Why are there civil service jobs?

✓ The NYS Constitution states that public employees must be hired for jobs on the basis of *merit* and *fitness*. The constitution also says that, for most jobs, merit and fitness must be measured by examination.

✓ To make the hiring process for government jobs more objective and less susceptible to abuse.

✓ The civil service system is designed to hire and promote the best possible people, not necessarily the best connected.

✓ It uses a formal rating scale that is as fair and objective as possible. Each candidate answers the same questions or does the same task. All candidates receive a score based on the same factors.

A Civil Service Exam Announcement will tell you:

✓ Job Title
✓ Salary
✓ Date of the test
✓ Date by which exam applications must be postmarked
✓ Whether the exam is open competitive or promotional
✓ Minimum qualifications
✓ Description of where the jobs exist
✓ Duties

✓ Subjects of examination (whether it is written, oral, performance, etc and what subjects will be covered)
✓ How to apply
✓ Residency requirements (if any)
✓ Admission and accommodations information
✓ The processing or application fee (if any)

Types of Exams

✓ **Open Competitive** Most exams fall into this category. Anyone who meets the minimum requirements can take the exam.
✓ **Promotional** You must be already employed by the specific agency to take the exam.
✓ **Provisional** The agency fills the job and gives the exam at a later date. The person who was hired has to take the exam and score high enough to keep the job.

The Civil Service Process

✓ Complete an application on-line or download and print an application and mail it in. The exams have strict application deadlines.

✓ If you meet the minimum qualifications for the position, you will be eligible to take the exam. The agency will mail you an admission slip explaining what to bring to the testing site (pencil, calculator).

✓ If you do not meet the qualifications, the agency may ask for additional information. If you cannot provide this information, your application fee will not be refunded and you cannot take the exam.

✓ Most of the exams are held at a large facility, such as a high school.

✓ After taking the test, you will receive your results within a few months. You will get your score and your overall ranking. An eligibility list is established.

✓ The eligibility list ranks those test takers who scored at least a 70, which is the minimum score required to pass the exam. A list may be renewed for up to three or four years.

✓ Agencies will use the list to canvass candidates by mail to see if they are interested in a particular opening. Civil service law requires that agencies fill the position from among the three highest ranking persons who are willing to accept the position ("rule of three").

✓ When a person is appointed to a position from a list, their name is removed and remaining job seekers move up in the order. Candidates will remain on the list until the list expires or they are appointed to a position.

How to prepare for a civil service exam

✓ On the state website, go to "Stay Informed". You will find Test Guides and Resource Books. There are guides for some of the specific tests and a general guide to written tests.

✓ Visit your local library for books and magazines.

✓ Search the internet for information on the particular subject area.

✓ Some private companies publish exam study guides on particular jobs, available in libraries and bookstores.

✓ Talk with people who are familiar with the job and/or people who have experience taking exams.

✓ Make sure you read the exam announcement carefully; it will give you an overview of that particular exam and what you will be tested on

✓ Look at the websites for the particular agency to check for civil service reference guides, which can include FAQ.

✓ Study and review the subject areas to be covered on the test (Look for information on subject areas or subtests, eg. Arithmetic Reasoning, Educating and Interacting with the Public, Office Record Keeping, Understanding and Interpreting Written Material)

Most exams have 60-90 multiple-choice questions. Some exams have typing and memory tests. Some exams may require physical agility and psychological tests (corrections, police, or firefighter).

Test taking strategies

✓ Read all directions, instructions, and test materials carefully

✓ Answer all questions designated for your examinations(s)

✓ You are responsible for determining which questions you are to answer, for making sure you have the correct Test Booklet(s), and for completing all test material required for your examination(s).

✓ Mark your answers accurately on the separate, scannable answer sheet

✓ Budget your rime wisely

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To understand how New York State jobs are filled, it is important to understand New York State (NYS) Government and how it is organized. New York State has three branches of Government: the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branch. Each branch hires separately.

State Agencies fall under the Executive Branch (*the Governor*) and have approximately 3,500 different job titles; Civil Service exams are required for about 85% of these titles. Most exams are announced to fill one specific job title, although there may be dozens or hundreds of positions in that title.

The Department of Civil Service exam announcements include information such as: title; salary; job duties; minimum qualifications; subject, date and type of the examination; and information on how to apply. Applicants can determine which exams to apply for based upon this information. Depending on the type of position and recruitment needs of the agency, examinations may be offered as follows:

Open to State Employees only - These are promotion examinations for current permanent Executive Branch employees serving in qualifying titles or salary grades. Members of the NYS Legislature, the Unified Court System and the general public are not eligible to take these exams. These examinations are held when new lists of eligible candidates are needed, usually on a four year cycle.

Open to All Qualified Individuals - anyone, including members of the general public and NYS employees, may apply to take these examinations if the applicant meets the announced minimum qualifications. These exams are announced when a list is needed, typically every 3 to 4 years.

Continuous Recruitment - These examinations are used to fill job titles for which NYS has an on-going recruitment need. Exam applications are accepted year-round and specific tests are held as needed. Entry-level titles such as Food Service Worker 1, Nurse 1 & 2, and Information Technology Specialist 1 & 2 are examples of positions for which NYS government has a continuing need to hire. Some continuous recruitment exams are open to anyone who meets the minimum qualifications while some are open to State employees only.

For most exams, there is a non-refundable application processing fee. The examination announcements will indicate if a fee is required. Fees may be waived for those who are unemployed and are primarily responsible for the support of a household, those receiving public assistance under certain programs, or for current State employees covered by a union agreement to reimburse or pay the exam fee.

Written test results usually take approximately 120 days to report and the list of successful candidates may be used for 4 years or until a new exam for the title is given, whichever comes first. We cannot notify candidates when a list expires; it is each person's responsibility to stay informed about the scheduling of upcoming examinations. Candidates may do this by signing up for our automatic e-mail notification when new exams are issued at: www.cs.ny.gov/announ/emaillist.cfm

New York State also features programs to hire individuals with disabilities, without taking the initial written examination. These programs are authorized by **Sections 55-b (Non-Veterans)** and **55-c (Wartime Veterans)** of the Civil Service Law. For further information, you may visit our website at www.cs.ny.gov/dpm/workersdisabilities.cfm, call (518) 233-3118 or toll free 1-866-297-4356, or e-mail questions to: dpmquestions@cs.ny.gov.

WHERE TO GET CIVIL SERVICE EXAM ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR STATE JOBS

- **Internet:**

www.cs.ny.gov - At this website, the NYS Department of Civil Service provides information on upcoming state and some local government exams. Here you'll find an explanation of how the testing process works and answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" and you can sign up for free email examination notification. You may print exam announcements and applications directly from our website. If needed, you may also request mailed notices by calling: 518-457-2487 or toll free at 1-877-NYS-JOBS (1-877-697-5627).

- **NYS Department of Labor Local Office**

Exam announcements and application forms are available at your local New York State Department of Labor Career Services Locations or One-stop Centers. Locations may be found at **www.labor.ny.gov**

WHERE TO GET CURRENT ELIGIBLE LIST INFORMATION
www.cs.ny.gov/elmspublic - New York State Department of Civil Service online eligible list webpage (ELMS ONLINE) has information on current eligible lists. Current eligible lists can be searched by list name, list number, or job title. Eligible list candidates can access their scores as well as update their list preference information.

WHERE TO GET INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT OR INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
www.statejobsny.com - Governor's Office of Employee Relations website on which NYS agencies voluntarily post vacancies.

nysinternships.com/nnyl/ - *New* New York Leaders: Student Intern Program - This website functions as the primary location where agency internship opportunities are posted and students submit applications, upload resumes and identify preferred internships.

OTHER VALUABLE NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC SECTOR WEBSITES
Executive Branch
www.ny.gov - New York State. This general site links to each NYS agency website. Also look for "Employment Opportunities" with State Authorities, SUNY, and Health Research Inc. (located on the NYS Department of Health's site), for additional opportunities which do not require competitive examinations.

Judicial Branch of NYS Government
www.nycourts.gov/careers - NYS Unified Court System. This site offers employment information with the NYS Courts system statewide. Some jobs require competitive exams; others do not. Examination announcements for their jobs are advertised only on this website.

Legislative Branch of NYS Government
www.nysenate.gov - NYS Senate
www.assembly.ny.gov - NYS Assembly
No exams are required for jobs with the Legislature. The Legislative Personnel offices are located in Albany:
Assembly - Empire State Plaza in Room 104
Senate - Legislative Office Building in Room 219

State University System
www.suny.edu
Faculty, professional, and Research Foundation jobs on the various SUNY campuses are exempt from the Civil Service exam process. Civil Service jobs are listed under "Classified Service". Check each campus's website directly for vacancy information and requirements.

What should I include in my federal resume?

Whether you're a current federal employee or new to the Federal Government, your resume is the primary way for you to communicate your education, skills and experience.

Before you get started

Read the entire job announcement. Focus on the following sections to understand whether or not you qualify for the position. This critical information is found under:

- **Duties** and **Qualifications**
- **How to Apply** (including a preview of the assessment questionnaire)
- **How You Will be Evaluated**

Make sure you have the required experience and/or education before you apply. Hiring agencies use the job announcement to describe the job and the required qualifications, including:

- Level and amount of experience
- Education
- Training

What to include in your resume

Federal jobs often require that you have experience in a particular type of work for a certain period of time. You must show how your skills and experiences **meet the qualifications and requirements listed in the job announcement** to be considered for the job.

Include dates, hours, level of experience and examples for each work experience

For each work experience you list, make sure you include:

- Start and end dates (including the month and year).
- The number of hours you worked per week.
- The level and amount of experience–for instance, whether you served as a project manager or a team member helps to illustrate your level of experience.
- Examples of relevant experiences and accomplishments that prove you can perform the tasks at the level required for the job as stated in the job announcement. Your experience needs to address every required qualification.

Example

Program Analyst GS-343-11
January 2009 - Present
40 Hours/Week
$63,000/Year

- Experience/Accomplishment
- Experience/Accomplishment

Include volunteer work and roles in community organizations

Don't limit yourself to only including paid work experience. Include relevant volunteer work or community organizations roles that demonstrate your ability to do the job.

Use numbers to highlight your accomplishments

Use numbers, percentages or dollars to highlight your accomplishments–you can find this information in things like your performance reviews, previous job descriptions, awards and letters of recommendation.

When explaining your accomplishments:

- Include examples of how you saved money, earned money, or managed money.
- Include examples of how you saved or managed time.

Examples

- "Improved efficiency of document processing by 25% over the previous year".
- "Wrote 25 news releases in a three-week period under daily deadlines".
- "Managed a student organization budget of more than $7,000".
- "Wrote prospect letter that has brought in more than $25,000 in donations to date".

These statements show in concrete terms what you accomplished.

More resume writing tips

Customize your resume

You should tailor your resume to the job announcement rather than sending out the same resume for every job. Customizing your resume helps you match your competencies, knowledge, skills, abilities and experience to the requirements for each job. Emphasize your strengths and include everything you've done that relates to the job you're seeking. Leave out experience that isn't relevant.

Use similar terms and address every required qualification

Your experience needs to address every required qualification in the job announcement. Hiring agencies will look for specific terms in your resume to make sure you have the experience they're seeking.

For example, if the qualifications section says you need experience with "MS Project" you need to use the words " MS Project" in your resume.

Organize your resume to make it easy to understand

You need to organize your resume to help agencies evaluate your experience. If you don't provide the information required for the hiring agency to determine your qualifications, you might not be considered for the job.

- Use reverse chronological order to list your experience–start with your most recent experience first and work your way back.
- Provide greater detail for experience that is relevant to the job for which you are applying.
- Show all experiences and accomplishments under the job in which you earned it. This helps agencies determine the amount of experience you have with that particular skill.
- Use either bullet or paragraph format to describe your experiences and accomplishments.
- Use plain language– avoid using acronyms and terms that are not easily understood.

Be concise

Hiring agencies often receive dozens or even hundreds of resumes for certain positions. Hiring managers quickly skim through submissions and eliminate candidates who clearly are not qualified. Look at your resume and ask:

- Can a hiring manager see my main credentials within 10 to 15 seconds?
- Does critical information jump off the page?
- Do I effectively sell myself on the top quarter of the first page?

Review your resume before you apply

Check your resume for spelling and grammatical errors and have someone else, with a good eye for detail, review your resume.

Important facts about the federal hiring process

- The Federal Government does have a standard job application. Your resume is your application.
- Hiring agencies use the job announcement to describe the job and list the required qualifications and responsibilities.
- After applying, the hiring agency uses the information in your resume to verify if you have the required qualifications stated in the job announcement.
- Once the hiring agency has determined who is qualified, they may use other assessments such as interviews or testing to determine the best qualified applications.

Learn more about the federal hiring process.

Additional resources

- What should I leave out of my resume?
- How to build a resume
- How to create a resume

QUESTIONS?

Important Websites

NYS Civil Service: cs.ny.gov

NYS Jobs: statejobs.ny.gov

Federal Jobs: usajobs.gov

US Postal Service: www.usps.com/employment

NYS DOL Career Center Locator: labor.ny.gov/career-centers

QUESTIONS ANSWERS!

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