or the pathological conditions of an animal organism require the ability to select an aspect of the subject that will emphasize the characteristics to be depicted. Illustrations showing the details and working parts of a piece of technical equipment require the ability to place the object in a perspective and position that will make the desired details recognizable.

There is not always a clear-cut distinction between illustration and drafting. The two kinds of work converge in the depiction of technical items or the display of statistical data in the form of charts or graphs. At times, the purpose of the visual product is identical, and incumbents of

either type of position may possess the same ability to visualize images and the same skill to produce a two-dimensional image of an object observed. Typically, however, illustrators are required to have skill in, and use, a variety of art media beyond pencil, pen-and-ink, or computer-generated simulations of them. Furthermore, illustrators are generally required to depict items or subjects in a manner that creates the illusion of reality by subtle use of tone, shading, and perspective. Drafters follow strict conventions on views and use standardized symbols such as series of lines and dots of varying intensity to indicate depth, the texture of objects, or the nature of materials they are depicting.

Uses of Art Media

The most common art media are pencil, pen-and-ink, tempera, oils, acrylics, wash, and air brush. Growing in use are a variety of computer graphics systems that generate images which simulate traditional art media and techniques (e.g., pen-and-ink drawings or air brushed backgrounds). Other, less common, art media are also used when appropriate (e.g., carbon dust for detailed, photographic-like images in scientific and medical illustration). While work in each medium has its unique techniques and skill demands, no one medium is considered more difficult than any of the others for grade evaluation purposes. Full performance illustrators are normally expected to be proficient in a variety of media.

The use of a specific medium for an illustration is determined by (1) the purpose of the illustration (whether it is to be primarily decorative, serve as a learning aid, create a mood, or furnish detailed information); (2) the visual effect desired (whether it is to be in color or black-and-white, large or small, or show fine details or broad outlines only); and (3) the reproduction process to be used (e.g., its cost, the degree of detail it will permit, the quality of color reproduction permitted, size, and other similar factors.) Choice of the medium also involves visual information or communications considerations. Illustrators at higher grade levels typically participate in the initial design of visual products by contributing their knowledge of the advantages and limitations of particular art media, both with respect to the desired information objectives and the reproduction processes available.

Subject Matter Knowledge

Illustrators may move from one subject matter field to another in the course of their assignments and must be able to acquire and understand information new to them. Illustrators typically must acquire enough information about the subject to be illustrated to present it accurately as well as aesthetically.

Some illustrator positions, however, require a body of knowledge from a broad subject matter field to execute illustrations depicting technical aspects of that field. For example:

- Illustrators working in a scientific field must be able to recognize the basic characteristics of specimens, read formulas, and understand specialized nomenclature.

- Illustrators working in the medical field must be familiar with human anatomy, including the structure and coloration of the body. They must understand medical terminology in order to follow instructions given to them by surgeons during surgical procedures.
- Illustrators who depict technical equipment in the engineering fields must be familiar with the appearance of different kinds of equipment and their components, and understand how the equipment is operated and maintained.

TITLES

Title nonsupervisory positions covered by this series as Illustrator. Agencies may add parenthetical titles of their choosing where further distinctions in the work are necessary for personnel management. (See the [Introduction to the Position Classification Standards](#) for more complete guidance on parenthetical titles.)

Use the title Supervisory Illustrator for positions that meet the definition of supervisor in the appropriate [supervisory grade evaluation guide](#).

GRADING OF POSITIONS

Evaluate nonsupervisory positions by reference to the [Grade-Evaluation Guide for Visual Arts Work](#).

Evaluate supervisory positions by reference to the appropriate [supervisory grade evaluation guide](#).