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Am I Qualified for a Forestry Aid or Technician Position?

Guidelines, definitions, and helpful tips for applicants

To qualify for a position means that you meet its baseline requirements. You may qualify as a forestry aid or technician (job series 0462) with just 6 months of full-time general work experience or at least 1 year of education beyond high school that included relevant coursework. What will vary is the General Schedule (GS) level you qualify for. GS level determines a position's salary and duties. Qualifying for a certain GS level depends on your work experience and formal education.

What is needed to qualify?

Qualifications for forestry aid or technician positions are exceptionally flexible because **applicants need only experience or education.** They don't need both.

- **GS-3: 6 months of full-time general experience or 1 year of education** above high school with relevant coursework.
- **GS-4: 6 months of full-time general experience and 6 months of full-time specialized experience or 2 years of education** above high school with relevant coursework.
- **GS-5: 1 year of full-time specialized experience** equivalent to at least GS-4 **or** a **4-year college degree** with relevant coursework.

The key word in these requirements is "or." For example, if you have 6 months of general work experience, there is no education requirement for you to qualify as a GS-3 forestry aid – i.e., you don't need a high school diploma or post-secondary coursework. On the other hand, if you have 1 year of education beyond high school with relevant coursework, you can qualify as a GS-3 forestry aid without general work experience.



Forestry technician Zuleymalisse Rodriguez. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

Experience needn't be continuous. Shorter periods of work can be combined to reach the required length. Your resume must state the month, day, and year when each period of employment started and stopped, as well as the number of hours worked per week. The required length of employment assumes full-time work, but longer periods of part-time work could be used to meet the requirement.

What counts as general experience?

General experience demonstrates your work ethic and capacity to learn, not that you've already performed the duties of a forestry aid or technician. Almost any work experience (as well as unpaid volunteering or internships) will count, including but not limited to these examples:

- Tended livestock or conducted other farm or ranch work.
- Worked in the outdoors or in recreation.
- Cared for animals.
- Tended plants or grounds for a nursery, greenhouse, or landscaping company.

- Provided mechanical, electrical, or plumbing services.
- Managed money.
- Provided customer service or conducted other administrative tasks.
- Worked as a delivery driver or in transportation.
- Provided caregiving for children or others.
- Volunteered or interned (paid and unpaid) at a hospital, park, youth camp, sports league, and/or fire or police department.

What counts as specialized experience?

Specialized experience means that a candidate's job duties were equivalent to a forestry technician's duties for at least the GS-4 level. To qualify with specialized experience, you must show that you performed **one or more** of the following:

- Helped prepare reports, visual aids, or maps to convey information.
- Assisted with inspections and reported findings on various natural resource projects.
- Helped maintain recreation areas or trails.
- Assisted with inspections, patrols, or contracts/permits for parts of a project.
- Collected data to support natural resource reports, plans, projects, or permitted uses.
- Used databases or software to support data management and/or prepare visuals for projects.
- Helped to build or maintain infrastructure for projects that restore or protect wildlife, fisheries, range, botany, or watershed.
- Used a range of communication methods to address customer questions and concerns.
- Used power tools or equipment for forestry or natural resource-related projects.

What counts as education?

If you're qualifying with **education instead of experience** (again, you don't need both), you need sufficient credit hours in required coursework and should attach your transcript with your application.

- **GS-3:** Successful completion of 1 year of study that included at least 6 semester hours in a combination of courses such as range management or conservation, agriculture, forestry, wildlife management, engineering,

biology, mathematics, or other natural or physical sciences.

- **GS-4:** Successful completion of 2 years of study that included at least 12 semester hours in any combination of courses such as forestry, agriculture, crop or plant science, range management or conservation, wildlife management, watershed management, soil science, natural resources (except marine fisheries and oceanography), outdoor recreation management, civil or forest engineering, or wildland fire science. No more than 3 semester hours in mathematics is creditable.
- **GS-5:** Successful completion of a full 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree (a) with major study in forestry, range management, agriculture, or a subject-matter field directly related to the position, or (b) that included at least 24 semester hours in any combination of courses such as those shown above for GS-4. No more than 6 semester hours in mathematics is creditable.

Tips for applicants

- Be sure to attach transcript(s) if you base your qualifications on education, not experience. Remember, education is more than a certain number of years beyond high school. You also need enough credit hours in particular subjects.
- If you base your qualifications on experience, be sure your resume clearly states the month, day, and year when you started and stopped each period of employment and how many hours per week you worked.
- Keep in mind that unpaid volunteer work or internships may count as experience.
- Human Resources specialists make the final determination of whether your experience counts as general or specialized. Be sure your resume clearly describes your job experience to help them make an accurate determination.

How do I contact the Regions 8 & 9 Recruitment Team?

Contact us at sm.fs.r8recruiting@usda.gov with any questions.