



United States
Office of Personnel Management

FWS Job Grading Standard for

Sign Painter

4104

TS-31, 6/74

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

NOTE

This standard has been converted from the original paper format to electronic format without substantive change in series coverage or grading criteria. The standard was reviewed to correct errors that may have been introduced during the conversion process. In some standards minor corrections were made such as updating references to other documents that may have become obsolete, or correcting minor typographical errors in the original standard. Any errors that remain due to conversion to electronic format should be minor and are not intended to change the meaning of the original standard.

WORK COVERED

This standard covers the nonsupervisory work of producing signs and posters, decorating models and displays, painting markings on vehicles, ships, or aircraft, or performing other functions requiring skill in lettering. The work involves the ability to design, layout, and decorate signs, to execute freehand and mechanical lettering, and skill in various production techniques such as silk screen printing, application of reflective sheeting, and lettering with machines.

WORK NOT COVERED

This standard does not cover the following work:

- Performing silk-screen printing on a full-time basis. (See [Silk Screen Making and Printing Series, 4419.](#))
- Graining, marbling, stippling, or applying other decorative effects except in decorating signs or displays. (See [job grading standard for Painter, 4102.](#))
- Refinishing instrument dials. (See [Instrument Dial Painting Series, 4157.](#))
- Identification painting or stencilling of containers, vehicles, or other objects not requiring precise freehand lettering. (See [job grading standard for Painter, 4102.](#))

TITLES

Jobs graded by this standard are to be titled Sign Painter.

GRADE LEVELS

This standard describes only one grade level for this occupation. However, some jobs may differ substantially from the skill, knowledge and other work requirements described at this level. These jobs may warrant grading either above or below the grade level which is described.

HELPER AND INTERMEDIATE JOBS

Helper and Intermediate level jobs are to be graded by the job grading standards for Trades [Helper](#) and [Intermediate](#) jobs. (WG-9 in this standard is to be used as the "journey level grade" in applying the Intermediate Job Grading Table.)

NOTES TO USERS

Pay Category: Work which requires primarily the application of artistic or drafting ability to produce illustrations, charts, or drawings is graded under General Schedule Position Classification

Standards. To do such work ordinarily requires knowledge and application of artistic principles such as perspective, composition, proportion, figure studied use of tone and shading, and color harmony. Interpretation of statistics or engineering terms may also be required. (See [Illustrating Series, GS-1020-0](#), or [Office Drafting Series, GS-1021-0](#).) While many signs are complemented with insignia or drawings, the work of sign painters is more concerned with lettering than illustration. For example, sign painters may prepare displays by enlarging existing diagrams of technical equipment or maps, and coloring the enlargement. Unlike illustrators, however, they are not responsible for conceiving and preparing the original views, nor for other functions which require the use of several of the common art media and extensive application of artistic principles.

General: Grade 9 Sign Painters apply a variety of graphic arts techniques, including freehand and mechanical lettering, and silk screen printing, to produce signs, posters, and displays for inside and exterior use, including building and reflective traffic signs. Sign painters usually letter small characters freehand, taking care to provide proper margins, spacing, and formation of letters. If required to make very large letters or markings, such as ship numerals, they chalk an outline following weld marks at the corners or blueprints and fill in and shade the characters. For reflective signs, they apply pressure or heat-sensitive reflective sheeting and attach ready-made or hand cut letters. Sign painters devise silk screens, stencils, templates, or paper patterns as necessary to reproduce designs or shapes. They embellish some signs, displays or doors with insignia, drawings, fancy script, shading, pin stripes, or gilding as required. Sign painters may be required to scale drawings by hand or by tracing the image thrown by a projector. They may also paint and decorate models, maps, graphic training aids, and status boards, and select coloring to provide contrast and a good appearance. While not limited at this level to such work, grade 9 Sign Painters also produce various graphics for routine requirements, such as producing nameplates and interior signs by machine or with engraving tools, and lettering hard hats or equipment numbers.

Skill and Knowledge: Grade 9 Sign Painters are skilled in the fundamentals of lettering, spacing, and layout and can execute freehand one or more common sign alphabets with considerable speed and accuracy. Most work requires a steady, delicate touch, and close concentration. Sign painters must be able to arrange layout of signs on the basis of only brief information on customer desires, such as the text desired or a rough sketch. Using an understanding of optical effects and contrast, they can devise signs and displays with good eye appeal. They have the ability to adapt lettering to the spacing, style, or effect desired by condensing or expanding the basic strokes.

Sign painters must be able to clean and fill surfaces and prepare them to receive paint or reflective sheeting. Although most signs are executed on flat sheets of metal or poster board, grade 9 Sign Painters must be able to apply paint or ink onto other surfaces such as decalcomania, wood, cloth, or plastic, and to letter in place signs or markings on building masonry or pavements as well as corrugated, riveted, or curved metal, including vehicles, aircraft, or ships. Sign painters know how to apply reflective sheeting either by pressure or by operating heat-vacuum applicators. They select and handle various types of brushes depending on the size of lettering desired and the nature of the surface. Sign painters are skilled with lettering pens, lettering kits, spray-gun, saws and drafting tools. They know the drying qualities and gloss characteristics of paints including bulletin, oil, and varnish types, and are skilled in blending and mixing various pigments, primers, and thinners. Sign painters must be able to produce the colors and figures specified for insignia or other illustrations for signs. They can execute emblems or drawings either freehand with drafting tools, or by preparing a silk screen for each color. They can use a hand or semiautomatic squeegee to draw paint across a silk screen, taking care to achieve close registration of colors on insignia. Sign painters know how to operate one or more machines related to their work,

depending on availability, such as embossing or poster machines; varitype or other composing machines; engraving tools; paper cutters; projectors; or cameras with vacuum tables used in preparing silk screen films.

Grade 9 Sign Painters also have the ability to apply any standard trade techniques as required for infrequent jobs, such as applying gold leaf, scaling a drawing, or making a paper pattern.

Responsibility: Grade 9 Sign Painters usually work in a small shop or alone under the supervision of a painter or maintenance foreman. They inform their supervisor of supplies and materials needed and the time required to accomplish work. Jobs are usually received in the form of work orders which may provide a text or sketch, but often no other specifications. Sign painters interpret work orders with considerable latitude for determining layout, balance, spacing, and colors. If necessary they contact customers to develop ideas or to reconcile customer desires with directives.

Since they normally work alone, sign painters must determine the steps required and complete projects using standard trade practices. They must identify and correct defects before their release. Little reference is made to written guidelines, but blueprints or specifications, manuals for traffic signs, type alphabets, or directives on formats may be applicable to some work. Supervisors check completed work for overall adequacy, eye appeal, and neatness.

Physical Effort: Work requires continual movement of hand and arm, standing, reaching, and bending, as well as lifting materials up to 5 kilograms (10 pounds). Occasionally, some projects may require heavier effort in doing tasks such as erecting signs or displays, kneeling to letter vehicles and equipment, or climbing ladders. At such times, sign painters may handle items up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds).

Working Conditions: Most work is performed indoors in adequately lighted and heated shops, although some is performed outdoors in good weather. Some outdoor projects may require work near moving vehicles or aboard ships, and exposure to the possibility of falls. Sign painters are subject to the possibility of cuts, bruises, and irritation of eyes and skin from exposure to fumes, solvents, or paints.