The Role of the Ergonomist
Under ADA Title I and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act
We are in a new age of opportunity for those trained in ergonomic evaluation. Responding to the demands of Title I of the ADA and various sections of the Rehab Act, the ergonomic evaluator can play an expanded role in hiring, retention, reasonable accommodation, and direct threat management.
The intent of Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act is to remove roadblocks to application, hiring, retention, and return-to-work of the qualified individual.
The term "qualified individual" means an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position such individual holds or desires.
Expanded Contributions

1. Compile or verify **essential function** task lists
2. Answer questions about the **physical and cognitive demands** of a job
3. Identify **risks or exposures** in job tasks
4. Identify potential **reasonable accommodation solutions**
5. Analyze **direct threat** situations
6. Monitor **disparate impact** in employee testing
Essential Functions
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The “essential functions” of a job are **not** the physical or cognitive demands of the job...
Essential functions are the tasks which must be accomplished to justify a job’s existence.

- Prepare a lesson plan
- Teach the lesson plan
- Compare English and French verbs
- Administer written quizzes each week
- Refer students for remedial coaching as needed
Physical Demands of Essential Functions

The physical demands of ‘Teach French to high school students’ may include:

- Hear
- Speak
- Read
- Reach
- Handle
Quantify Risks in Job Tasks
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Quantifying the risk present in job tasks is a basic requirement of the ergonomic analyst job.
Reasonable accommodation management and direct threat analysis each benefit from the identification and quantification of the risk present in job tasks.
Quantify Risks in Job Tasks

Reasonable accommodation program managers want guidance on changing how a task is accomplished, not which tasks are accomplished.
Each request for reasonable accommodation will have a unique set of reasons and resolutions. You can facilitate a healthy RA program because of your knowledge of how tasks are and can be accomplished.
Your ability to quantify the risk in a task will position the RA program manager to compare the medical limitations of the worker to the risks of the demands of the essential functions of his/her job.
Direct Threat
Direct Threat to Self or Others

From time-to-time a supervisor or co-worker will voice concern that a worker is a direct threat to himself or others.

Your knowledge of a job and its tasks may inform the conversation about the existence of a threat, the magnitude of the threat and the likelihood that the threat will occur.
Disparate Impact
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‘Disparate impact’ in employment testing means that a test results, for example, in fewer members of a protected group being hired.

Disparate impact is not illegal but is has to be explained.