

Veteran Claims Made Easy™

A Marine's Guide to Filing Correctly & Winning the Benefits You Earned

RESOURCE 1 – CLAIM READINESS CHECKLIST

Claim Readiness Checklist

A simple way to confirm you're fully prepared before filing your VA disability claim.

This checklist helps you determine whether your claim has the essential elements the VA looks for: a current diagnosis, evidence of an in-service event, and a clear link between the two. If anything is missing, you'll know exactly what to shore up before submitting.

SECTION 1 — Current Medical Evidence

You are ready if you can check all that apply:

- You have a **current diagnosis** from a licensed medical professional. • Your diagnosis is **less than 12 months old** or supported by ongoing treatment. • You have **treatment records** covering the period you've experienced symptoms.
- You have **private medical records** collected or requested using VA Form 21-4142/4142a.
- You have **VA treatment records** in your VA.gov or MyHealtheVet account. • You have a **symptom log** showing frequency, severity, and impact on daily life.

SECTION 2 — In-Service Event, Injury, or Exposure

Check all that apply:

- You can clearly identify the **event, injury, or exposure** that caused or aggravated the condition.
- You have **service treatment records (STRs)** documenting the issue *or* related symptoms.
- If STRs are missing, you have **buddy statements** or **other corroborating evidence**.

- You can explain **where**, **when**, and **how** the incident happened.
- Your MOS or duty assignments logically support the exposure or injury.

SECTION 3 — Nexus (Medical Link)

Check all that apply:

- You understand the difference between **direct**, **secondary**, and **aggravated** service connection.
- Your condition is medically explainable as related to your service.
- You can articulate how your symptoms started during or worsened because of service.
- You can explain the timeline between service and now.
- You have a **medical opinion**, **C&P notes**, or **clear written explanation** supporting the connection.

SECTION 4 — Supporting Statements

Check all that apply:

- You have a **personal statement** describing your symptoms and how they affect daily life.
- You have at least one **buddy statement** confirming the in-service event or changes in your behavior/function.
- You have **employment records**, if relevant (missed work, accommodations, etc.).
- You have **spouse or family observations** documented (optional but helpful).

SECTION 5 — Administrative Readiness

Check all that apply:

- You created or confirmed your **up-to-date VA.gov account**.
- You have selected whether you will file a **Fully Developed Claim (FDC)** or Standard claim.
- You have all evidence digitized and properly labeled.
- You understand how to upload documents to VA.gov.
- You have submitted (or are ready to submit) an **Intent to File** to lock in your effective date.
- You are aware of your upcoming **C&P exam responsibilities**.

SECTION 6 — Final Readiness Questions

You are ready to file if you can confidently answer **YES** to all of the following:

1. Do I have a current diagnosis?
2. Do I have evidence of an in-service event, injury, or exposure?
3. Do I have a clear explanation of the connection between the two?
4. Do I understand my symptoms and how to articulate them?
5. Do I have all evidence gathered, labeled, and prepared to upload?
6. Do I understand what happens after I file, including C&P exams?

If the answer to any question is **NO**, pause and address that area before filing — it will protect your claim and increase your chances of being approved the first time.

What Your Answers Mean — Next Steps

Take a moment to look back over your checklist answers.

There's no score and no pass or fail.

This is simply a way to decide what makes the most sense **before you file**.

If you checked

YES to almost everything

You likely have the main pieces in place.

At this stage, many veterans choose to have their claim reviewed to make sure:

- Nothing important is missing
- Statements are clear and consistent
- Evidence is organized the way the VA expects

Next step:

Claim Review for Accuracy

Standard Claim Review Package

This option is for veterans who are mostly ready to file and want a careful review before submitting their VA disability claim.

If you checked

YES to some items but NO or NOT SURE to others

You're close — but gaps or weak evidence can slow things down or lead to denial.

This usually means help is needed to:

- Identify what's missing
- Strengthen medical or service connection evidence
- Clarify statements before filing

Next step:

 Strengthen My Claim Before Filing

Enhanced Claim Review Package

This option is for veterans who are close but need help strengthening weak or missing areas before submitting their claim.

If many items were

NO

, or you felt overwhelmed completing this

Filing now could hurt your claim.

In this situation, it's usually better to pause and:

- Organize records
- Build clear explanations
- Assemble everything the right way before filing

Next step:

 Help Me Build This the Right Way

Full Claim Build-Out Support

This option is for veterans who feel overwhelmed or have major gaps and want structured, hands-on help preparing their claim correctly.

If you're unsure which path fits you, that's okay.
The goal is not speed — it's filing correctly