

GUIDE TO WITHIN GRADE INCREASES (WGI)

Applicable to U.S. appropriated fund civilian employees

Description/Purpose

Within-grade increases (WGIs) or step increases are periodic increases in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade. A WGI waiting period begins upon (1) first appointment in the Federal service, (2) receiving an "equivalent increase," or (3) after a period of non-pay status and/or a break in service in excess of 52 calendar weeks.

General Information

Within-grade increases (WGIs) are effective on the first day of the first pay period following the completion of the required waiting period, and compliance with the other conditions of employment in accordance with 5 CFR 531 or 5 CFR 532.417. When an employee is entitled to two or more pay benefits at the same time (simultaneous pay actions), pay-setting rules require us to process actions in the order that gives the employee the maximum benefit. When an impending WGI will give the employee the maximum benefits, the Air Force Personnel Center staffer will advise the civilian personnel section and supervisor that it would be advantageous to delay the effective date of the personnel action (by no more than two pay periods) to give the employee the maximum benefit. WGIs apply only to employees occupying permanent positions. "Permanent position" means a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year.

Earning Within-Grade Increases

Employees who occupy permanent positions earn WGIs upon meeting the following three requirements established by law:

- The employee's performance must be at an acceptable level of competence. To meet this requirement, an employee's most recent performance rating of record must be at least Level 3 ("Fully Successful" or equivalent).
- The employee must not have received an "equivalent increase" in pay during the waiting period.
- The employee must have completed the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step.

Required Waiting Periods

For employees with a scheduled tour of duty, the required waiting periods established by law for advancement to the next higher step are as follows:

GS Employees

Advancement from...	Requires...
step 1 to step 2	52 weeks of creditable service in step 1
step 2 to step 3	52 weeks of creditable service in step 2
step 3 to step 4	52 weeks of creditable service in step 3
step 4 to step 5	104 weeks of creditable service in step 4
step 5 to step 6	104 weeks of creditable service in step 5
step 6 to step 7	104 weeks of creditable service in step 6
step 7 to step 8	156 weeks of creditable service in step 7
step 8 to step 9	156 weeks of creditable service in step 8
step 9 to step 10	156 weeks of creditable service in step 9

Wage Grade Employees

Advancement from...	Requires...
step 1 to step 2	6 months of creditable service at step 1
step 2 to step 3	18 months of creditable service at step 2
step 3 to step 4	2 years of creditable service in step 3
step 4 to step 5	2 years of creditable service in step 4

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