**PLA Guide**

**Data Management Tools**

**How to Use this Guide**

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who has a college-level understanding of **Data Management Tools.**

This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your learning and writing your Prior Learning Request by answering the following questions, which will be explained more fully in the section Writing your PLA Request:

1. Describe what you do.
2. Compare a real and hypothetical situation in this field.
3. Identify informal “rules” in this field.
4. Examine the role of a professional in this field.
5. Apply your knowledge in a problem-solving situation.
6. Identify critical issues in the field.
7. Teach others.
8. Offer additional information or evidence of your learning.

**Typical Learning Experiences**

The following list is not all inclusive; you may have learned in other ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Administrative Support | Business Operations |
| Research Support | Project Management |
| Small Business Management | Marketing Support |

**What are Data Management Tools?**

Data management tools make use of spreadsheet and database software programs that can address information management and data analysis problems. This topic presupposes basic computer literacy and knowledge of computer applications and expands on knowledge of intermediate spreadsheet and database software tools. This topic supports analysis, reporting and visualization of data and decision making. The diagram below identifies many aspects of learning in this field. Your learning may fall within some areas and not others, based on your personal experience, and that’s o.k.  You can consult other guides or use the general guide, if they are more appropriate to your learning.

**DATA MANAGEMENT TOOLS**

Planning

Data Entry

Manipulation

Analysis

Reporting/Visualization

Decision Making

Knowledge/Principles

Data Foundation

Spreadsheet/ Database Knowledge

Introductory Needs Assessment

**Writing Your PLA Request**

Answer all eight questions.

1. Describe:

a. What tasks you regularly perform in this area or have performed in past roles?

b. What methods have you used to acquire knowledge on this topic?

c. a situation you have encountered in this area -- or a task that you had to complete – and explain how you approached it.

2. Choose a hypothetical situation or task that’s different from your real one. Explain how you would deal with it. What’s the same and/or different about how you approached the hypothetical vs. how you approach actual tasks?

*Use the scenario below or offer your own*:

You are managing a local soccer club. Describe how you would manage the member information with data management tools. Information to track might include contact information, position, emergency contact, uniform size, medical conditions.

Explain the process you’d use to track this data. How does this hypothetical situation differ from how you have actually handled a similar situation?

3. What informal “rules’ have you developed for yourself when you’re given a task to complete?

* How do you determine what to do when?
* What tools do you use?
* How do you determine what reports are needed and why?

4. What is the role of a data management specialist in relation to the larger organization? What roles do data management skills play in your overall professional responsibilities? How does proper data management impact the success of your organization?

5. Problem-Solving: Real-World Scenarios.

Given a data set and asked to do analysis, tell us your plan. What tools would you use? How will you enter/store data? What kind of analysis will you conduct? What types of reports would you plan to produce? How would you present the results?

6. Identify issues critical to data management: (choose 2 out of 4 questions to answer)

What role does technology play in data management?

How might technical innovations impact this field?

How do you recommend dealing with continual change in data management tools and how do you stay current?

How could data be more effectively managed in your organization?

7. How would you share your knowledge of data management tools with others? What are the 4-6 key topics you would consider most important? How would teach others these topics?

8. Offer any additional information or thoughts on this topic that you would like to discuss as part of your PLA evaluation. Is there any additional material/documentation that you’d like to share with the evaluator? (please attach) Please make sure to respect privacy and proprietary rules when submitting information.

**Information to Help You Decide Credit Specifications for Your Request**

All college-level learning means that you can talk about what you know in some detail, come up with some general insights and “rules” about the topic, and apply those insights and rules to new situations.

* **Introductory/Advanced**: Data Management Tools is typically Introductory.
* **Liberal/Non-Liberal**: Data Management Tools is typically Liberal.
* **General Education**: Data Management Tools typically does not fulfil General Education requirements.
* While Data Management Tools is considered introductory, students with extensive knowledge might consider submitting advanced-level PLA requests in areas such as: Data Security, Database Systems, or Decision Support Systems. Students with advanced learning might also consider submitting additional requests.

**Number of Credits**To determine the number of credits to request, think about your experience using this guide. If you answered most of the questions easily, and feel that you can confidently discuss areas related to this topic, you may want to request 3-4 credits, which is the equivalent of one college course. After your discussion, your evaluator will have the opportunity to recommend fewer or more credits based on his/her evaluation of your learning.

**Level of Credits**To determine the level of your request think about your comfort level answering the questions. Did you feel confident answering the questions that asked you to interpret, analyze, compare, or generalize? Reflect on your learning in light of the information below to help you determine whether to request introductory or advanced-level credit. If you aren’t sure, discuss this with your mentor.

**Introductory college-level learning** (freshman/sophomore) means that you understand:

* Basic concepts, theories, and principles of a topic.

**Advanced college-level learning** (junior/senior level) means that you understand the topic more broadly and deeply. You may understand:

* What the broader field is about, based on your experience.
* Why something is done in a certain way.
* What you, yourself, think about the topic or field, as a result of blending others’ perspectives with your own understanding and judgment.
* How to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information more abstractly, applying methods usually used in that field.

**Examples of General PLA Topics and Level of Learning**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PLA Topic – Building**  | **PLA Topic – Project Management** | **PLA Topic – Spanish Culture** |
| **NOT college –level** | Know how to put up wallboard | Work to complete items on a checklist given to you | Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time |
| **Intro. college-level** | Understand why walls are constructed a certain way | Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks | Understand trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Understand some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices |
| **Advanced college level** | ***Intro level plus:*** Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up | ***Intro level plus:*** Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project; analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project | ***Intro. level plus:***Understand nuances related to attitudes and practices. Know of and understand sub-groups within the overall culture. Understand more fully Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices. |