

HOW TO FILE A VA DISABILITY CLAIM

A step-by-step walkthrough of the claims process — from gathering evidence to your decision letter — so you know exactly what to expect.

OVERVIEW

Filing a VA disability claim can feel overwhelming — especially if you're doing it for the first time. This guide breaks the process down into clear, simple steps so you know exactly what to expect and how to prepare. Whether you're filing your first claim or reopening an old one, this walkthrough will help you avoid common mistakes and strengthen your case.

1 Gather Your Evidence

Before filing, make sure you have the right documentation. The VA requires proof of:

- ☐ A current diagnosed condition
- ☐ An in-service event, injury, or exposure
- ☐ A medical nexus connecting the two

Strong evidence includes service treatment records, private medical records, buddy statements, and nexus letters.

TIP

Keeping this organized matters as much as having it. A simple digital folder or notes app can hold your evidence checklist, document copies, and submission dates in one place.

2 File Your Claim Online

The fastest way to file is through VA.gov. You can submit:

- New claims
- Increases
- Secondary conditions
- Reopened claims

Upload your evidence directly during the application to avoid delays.

3 Attend Your C&P Exam

After filing, you'll likely be scheduled for a Compensation & Pension exam. This exam is critical — it heavily influences your rating. Be honest, be detailed, and describe your symptoms as they are on your worst days, not just your best.

4 Wait for Your Decision

The VA will review your evidence, exam results, and service history. Once complete, you'll receive a decision letter with:

WHAT'S INCLUDED	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Disability rating	Your percentage for each condition and combined
Monthly payment	The compensation amount tied to your rating
Effective dates	When your rating and payments begin
Reasons for decision	Why each condition was approved or denied

5 If Denied, Don't Give Up

Many veterans are denied the first time — but you have options:

- **Supplemental Claim** — when you have new and relevant evidence
- **Higher-Level Review** — when you believe the evidence was misapplied
- **Board Appeal** — for complex or long-contested claims

REMEMBER

Filing for VA benefits is always free. No VA-accredited representative may legally charge you for help with an initial claim.

YOUR EVIDENCE CHECKLIST

Print this page and fill it in as you gather documentation for each condition you're claiming. Bring it with you to appointments and refer back to it before you submit.

CONDITION	DATE OF ONSET / INJURY	EVIDENCE I HAVE	STILL NEED

DATE I FILED MY CLAIM

CLAIM / FILE NUMBER

C&P EXAM DATE (IF SCHEDULED)

NOTES / QUESTIONS FOR MY VSO

READ THE FULL GUIDES ON THESE RELATED TOPICS

- veteran-roadmap.com/blog/what-to-gather-before-you-file-a-va-claim
- veteran-roadmap.com/blog/how-to-prepare-for-a-cp-exam
- veteran-roadmap.com/blog/how-to-write-a-strong-statement
- veteran-roadmap.com/blog/claim-denied-next-steps
- veteran-roadmap.com/blog/how-va-disability-ratings-work

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