



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

# **FWS Job Grading Standard for Upholsterer**

**3106**

**TS-34, 9/74**

**Workforce Compensation and Performance Service  
Classification Programs Division  
June 1998, HRCD-5**

## WORK COVERED

This standard covers nonsupervisory work that involves repairing and replacing upholstery, including fabrics, springs, webbing, filling, and padding, on items such as furniture, seats, and structural framework in houses, rooms, offices, aircraft, ships, boats, railroad cars, automobiles, trucks, buses, and other vehicles or equipment.

Upholstering work involves taking measurements, making patterns and layouts, cutting fabrics, fitting and joining cover pieces, and installing and fastening upholstery materials in place, using hand or power tools and equipment and knowledge of fabrics and upholstery methods.

## WORK NOT COVERED

This standard does not cover the following work:

- Making and repairing fabric and leather articles such as curtains, slip covers, equipment covers, safety belts, storage harnesses, truck tarpaulins, boat covers, and awnings (See [Job Grading Standard for Fabric Worker, 3105](#));
- Operating sewing machines to sew or repair upholstery when the work does not include measuring, marking, cutting, and fitting materials (See [Job Grading Standard for Sewing Machine Operator, 3111](#));
- Installing, replacing, and repairing floor coverings such as carpeting, resilient tile, and linoleum (See [Floor Covering Series, 3124](#));
- Building, repairing, and/or refinishing furniture frames (See Furniture Repairing Series, -4613 or [Job Grading Standard for Sheet Metal Mechanic, -3806](#); [Woodcraftsman, 4605](#); [Carpenter, -4607](#); or [Painter, -4102](#));
- Assembling, installing, and repairing window shades and venetian blinds (see Window Shade Assembling, Installing, and Repairing Series, 4841).

## TITLES

Jobs graded by this standard at the grade 9 level and above are to be titled *Upholsterer*.  
Jobs graded by this standard below the grade 9 level are to be titled *Upholstery Worker*.

## GRADE LEVELS

This standard does not describe all possible grades for this occupation. Some jobs may differ substantially from the levels of skill, knowledge, and other work requirements of the grades described in the standard. Such jobs may be graded above or below these grades based on sound job grading methods.

## HELPER AND INTERMEDIATE JOBS

Helpers jobs are graded by the [Job Grading Standard for Trades Helper Jobs](#).

The grade 7 level in this standard does not apply to upholsterer jobs that are part of a planned program of training and development of skills for advancement to a higher grade. Such trainee jobs are covered by the [standard for Intermediate Jobs](#). (Grade 9 in this standard is to be used as the journeyman grade in applying the Intermediate Job Grading Table.)

## NOTE TO USERS

This standard is directly applicable only to upholstering work. However, many upholsterers perform other work in conjunction with their upholstering duties, such as repairing and refinishing furniture, repairing venetian blinds, making and repairing fabric and leather items, and installing floor coverings. When such nonupholstering duties are performed on a full-time basis, or when they are the highest level and grade controlling work of the position involved, appropriate standards such as those listed above in the WORK NOT COVERED paragraph should be used for grading purposes. Mixed jobs should be graded in accordance with the instructions for mixed jobs in [Part I, Explanation of the Job Grading System, Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations](#). When the upholstering work of a mixed job is at the same grade level as the other work performed, such a job should be titled and coded as Upholsterer if the upholstering work is most important in terms of the total job, the purpose of the job, or the career ladder in which it is located.

**3106-7****UPHOLSTERY WORKER, GRADE-7****3106-7**

*General:* Grade 7 upholstery workers repair and replace upholstery on items such as side chairs, executive chairs, typist chairs, slip-seats, benches, stools, mattresses, pillows, bolsters, cornices, door panels, truck seats, automobile seats, crash pads, boat cushions, and other pieces of furniture and equipment that have simple shapes and surfaces or that can be covered with a single piece of fabric or a pull-over type cover.

*Skill and Knowledge:* Grade 7 upholstery workers use a knowledge of standard upholstery techniques to pad and cover items that have relatively straight lines and regular surfaces. They have the ability to remove old or worn upholstery fabric, burlap, broken springs, padding, and other materials, and repair frames by regluing loose joints or refinishing exposed wood. They are able to repair or replace webbing, springs, filling, and padding, using sagless springs, prebuilt innerspring units, ready-made edge rolls, preshaped cotton felt, polyester, or foam stuffings, and other similar materials that are easy to work with.

At grade 7, upholstery workers use skill to interpret simple blueprints and drawings. They can match shades and colors. They are able to determine the amount of material required by using patterns or samples, or by following dimensions given in instructions and adding for seams, pleats, and tacking allowances. They have the ability to take measurements and make simple cover patterns. They know how to use arithmetic and fractions to calculate pattern measurements and figure yardage of fabric needed.

Upholstery Workers are able to lay out parts in correct relation to the grain or pattern of the fabric and mark material for cutting and sewing, using patterns, samples, or the surface of the piece to be covered an outline. They use skill to cut, assemble, fit, and sew cover pieces to exact size and shape. They are able to attach finished covers by gluing, tacking, stapling, or fastening in other ways, making sure they are smooth and tight so as to obtain good appearance and durability. They can sew or tack on gimp, buttons, or other ornaments. Grade 7 upholstery workers are able to use established procedures to repair upholstery that has been torn, cut, burned, or otherwise damaged. They know how to examine upholstery to locate defects, how to sew tears or rips with needle and thread, and how to remove and replace damaged parts.

Upholstery Workers at this level use skill to handle a variety of hand and power tools such as ripping chisels, tack and staple in removers, webbing stretchers, awls, straight and curved needles, skewer pins, cushion stuffing machines, stuffing regulators, tack hammers, mallets, staplers, drills, wrenches, saws, and screwdrivers to remove parts that are worn or damaged, make repairs, and install new material. They are able to use measuring devices such as flexible steel-tapes, yardsticks, rulers, squares, compasses, patterns, and templates to measure covers, mark off webbing strip locations, lay out dimensions, and mark cutting or sewing lines on material. They know how to use scissors, shears, knives, and electric cutters to cut fabrics. They are skilled in operating regular and heavy-duty sewing machines to sew welt, seam cushions, and join various sections of covering material.

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They set up and adjust their equipment according to the type of material or operation involved, and perform minor maintenance such as cleaning and oiling.

Grade 7 upholstery workers have a knowledge of stock materials such as velour, nylon, burlap, leather, leatherette, plastic, vinyl, olefin, fiberglass, sponge rubber, plastic foam, zig-zag springs, and tacking strips, including a knowledge of properties such as stretchability, tendency to ravel, strength and hardness. They use this knowledge to produce satisfactory results when cutting, sewing, pleating, and installing upholstery. They know when and on what to use glues and cements to join pieces of material or secure covers to frames or panel surfaces. They also know how to remove spots from upholstery using cleaning fluids.

*Responsibility:* Grade 7 upholstery workers perform upholstering operations on the basis of written or oral instructions, blueprints, sketches, and work orders that clearly show what is to be done. They select the methods, tools, and materials commonly used to do the assigned work or described in the instructions. They are responsible for making articles to work order specifications, obtaining good appearance and durability, and insuring economical use of material. The supervisor checks work during progress and provides guidance on any problems encountered. Completed work is checked to see that it meets requirements.

*Physical Effort:* Grade 7 upholstery workers usually work at tables or while furniture or other items are on supports. They generally stand while they work and do a considerable amount of stooping, bending, and kneeling. They continually use arms, hands, and fingers in pulling and stretching fabrics, sewing, hammering, and using tools such as shears and electric knives. Upholstery Workers sometimes work in cramped areas, on ladders and scaffolds, and overhead. They frequently lift and carry items that weigh up to 23 kilograms (50 pounds). They may occasionally lift heavier items with assistance.

*Working Conditions:* Upholstery Workers usually work in upholstery shops or other enclosed areas that are adequately lighted, ventilated, and heated. They are subject to cuts, bruises, punctures, scratches, and other minor injuries or irritation from sharp tools, flying tacks, and handling coarse and prickly materials. Also, dust from old fabric, stuffing materials, and talc powder, and fumes and odors from glues and cleaners sometimes are present. Workers may wear or use protective devices such as goggles, respirators, gloves, safety shoes, and machine guards. Upholstery Workers sometimes work outside or in unheated areas. They may also work on ladders and scaffolds when hanging or installing completed items.

**3106-9****UPHOLSTERER GRADE-9****3106-9**

*General:* Grade 9 upholsters recondition items that are more complicated than those at grade 7, such as overstuffed chairs, wing chairs, couches, davenports, sofa-beds, heirloom-type chairs, body-conforming seats, headliners, aircraft insulation and soundproofing panels, and other pieces of upholstered furniture and equipment or items which have unwieldy shapes and sizes, irregular surfaces, complicated curves, many cover pieces, or other features that make planning, layout, construction, shaping, cushioning, and cover installation more difficult.

*Skill and Knowledge:* Grade 9 upholsterers apply a broader knowledge of upholstering methods than grade 7 workers to cushion and cover items with more complicated and varied shapes and sizes. They know how to restyle frames for greater comfort or better appearance; for example, they modernize chairs by removing or upholstering carved show wood, change seats from spring to pad construction or vice versa, and make seats more comfortable by adding extra stuffing along the bottom of the backrest. They use skill to sew and tie coil springs in flat, round, and spring-edge configurations; make edge rolls in sizes not available commercially; and install stuffings where springs, uneven supports, or awkward frame shapes necessitate filling, shaping, insulating, leveling, or building up surfaces.

Grade 9 upholsterers are able to measure irregular surfaces and curved contours to determine cover dimensions; make rough sketches or working drawings giving measurements of cover pieces; develop patterns and templates; and make complicated cutting layouts, experimenting to find which layout requires the least amount of fabric. They have the ability to plan work when detailed specifications are not available. They apply a knowledge of shop mathematics to make more difficult calculations than grade 7 workers, such as computing dimensions and laying out circles, angles, curves, and irregular shapes.

Upholsterers at this level are skilled in using techniques such as channeling, tufting, quilting, and trapunto to decorate surfaces or make outer covers conform to curved frame lines or other special shapes. They are able to install final covers where the shape or size of the piece being covered calls for attaching many pieces, handling delicate fabrics, fitting to irregular edges or obstructions (as around curves, openings, and obstructions such as back posts, arm stumps, and legs), providing accents or special effects, or using other complicated procedures. These techniques require greater skill and accuracy in design layout and cover installation than is necessary at grade 7.

Grade 9 upholsterers are able to use the same upholstery tools and measuring devices as grade 7 workers to accomplish more delicate and exacting operations such as moving padding materials without removing outer covers or taking measurements over loose stuffing. Grade 9 upholsterers work with a wider variety of fabrics and materials than grade 7 workers, including materials that are used infrequently and materials that require skillful handling, such as silk, satin, velvet, hair, and moss. They apply a thorough knowledge of the performance properties and handling characteristics of all types and grades of common upholstery materials to

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select materials for specific tasks. For example, they determine what gauge, temper, and shape of coil springs and method of tying to use to obtain required spring action; what type and density of stuffing materials to use to secure desired resilience, insulation, or shaping; and which fabrics to use to produce well-defined tuft and channel pleats, which fabrics are not good choices for "railroading", and which are prone to ripping during installation and use. They are able to substitute or adjust materials when the precise size or grade desired is not available.

*Responsibility:* Grade 9 upholsterers work from written or oral instructions, blueprints, sketches, specifications, and work orders. These are often general and incomplete. Upholsterers plan and lay out their own work. They make patterns or templates where necessary and select the methods, materials, and tools most appropriate for the assigned project. They insure that completed upholstery meets requirements for proper resiliency, even density, correct shape, good appearance, and durability. Completed work is spot checked by the supervisor for quality and accuracy.

*Physical Effort:* Physical effort required at this level is substantially the same as that described at [grade 7](#).

*Working Conditions:* Working conditions at this level are substantially the same as those described at [grade 7](#).