

VETERAN CLAIMS

VA Rating Decision Debrief Worksheet

A structured way to read and understand your decision letter before you decide what's next



PRIVACY NOTICE: Shared device? Protect your screen, downloads, printouts and surroundings. Clear or securely store this worksheet when finished.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Your VA decision letter can be long and dense. This worksheet helps you break it down issue by issue so you understand exactly what VA decided, why, and what evidence it considered — before you decide on next steps.

This worksheet does not tell you which decision-review option to choose, whether to appeal, or what your chances are. Decision-review choices involve deadlines and strategy that are specific to your situation. For that conversation, talk with an accredited attorney, claims agent, or Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative.

SECTION 1 — DECISION LETTER BASICS

Date on the decision letter: _____

Date you received it: _____

Type of decision (original claim, increased rating, Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, Board Appeal):

Combined disability rating assigned: _____

SECTION 2 — ISSUE-BY-ISSUE BREAKDOWN

Use this table for each condition or issue in your decision letter. Print or copy additional pages as needed.

Issue / condition: _____

FIELD	YOUR NOTES
Outcome (Granted / Denied / Deferred)	

FIELD	YOUR NOTES
Percentage assigned (if granted)	
Effective date assigned	
Diagnostic code cited (if listed)	
Favorable findings noted by the rater	
Evidence VA says it considered	
Evidence you submitted that isn't mentioned	
Reasons VA gave for this outcome	
Questions this raises for you	

SECTION 3 — EFFECTIVE DATES

Effective dates are often the most misunderstood part of a decision. VA generally sets the effective date as the later of the date it received your claim or the date your entitlement arose — with different rules for claims filed within one year of separation, presumptive conditions, reopened claims, and increased-rating claims.

Effective date(s) assigned in this decision: _____

Does the effective date match when you filed, or when your condition began, or something else?

Do you understand why VA chose this date? ☐ Yes ☐ No — question for review _____

SECTION 4 — GRANTED, DENIED, AND DEFERRED ISSUES AT A GLANCE

ISSUE	GRANTED	DENIED	DEFERRED
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐

Note on deferred issues: A deferred issue means VA needs more evidence or time before deciding — it is not a denial. Check your letter for what VA says it still needs.

SECTION 5 — UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

List anything in the letter you don't understand, disagree with, or want explained by a professional before deciding what to do next.

SECTION 6 — DEADLINES TO BE AWARE OF

VA decision letters generally state the deadline that applies to your specific decision. Write down what your letter says here, and confirm it against the official source if anything is unclear.

Deadline stated in your letter (if any): _____

Type of deadline (e.g., 1 year for Higher-Level Review or Board Appeal from the date on the letter; no fixed deadline to file a Supplemental Claim, though VA recommends filing within 1 year to preserve your effective date):

This worksheet does not recommend a specific decision-review path. VA offers three review options — Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, and Board Appeal — each with different rules about new evidence, timelines, and eligibility. An accredited representative can help you match your situation to the right option and make sure you don't miss a deadline.

WHAT THIS WORKSHEET IS NOT

This worksheet helps you organize and understand your own decision letter. It does not interpret VA law for your specific case, does not recommend an appeal strategy, and does not guarantee any outcome. Veteran Claims is not part of, and is not endorsed by, the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VERIFIED AS OF AND SOURCES

Verified as of: August 11, 2026.

RULES CHANGE: Decision-review rules, timelines, and average processing times change — confirm current details at the official source links below before making decisions about deadlines.

- VA decision reviews and appeals — <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/>
- Supplemental Claims — <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/supplemental-claim/>
- Higher-Level Reviews — <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/>
- Board Appeals — <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/board-appeal/>
- Disability compensation effective dates — <https://www.va.gov/disability/effective-date/>
- Get help from an accredited representative — <https://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative>

Continue at the official source: <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/>