

# Welcome to SVP 6: Traits, Worker Functions, MPSMS, & Skills



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## Overview


**Vocational Factors Considered in Each Hypothetical Question**

Covered in SVP 5

- Age ([CFR 404-1563](#))
- Education ([CFR 404-1564](#))
- Work Experience Skill Requirements ([CFR 404-1568](#))
- Physical Exertion ([CFR 404-1567](#))

In SVP 6

- Skill ([20 CFR 404.1568](#))
- Traits
- Worker Functions
- MPSMS



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## Overview, Cont.

**Vocational Factors Considered in Each Hypothetical Question**

- Skill ([20 CFR 404.1658](#))
  - Skills
  - Skill transferability
- Traits ([Vocational Expert Handbook](#))
  - Inherent qualities that a worker brings to a job.
  - Aptitudes or abilities
- Worker Functions
- MPSMS



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## Skills vs Traits

Page 32 Revised VE Handbook

We distinguish "skills" from worker "traits." *Traits* are inherent qualities that a worker brings to the job, such as good eyesight or good eye-hand coordination. When an ALJ asks you whether a claimant has a "skill," you must be careful not to confuse the two terms. For example, the *traits* of coordination and dexterity may be contrasted with a *skill* in the use of the hands or feet for the rapid performance of repetitive work tasks. *It is the acquired capacity to perform the work activities with facility that gives rise to potentially transferable skills.*

You must be prepared to classify the claimant's past relevant work and any jobs that you identify in response to hypothetical questions (see page 34) as "skilled," "semiskilled," or "unskilled," as defined in our regulations and SSRs. These descriptions of the skill levels are based on the DOT's specific vocational preparation (SVP) ratings for each described occupation. Unskilled work corresponds to an SVP of 1-2; semiskilled work to an SVP of 3-4; and skilled work to an SVP of 5-9. In general, we use the following definitions:



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## Traits

- *Traits* are inherent qualities that a worker brings to the job, such as good eyesight or good eye-hand coordination.
- For example, the traits of coordination and dexterity may be contrasted with a skill in the use of the hands or feet for the rapid performance of repetitive work tasks.
- It is the acquired capacity to perform the work activities with facility that gives rise to potentially transferable skills.
- *Worker traits to be relevant must have been used in connection with a work activity.* Thus, in the regulations, the trait of alertness is connected with the work activities of close attention to watching machine processes, inspecting, testing, tending or guarding; and the traits of coordination and dexterity with the use of hands or feet for the rapid performance of repetitive work tasks. It is the acquired capacity to perform the work activities with facility (rather than the traits themselves) that gives rise to potentially transferable skills. SSR 82-41



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## Overview, Cont.

### Vocational Factors Considered in Each Hypothetical Question

- Skill (20 CFR 404.1658)
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### Worker Functions/Traits\*

Corresponds to middle 3 numbers of DOT code

Data	People	Things
0 Synthesizing	0 Mentoring	0 Setting Up
1 Coordinating	1 Negotiating	1 Precision Working
2 Analyzing	2 Instructing	2 Operating-Controlling
3 Compiling	3 Supervising	3 Driving-Operating
4 Computing	4 Diverting	4 Manipulating
5 Copying	5 Persuading	5 Tending
6 Comparing	6 Speaking-Signaling	6 Feeding-Off Bearing
	7 Serving	7 Handling
	8 Teaching-Instructions-Helping	

Further defined with examples RHAI.3

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### Overview, Cont.

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### MPSMS

#### Materials, Products, Subject Matter, Services

Basic **Materials** processed, such as fabric, metal, or wood.  
 Final **Products** made, such as automobiles; cultivated, such as field crops; harvested, such as sponges; or captured, such as wild animals.  
**Subject Matter** or data dealt with or applied, such as astronomy or journalism.  
**Services** rendered, such as barbering or janitorial.

MPSMS is the final link in a chain describing (1) what the worker does (Worker Functions); (2) what gets done (Work Fields); (3) to what (MPSMS).  
 An appropriate MPSMS code and title for a specific job is essential (1) to place the job in its occupational group of the DOT and (2) to contribute to an understanding of the basic knowledge required of the worker. *The assigned Work Field(s) and MPSMS together answer the question, "What does the worker need to know?"*

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## MPSMS

### Materials, Products, Subject Matter, Services Cont'd

...Some categories of MPSMS are *tangible* and some are *intangible*. Categories of tangibles cover materials and products, such as Grains and Alcoholic Beverages. Categories of intangibles involve specialized knowledge or services, such as Dramatics and Air Transportation, and cannot be expressed by listing a material or product.

The MPSMS classification for a given job is generally based on the overall purpose of the job, usually reflected by the primary knowledge required of the worker. In production jobs, the MPSMS classification can be a material or a final product; it is based on the end-product of the job and not the end-product of the establishment. For example, a fabric cutter in a furniture plant is assigned an MPSMS category in Group 420 Fabrics and Related, not in Group 460 Furniture and Fixtures. When the primary knowledge is in terms of a product being made, the product is rated. When the primary knowledge is in terms of a specific material being processed, the material is rated. RHAJ Chapter 5

*The Finer Points...A complete similarity of all these factors is not necessary for transferability.*



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## From a Functional Viewpoint

If a claimant's past relevant job was performed at either skilled or semi-skilled level, the ALJ may ask the VE to enumerate the skills acquired by the claimant and to furnish a complete explanation for his or her opinion. In order to determine the skills acquired, the VE may use the DOT to supplement the information furnished by the claimant. The narrative occupational descriptions in the DOT may describe activities which represent the actual skills used in a job. Moreover, the headings of the 4-digit Guide for Occupational Exploration (GOE) workgroups supplement these descriptions. The VE may encounter situations in which the claimant performed a job in a different manner than customarily performed in the national economy. 1987 VE Handbook



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## What a Skill Is According to SSA

*Skills* refer to experience and demonstrated proficiency with work activities in particular tasks or jobs. In evaluating the skill level of PRW or potential occupations, *work activities* are the determining factors...A skill is knowledge of a work activity which requires the exercise of significant judgment that goes beyond the carrying out of simple job duties and is acquired through performance of an occupation which is above the unskilled level (requires more than 30 days to learn). It is practical and familiar knowledge of the principles and processes of an art, science or trade, combined with the ability to apply them in practice in a proper and approved manner. This includes activities like making precise measurements, reading blueprints, and setting up and operating complex machinery. A skill gives a person a special advantage over unskilled workers in the labor market.



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## What a Skill Is According to SSA

Cont'd

Skills are not gained by doing unskilled jobs, and a person has no special advantage if he or she is skilled or semiskilled but can qualify only for an unskilled job because his or her skills cannot be used to any significant degree in other jobs. The grid rules are consistent with the provisions regarding skills because the same conclusion is directed for individuals with an unskilled work background and for those with a skilled or semiskilled work background whose skills are not transferable. A person's acquired work skills may or may not be commensurate with his or her formal educational attainment. SSR 82-41 & 404.1568 (c)



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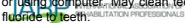
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## Example: DOT - Identifying the Skills in the Definition

079.361-018 DENTAL ASSISTANT Light SVP 6 ( DLU 1989) O\*NET Code: 31-9091.00

Assists dentist during examination and treatment of patients: Prepares patient, *sterilizes and disinfects instruments, sets up instrument trays, prepares materials, and assists dentist during dental procedures. Takes and records medical and dental histories and vital signs of patient. Exposes dental diagnostic x rays. Makes preliminary impressions for study casts and occlusal registrations for mounting study casts. Pours, trims, and polishes study casts, fabricates custom impression trays from preliminary impressions, cleans and polishes removable appliances, and fabricates temporary restorations.* Assists dentist in management of medical and dental emergencies. Instructs patients in oral hygiene and plaque control programs. Provides postoperative instructions prescribed by dentist. Records treatment information in patient records. Schedules appointments, prepares bills and receives payment for dental services, completes insurance forms, and maintains clerical records, manually or using computer. May clean teeth, using dental instruments. May apply protective coating of fluoride to teeth.



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## Skills/Traits: O\*NET Versus the DOT/ RHAJ

### O\*NET - Tasks are SS Skills

#### Dental Assistant

- Prepare patient, sterilize or disinfect instruments, set up instrument trays, prepare materials, or assist dentist during dental procedures.
- Record treatment information in patient records.
- Expose dental diagnostic x-rays.
- Take and record medical and dental histories and vital signs of patients.
- Assist dentist in management of medical or dental emergencies.



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## Why is Identifying a Composite Job Important?

- SSR 00-04p explains:
- When the VE provides evidence about the requirements of a job or occupation, it must comport with the DOT. If there is a conflict with the DOT the ALJ has an affirmative responsibility to ask about that conflict and resolve the conflicts. In these situations, the adjudicator will:
  - Ask the VE if the evidence he or she has provided conflicts with information provided in the DOT; and
  - If the VE's evidence appears to conflict with the DOT, the adjudicator will obtain a reasonable explanation for the apparent conflict.
- By their very nature, composite jobs conflict with the DOT and the VE should be prepared to provide additional occupations which could account for those additional occupational responsibilities.



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## Is it a Composite Job?

- When the DOT was written and revised, job analysts were expected to document where jobs begin and where they end.
- This is the definition found within the DOT.
- Jobs were expected to be analyzed as they existed.
- Each completed Job Analysis Report reported the job as it existed at the time of the analysis, not as it should exist, not as it has existed in the past, and not as it exists in similar establishments.
- Tasks *temporarily assigned* to a given worker in addition to regular duties should not be considered part of the basic job.
- If the jobs performed by a claimant included duties and responsibilities that are not found within the DOT definition, the job as they performed it would be a composite job.
- Composite jobs require the VE to provide *two or more* DOT codes for that job.
- Since the DOT was written and revised, employers have in some cases combined two or more jobs (DOT codes) into one.



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## The Art & Science of Being a VE:

- Knowledge of how jobs have changed.
- Has technology changed the job and ultimately the skill level.
- Job has become less complex or more complex over time.
- Recognizing composite jobs.



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## References and Resources

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- *Selected Characteristics of Occupations Defined in the Revised Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 1993, U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration*
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