



VETERANS CLAIMS EDUCATION · FREE GUIDE

C&P Exams: Guide and Trackers

Before, during and after your exam · Rescheduling and no-shows · Video and weekend exams · What to say · Getting your report · Skipped tests and bad exams · 12 printable logs and trackers

Before you start: we are a free education resource. We are not VA, a VSO, an attorney or an accredited claims agent, and we don't decide what applies to you. Only VA decides. Examples are made up to show how the rules work.

The key idea: go, and describe your worst days honestly

Missing your exam without a good reason can sink your claim. At the exam, the examiner only knows what you show and tell them. The trackers at the back of this guide help you walk in with real numbers: how often, how long, and what you can't do.

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SECTION 1

What the C&P exam is

A Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam is a medical exam VA orders for your claim. The examiner's report is often the most important medical evidence VA reads.

Who does it

A VA provider or a VA contractor. It isn't treatment, and the examiner isn't your doctor.

What they do

Examine you, review records, fill out a Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ), and sometimes give an opinion on the link to service.

Who decides

Not the examiner. VA reviews the report with all your evidence and makes the decision.

Kind of exam	What it means
In person	At a VA medical center or contractor office, usually within 50 miles of home (100 for specialists).
Telehealth	By phone or video from home, in some cases. If your condition needs hands-on testing, you can ask for in person.
Records review (ACE)	If your file already has enough medical evidence, VA may skip the exam and decide from your records.

EXAMPLE

A records-only review

Jen sends VA a complete DBQ from her own doctor with her knee claim.

VA decides the evidence is enough and does an Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) review instead of scheduling an exam. Her doctor's detailed measurements carry the claim.

The rules: [VA: Your VA claim exam](#) · [38 CFR § 3.159\(c\)\(4\)](#) · [§ 3.326](#)

2 · WHO DOES C&P EXAMS

VA schedules your exam at a VA medical center or with one of its contracted examiners. VA picks the contractor based on where you live; you can't choose one. The same exam rules apply either way.

Contractor	Caller ID	Phone
Leidos QTC Health Services	VA EXAM-QTC	800-682-9701
OptumServe Health Services	VA EXAM-Optum	866-933-8387 (TTY: 711)
Veterans Evaluation Services (VES)	VA EXAM-VES	877-637-8387
Loyal Source Government Services	Loyal Source	833-832-7077

Not sure a call is real? Hang up and call the contractor's number above, or VA at 800-827-1000. Contractors may verify your identity, but there's never a charge for a VA exam. Contractors can change; check [VA's contract exam vendors page](#) for the current list.

Before your exam

1. Watch for the call, letter or email. You can't schedule it yourself. Answer unknown numbers while your claim is open, and keep your contact information current on VA.gov.
2. Confirm the appointment by calling the number on your letter. Log it on Tracker 9.
3. Send new records before the exam, through your claim on VA.gov or your VSO, so they're in your file.
4. Read your rating criteria. Look up your condition's diagnostic code and what the next level requires. Our CFR Explained guide shows how.
5. Track your symptoms for 2 to 4 weeks using Trackers 1 to 7.
6. Fill out an exam prep sheet (Tracker 8) for each condition being examined.
7. Upload your logs to your claim, or turn them into a statement on VA Form 21-4138, before the exam.
8. Plan the trip: arrive 15 minutes early, wear comfortable clothes that let you show the body part, and bring a photo ID and your glasses, hearing aids, brace or cane.

Travel pay: VA reimburses travel for exams at VA medical centers through its travel pay program. For contractor exams, the contractor reimburses travel; if you aren't paid within 14 days, call the contractor.

EXAMPLE

Getting ready for a back exam

Carlos gets a call from a contractor for a back exam in three weeks.

He confirms the date, logs the call, reads the spine rating criteria, and starts a daily symptom log and flare-up tracker. A week before, he uploads the logs with a one-page statement. He fills out his prep sheet the night before.



SECTION 4

Keep your date, or **reschedule safely**

Rescheduling delays your claim

A new exam date pushes back the whole decision. Your effective date doesn't change, but your pay comes later.

You may get only one change

For contractor exams, you can usually reschedule only once, to a date within 5 days of the original.

Missing it can mean a denial

Without good cause, a first claim is decided on what VA already has. A claim for an increase or a Supplemental Claim is denied.

Good cause gets a new date

Like your own illness or hospitalization, a death in your immediate family, homelessness or a terminal illness.

If you truly can't make it

1. Call the number on your letter at least 48 hours ahead.
2. Ask for the new date in writing. Write down who you talked to on Tracker 10.
3. If you already missed it, tell VA right away why, by phone, online or by mail, with proof of the reason if you have it.

EXAMPLE

A sick child on exam day

Ana's daughter is hospitalized the night before her exam.

She calls the contractor that morning, explains, and uploads a short statement and the hospital discharge note through her claim. It's good cause, so she gets a new appointment.

EXAMPLE

Missing an increase exam

Hal ignores calls from an unknown number and misses his exam for a knee increase.

VA denies the increase for failure to report without good cause. He has to start again, and he loses months. Keeping contact information current and answering calls would have prevented it.

The rules: [38 CFR § 3.655](#) · [VA: Your VA claim exam](#)

No-shows, video and weekend exams

5A · IF THE EXAMINER DOESN'T SHOW UP OR CANCELS

That's not a missed exam on your part. The missed-exam rule is about veterans who don't report. But protect yourself so it isn't recorded that way.

1. Before you leave, ask the front desk to note that you showed up and the exam didn't happen. Get the staff member's name.
2. Write it down: date, time you arrived, who you spoke with, what they said (Tracker 11). A photo of the check-in sheet or a parking receipt helps.
3. Call the number on your letter that day to reschedule.
4. Tell VA in writing: upload a short statement saying you reported on time and the exam was canceled or not done.
5. Ask about travel pay for the wasted trip.
6. If a decision says you "failed to report," respond right away with your statement and proof. Within a year of the decision, a Higher-Level Review can fix it.

Sample statement: *"I reported on time for my C&P exam on [date] at [time] at [location]. The exam was not done because [the examiner was unavailable / the office canceled]. I spoke with [name]. I did not miss this exam, and I am willing to attend a rescheduled exam."*

EXAMPLE

The examiner who never came

Ray drove 45 minutes. After an hour, the front desk told him the examiner had called out sick.

He asked the desk to note he was there, photographed his check-in slip, rescheduled from the parking lot, and uploaded a statement that night. His decision had no "failed to report" problem.

5B · VIDEO OR PHONE EXAMS

The day before

Test the link, camera, microphone and speaker.
Charge your device. Find a quiet, private, well-lit room with space to stand and move. Set the camera so your whole body shows for joint or back exams.

During the call

Join early. Keep your logs nearby. Tell the examiner if a movement isn't safe, and why. Describe what they can't see: swelling that comes and goes, flare-ups, how far you can walk.

Need hands-on testing, like measuring joint motion or a nerve exam? Ask the exam office early for an in-person exam. If the technology fails, call the number on your letter right away, write down the time, and send VA a short statement that you were ready and the connection failed.

5C · WEEKEND EXAMS

Some contractors see veterans on Saturdays, and a weekend appointment counts like any other.

- ☐ Check the caller ID matches a VA contractor, or call VA at 800-827-1000 to confirm
- ☐ Need to reschedule? Call on a business day before the weekend; offices may be closed
- ☐ Can't do weekends because of work, child care or religious observance? Call as soon as you get the letter and ask for a weekday
- ☐ Confirm the office is open and how to get in; some buildings use different weekend entrances

EXAMPLE

A Saturday appointment

Leo gets a letter for a Saturday 8 a.m. exam. He works Saturdays.

He calls on Tuesday, explains, and gets a weekday slot the same week. He logs the call, the new date and the person he spoke with.



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Your symptom log

Keep notes for 2 to 4 weeks before the exam. A log helps you remember specifics in the exam room, and it can go in your file as evidence. The trackers at the back of this guide are built for this.

Track this	Why it matters	Tracker
What happens, in plain words	Gives the examiner the full picture, including small symptoms	1
How often and how long	Many ratings depend on frequency and duration	1, 2, 4
Flare-ups	Joint exams must consider flare-ups, even if you're not flaring that day	3
Sleep, mood, panic, anger	Mental health ratings look at how symptoms affect work and relationships	5
Missed work and help you need	Shows how the condition limits daily life and work	6
Medications and side effects	Side effects can be secondary conditions; some ratings depend on treatment	7

Rules for a useful log

- ☐ Write it the same day, while you remember
- ☐ Use real numbers: "3 times this week, 2 hours each," not "a lot"
- ☐ Describe what you couldn't do, not just how it felt
- ☐ Write good days too. An honest log is more believable
- ☐ Keep the original. Upload a copy, or summarize it on VA Form 21-4138

Weak entry: *"Back hurt today."*

Strong entry: *"Back pain 7/10 from 6 a.m. to noon. Couldn't bend to tie shoes; wife helped. Left work 2 hours early. Took prescribed muscle relaxer; drowsy all afternoon."*

EXAMPLE

The log that filled a gap

Mia's knee examiner didn't ask about flare-ups.

Her flare-up tracker, uploaded a week before the exam, showed 9 flare-ups in a month lasting 1 to 3 days. When the decision came back low, her Higher-Level Review pointed to the log and the examiner's failure to address flare-ups. VA ordered a new exam.

During the exam

- ☐ Describe your typical and worst days, not just how you feel that morning.
- ☐ Flare-ups: if you're not flaring that day, say how often flare-ups happen, how long they last, and what you can't do. The examiner should estimate your limits during a flare (*Sharp v. Shulkin*, 2017).
- ☐ Range of motion: stop when it hurts, and say where the pain starts. Joint exams should test moving on your own and with help, with and without weight when that applies (*Correia v. McDonald*, 2016).
- ☐ Take your medications as prescribed, and say how you are when they wear off.
- ☐ Mention every symptom of the conditions being examined, even small ones.
- ☐ Stay honest. Overstating hurts your credibility as much as downplaying hurts your rating.

If the examiner won't take your log or papers: many exam offices don't accept documents at the exam. Don't argue.

1. Use it as notes. Read the key points out loud: how often, how long, your worst day, what you can't do.
2. Ask: "Can you please note in the report that I have flare-ups about twice a week that last 2 days?"
3. Ask: "Please note that I brought a symptom log."
4. Upload the log to your claim that day if you didn't already, with a short statement that you offered it.

Right after the exam, fill out Tracker 11 in the car or waiting room: how long it lasted, what was tested and skipped, and anything said.



What to say, and what not to say

Instead of	Try saying
"I'm fine." / "It's not that bad."	"Most days my back hurts at about 6 out of 10. On bad days, about twice a week, I can't bend to put on my shoes."
"I get headaches."	"About once a week I get a migraine that makes me stop and lie down in a dark room for 4 to 6 hours."
"My knee bothers me."	"My knee gives out on stairs about 3 times a week. I wear a brace my doctor prescribed."
"I manage."	"I missed 6 days of work last month, and my wife helps me get dressed during flare-ups."
"I don't sleep well."	"I sleep about 4 hours a night. Nightmares wake me 3 or 4 nights a week, and I'm exhausted at work."
"I get stressed."	"I have panic attacks about twice a week. I stopped going to the grocery store, and my wife does the shopping."
"It hurts all the time, 10 out of 10."	Real numbers and real examples. Specific, honest details are more believable.

EXAMPLE

The good-day exam

Marcus's back exam falls on one of his better days. He can bend farther than usual.

He tells the examiner: "Today is a better day. About twice a week I flare up and can barely bend at all, for 2 or 3 days at a time." He reads from his flare-up tracker, and the examiner estimates his motion during flares.

EXAMPLE

Toughing it out

Dee pushes through the pain to touch her toes because she doesn't want to look weak.

The report shows nearly normal motion. Better: stop where the pain starts and say so: "It starts hurting here, and I can't go farther without sharp pain."

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Examples by condition

Each condition is rated on different things. Know what the examiner is looking for, and track exactly that. Your rating criteria are in 38 CFR Part 4; our CFR Explained guide shows how to read them.

Condition	What the examiner usually checks	What to describe and track
Back, neck, joints	Range of motion with a goniometer, pain, repeated use, flare-ups, instability, the other joint for comparison (§ 4.59)	Flare-up frequency and length, what you can't do (bend, lift, stairs), braces or canes, missed work (Trackers 3, 6)
Nerves (radiculopathy, neuropathy)	Strength, reflexes, sensation; which nerve and how severe (§ 4.124a)	Numbness, tingling, burning, weakness, dropping things, falls (Tracker 1)
Migraines and headaches	How often attacks are prostrating (you have to stop and lie down), and how long they last	Every headache: start and end time, lying down, missed work (Tracker 4)
PTSD, depression, anxiety	Symptoms and how they affect work, family and social life (§ 4.130)	Sleep, nightmares, panic, anger, isolation, memory, concentration (Tracker 5)
Hearing loss and tinnitus	A licensed audiologist, a pure-tone test and a Maryland CNC speech test (§ 4.85)	Situations where you can't follow speech; ringing and its effect on sleep and focus
Sleep apnea	Diagnosis by sleep study and what treatment you use	CPAP use, daytime sleepiness, effects at work (Trackers 5, 7)
Skin	How much of your body and exposed skin is affected, and treatment in the past year (§ 4.118)	Photos during flares; creams, pills or shots and how long you used them (Tracker 7)
Stomach and digestion	Symptoms, frequency, and treatment	Episodes, food limits, medications, weight changes (Trackers 1, 7)

JOINTS

A knee that gives out

Tony's knee buckles on stairs and swells after long shifts. His exam is on a Monday after a quiet weekend.

His flare-up tracker shows 3 flares a week lasting a day each. He tells the examiner, describes using a prescribed brace, and asks that his flare-ups be noted.

HEADACHES

A month of migraines

Lena has migraines but can't remember how many.

Her headache log shows 6 attacks last month; 4 made her lie down in a dark room for 4 to 8 hours, and she left work early twice. She reads those numbers at her exam.

MENTAL HEALTH

A week in the life

Sam says "I'm doing okay" out of habit.

He brings his sleep and mental health log and says: "I average 4 hours of sleep, I had 2 panic attacks this week, and I skipped my son's game because of crowds."

NERVES

Numb feet

Kim's diabetic neuropathy makes her feet numb and burn at night.

Her log shows she tripped twice this month and can't feel the gas pedal well. She describes it, and the examiner tests sensation in both feet.

Mental health exams

- ☐ Describe a typical week and your worst days, not just today.
- ☐ Cover work, family, friends, sleep, anger, concentration, memory and panic: how often and how bad.
- ☐ Mention things you've stopped doing, and how others see you change.
- ☐ Bring a trusted person's statement about what they see (VA Form 21-10210).
- ☐ It's okay to say a question is hard to talk about. You don't have to share every detail of a traumatic event in one exam.
- ☐ If you have thoughts of harming yourself, say so. Help is available: Veterans Crisis Line, dial 988 then press 1.

MST and sensitive exams: you can ask for a male or female examiner for mental health exams, claims related to military sexual trauma, and reproductive, breast or rectal exams.

EXAMPLE

A spouse's view

Rick downplays his symptoms. His wife sees the night sweats, the anger and the missed family events.

She writes a statement on VA Form 21-10210 describing a typical week. Rick uploads it before his exam, and the examiner reviews it with his file.



After the exam: get **your report**

1. Ask for the full report as part of your claims file (C-file). Use a Privacy Act request on VA Form 20-10206, submitted online, not through your claim. Step-by-step instructions are in our Evidence & Records guide.
2. Faster options: exams at a VA medical center may show up in My HealtheVet, and a VSO with your power of attorney can often view the report in your electronic file.
3. Compare it to your rating criteria using Tracker 12: did the examiner record what the next level needs?
4. Check for errors: wrong side of the body, missing conditions, flare-ups skipped, statements ignored, or facts that are just wrong.

Don't wait on the report to act. If your exam went badly, send a statement right away explaining what happened. Decision deadlines don't pause.

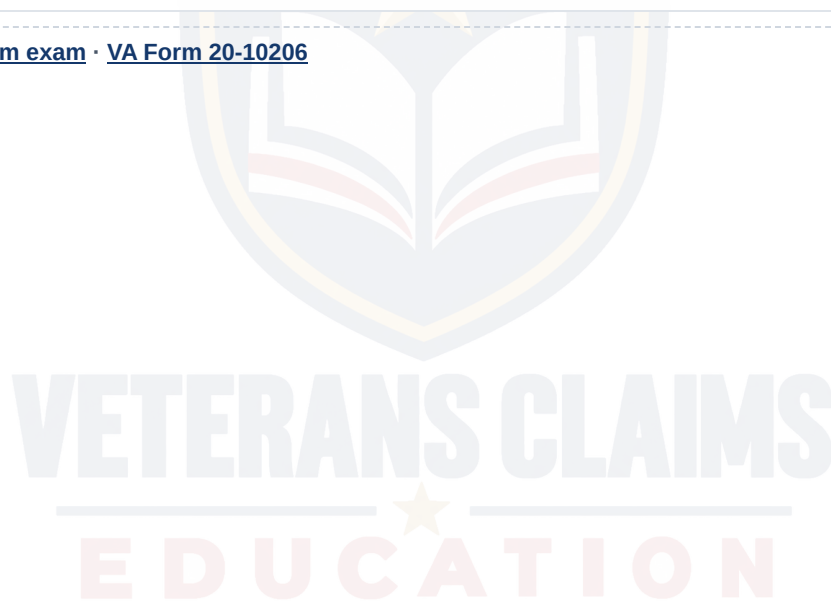
EXAMPLE

The wrong knee

Pat's VSO views her report: the examiner measured her left knee. Her claim is for the right.

She sends a statement that week pointing out the error and asking for a new exam of the right knee, before VA decides.

The rules: [VA: Your VA claim exam](#) · [VA Form 20-10206](#)



Spotting an inadequate exam

Once VA gives you an exam, it has to be adequate (Barr v. Nicholson, 2007). Red flags:

Red flag	Why it matters
An opinion with no reasons	A conclusion like “less likely than not” needs medical reasoning (Nieves-Rodriguez v. Peake, 2008)
Your statements ignored	An examiner can’t rely only on missing records and ignore your account (Dalton v. Nicholson, 2007)
Flare-ups not addressed	Joint exams must consider flare-ups, or explain why they can’t estimate them (Sharp v. Shulkin, 2017)
Required tests skipped	The DBQ wasn’t completed for what your rating needs, like range of motion
Wrong facts	Wrong side, wrong history, or a condition you don’t have
Wrong kind of examiner	Some exams call for specialists, like mental health, hearing, eye and dental
Didn’t answer VA’s question	For example, addressed “caused by” but not “made worse by” on a secondary claim

A short exam isn’t automatically inadequate. What matters is whether it covered what your rating needs and gave reasons for any opinion.



Skipped tests and witness statements

Condition	What should be done	Rule
Joints and spine	Motion measured with a goniometer; pain on moving on your own and with help, with and without weight when that applies; the other joint; repeated use and flare-ups	§ 4.40 · § 4.45 · § 4.46 · § 4.59
Hearing loss	A licensed audiologist, a pure-tone test and a Maryland CNC speech test	§ 4.85
Nerves	Strength, reflexes and sensation; which nerve is involved	§ 4.124a
Skin	How much of your body and exposed skin is affected; treatment over the past year	§ 4.118
Mental health	Symptoms and their effect on work and relationships, by a qualified examiner	§ 4.130

What to do, step by step

1. During the exam, ask politely: “Will you be measuring my range of motion?” or “Can I tell you about my flare-ups?”
2. Right after, write down what was skipped and how long the exam lasted (Tracker 11).
3. Within a few days, send VA a statement on VA Form 21-4138 naming what was missing, and ask for a new exam.
4. Fill the gap yourself if you can: ask your own provider to complete the public DBQ, with measurements.
5. If a decision comes first: within 1 year, ask for a Higher-Level Review and point to the missing tests (a duty-to-assist error), or file a Supplemental Claim with your provider’s DBQ.

Sample statement: “At my C&P exam on [date] for my [right knee], the examiner did not measure my range of motion with a goniometer, did not test after repeated movements, and did not ask about flare-ups. My flare-ups happen [twice a week] and limit me to [describe]. The exam lasted about [8] minutes. I request a new examination.”

Adding a witness statement

Anyone who saw what happened, like a spouse or friend in the room, can write a statement on VA Form 21-10210, Lay/Witness Statement. You write your own on VA Form 21-4138.

1. The witness writes their name, contact information, how they know you, and what they saw, with the date, place and time.
2. Stick to facts they saw: how long it lasted, what was and wasn’t done, what was said.
3. They sign and date it.
4. Upload it to your claim on VA.gov, give it to your VSO, or mail it to the address on your VA letter. Keep a copy.

Sample witness statement: “I am [name], [the veteran’s wife]. I went with [veteran] to his C&P exam on [date] at [location] and was in the room. The exam lasted about [8] minutes. The examiner watched him bend his knee once but did not use any measuring tool and did not ask about flare-ups. I see his flare-ups about twice a week, when he can’t climb stairs or drive.”

EXAMPLE

The knee exam with no measurements

Dana's exam lasted 7 minutes. The examiner watched her bend her knee once and never used a measuring tool.

Two days later she uploaded a statement listing the skipped tests, her husband's witness statement, and a DBQ from her orthopedist with measurements. VA ordered a new exam before deciding.

14 · CHALLENGE IT, CHANGE EXAMINERS, COMPLAIN

Before the decision

1. Send a statement (VA Form 21-4138) explaining exactly what was wrong or skipped.
2. Ask VA for a new exam, and say why.
3. Send a private opinion or DBQ from your own provider. VA doesn't pay for it.

After the decision (within 1 year)

1. Higher-Level Review: point to the inadequate exam.
2. Supplemental Claim: add a private opinion or DBQ.
3. Board Appeal: for a judge's review. See our Reviews & Appeals guide.

EXAMPLE

A rushed knee exam

Tim's exam took 8 minutes. The examiner wrote that he "denies instability," though Tim wears a prescribed brace.

The same week, Tim sends a statement with his brace prescription. When the decision comes back low, he asks for a Higher-Level Review pointing to the inadequate exam. VA orders a new one.

Asking for a different examiner

- ☐ Gender: for mental health, MST-related, reproductive, breast or rectal exams
- ☐ Specialty: if your condition needs a specialist, like mental health, hearing, eye or dental
- ☐ A real problem with the examiner: call the exam office before the exam and explain briefly; after a bad exam, ask VA for a new exam with a different examiner in your statement
- ☐ Your own provider can complete a public DBQ, which VA must consider

Filing a complaint

1. Write it down right away: date, time, place, examiner's name, what happened, witnesses.
2. Contractor exam: call the contractor and ask to file a complaint. VA medical center exam: contact the facility's Patient Advocate.
3. Tell VA through [Ask VA](#) or the VA hotline at 855-948-2311.
4. Fix the evidence too. A complaint doesn't change your claim; send VA a statement about the exam.

Keep your treatment going

Your regular treatment records show VA how your condition really is over time. Gaps in treatment can look like improvement.

- ☐ Start care for every condition you claim, even if it's a primary care visit
- ☐ Keep going, and reschedule instead of skipping
- ☐ If you can't get appointments, write down why: no openings, distance, cost or work. Then tell VA
- ☐ Ask providers to document your symptoms at each visit, and fix wrong notes (see our Evidence & Records guide)

EXAMPLE

The two-year gap

Joe stopped seeing his doctor for his back because appointments were hard to get.

His examiner notes "no treatment in two years." Joe sends a statement explaining the wait times and his own care at home, with his symptom log, and restarts treatment.

16 · MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake	The fix
Ignoring calls from unknown numbers	Answer while your claim is open; keep contact info current
Rescheduling when you don't have to	Keep your date; you may get only one change
Describing only how you feel today	Describe typical days, worst days and flare-ups
Pushing through pain during motion tests	Stop where the pain starts, and say so
Walking in with no numbers	Use your trackers: how often, how long, what you can't do
Bringing your log only to the exam	Upload it before the exam so it's in your file
Waiting for the decision to fix a bad exam	Send a statement within days
Leaving after a no-show without proof	Get a name, a photo of check-in, and send VA a statement

Your checklist

- ☐ Contact information current on VA.gov; answering unknown calls
- ☐ Exam confirmed and logged; kept the original date if possible, or gave 48 hours' notice
- ☐ Video exam: tested the link and set up a private room with space to move
- ☐ Weekend exam: confirmed it's real and the office is open, or asked for a weekday early
- ☐ New private records uploaded before the exam
- ☐ Read the rating criteria for each condition
- ☐ Tracked symptoms for 2 to 4 weeks, and uploaded the logs or a statement
- ☐ Exam prep sheet filled out for each condition
- ☐ Photo ID, glasses, hearing aids, brace or cane ready; arriving 15 minutes early
- ☐ Described typical days, worst days and flare-ups; stopped where pain started
- ☐ Filled out after-exam notes right away
- ☐ Examiner didn't show? Documented it, rescheduled, sent VA a statement
- ☐ Requested my exam report through my C-file and reviewed it
- ☐ Sent a statement right away if anything was wrong or skipped
- ☐ Asked about travel reimbursement



Logs and trackers

The next pages are printable logs. Each one starts with a shaded sample row so you can see what a good entry looks like.

1. Start 2 to 4 weeks before your exam, or any time you're building a claim or an increase.
2. Write the same day, in pen or pencil. Short is fine; specific is better.
3. Pick the trackers that fit. Everyone should use 1, 3 and 8. Add 4 for headaches, 5 for mental health or sleep, 6 for work impact, 7 for medications.
4. Upload copies to your claim before the exam, or summarize them on VA Form 21-4138. Keep the originals.
5. Bring a copy to the exam to read from, even if the examiner won't take it.
6. Keep tracking after the exam. Logs help with reviews, appeals and future increases.

#	Tracker	Best for
1	Daily symptom log	Any condition
2	Monthly symptom calendar	Seeing patterns at a glance; bringing a one-page summary
3	Flare-up tracker	Back, neck, joints, arthritis, skin, stomach
4	Headache log	Migraines and other headaches
5	Sleep and mental health log	PTSD, depression, anxiety, sleep apnea, tinnitus
6	Work and daily life log	Showing missed work and help you need
7	Medication tracker	Treatment, side effects, possible secondary conditions
8	Exam prep sheet	One per condition, filled out before the exam
9	Exam appointment tracker	Keeping dates, contractors and travel pay straight
10	Call and contact log	Proof of who you talked to and when
11	After-exam notes	Right after the exam, while you remember
12	Report review	Checking the examiner's report against your rating criteria

Logs are your own honest record. Never exaggerate. Real, consistent details are what make a log believable.

Daily symptom log

One line per day, or per episode. Condition: _____

Date	Symptoms	Pain 0–10	How long	What I couldn't do	What helped / meds
3/4	Low back pain, left leg tingling	7	6 a.m.–noon	Couldn't tie shoes; wife helped. Left work 2 hrs early	Muscle relaxer; drowsy



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Monthly symptom calendar

Write your pain number (0–10) in each day. Add a letter for anything else that happened.

Key: F = flare-up · H = headache (L if you had to lie down) · P = panic attack · N = nightmare · W = missed work or left early · D = doctor visit · M = medication change

Month: _____ Condition: _____

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

Month summary: Flare-ups: _____ · Days lying down: _____ · Missed work days: _____ · Worst day and why: _____

EXAMPLE

One page that says a lot

Ray brings his calendar to his back exam: 8 F days, 3 W days, and pain mostly 5 to 7.

He reads the summary out loud: "I had 8 flare-up days last month and missed 3 days of work."

TRACKER 3

Flare-up tracker

A flare-up is when your symptoms get much worse for a time. Track each one from start to finish. Condition:

Start	End	Days	What set it off	What I couldn't do during it	Treatment / missed work
3/10	3/12	3	Mowing the lawn	Couldn't bend or sit more than 20 min; couldn't drive	Ice, meds; missed 2 days



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For the examiner: About how often do flare-ups happen? _____ · How long do they last? _____ · How much worse is motion during a flare?

TRACKER 4

Headache log

Log every headache, even mild ones. “Lay down” means you had to stop what you were doing and lie down.

Date	Start	End	Pain 0–10	Lay down?	Symptoms (light, sound, nausea, vision)	Missed work?	Meds / helped?
3/6	2 p.m.	9 p.m.	8	Yes	Light hurt, nausea, vomited once	Left 3 hrs early	Prescribed med; dark room



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Sleep and mental health log

Write a few words each day. This helps with PTSD, depression, anxiety, sleep apnea and tinnitus claims.

Date	Hours slept	Nightmares / waking	Panic or anxiety	Anger / irritability	Avoided or stopped doing	Notes (memory, focus, mood, CPAP)
3/8	4	Woke 3x, nightmare	1 attack, store	Yelled at son	Skipped son's game	Forgot appointment; CPAP 5 hrs



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Work and daily life log

How your conditions affect work, chores, family and getting around.

Date	Condition	Work impact (missed, left early, light duty)	Help I needed from others	Things I couldn't do or stopped doing
3/11	Back, knee	Left 2 hrs early; skipped lifting	Wife helped with shoes and shower	Couldn't mow; stopped coaching



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Total this month: Days missed ____ · Hours left early ____ · Lost pay or used leave? _____

Medication tracker

List every medicine, including over-the-counter. Side effects can be secondary conditions; tell your doctor.

Medication	For which condition	Dose / how often	Started	Does it control symptoms?	Side effects
<i>Naproxen</i>	<i>Back, knees</i>	<i>500 mg, 2x/day</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Takes the edge off</i>	<i>Heartburn, stomach pain</i>



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Treatments that aren't pills (CPAP, brace, cane, creams, shots, physical therapy, injections):

Exam prep sheet

Fill out one per condition the night before. Bring it to read from.

Condition being examined: _____

Diagnostic code (from your decision or the rating schedule): _____

What the next rating level requires (from 38 CFR Part 4):

My typical day:

My worst day in the last month:

Flare-ups: how often, how long, what I can't do:

Things I've stopped doing or need help with:

Work: days missed, accommodations, jobs I can't do anymore:

Medications, devices and side effects:

The 3 things I must say:

- ☐ Uploaded my logs or statement before the exam
- ☐ Medication list

- ☐ Photo ID, glasses, hearing aids, brace or cane
- ☐ Copy of my logs to read from

Exam appointment tracker

Write each exam as soon as you're contacted.

Condition(s)	Date and time	Place or video link	Contractor or VA	Confirmed? (who, when)	Travel pay filed / paid
<i>R knee, back</i>	<i>4/2, 9:30 a.m.</i>	<i>QTC, 100 Main St.</i>	<i>QTC</i>	<i>Yes, Maria, 3/20</i>	<i>Filed 4/2; paid 4/12</i>



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Reschedule record (date I called, who I spoke with, reason, new date):

Call and contact log

Every call, letter or message with VA, a contractor, your VSO or a congressional office.

Date / time	Who I contacted	Person's name / ID	Phone or method	What was said	Next step
3/20, 10 a.m.	QTC	Maria, #4471	800-682-9701	Confirmed 4/2 exam, bring ID	Upload logs by 3/27



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After-exam notes

Fill this out right after the exam, before you drive home.

Date: _____ Time I arrived: _____
 Location / video: _____ Exam started: _____
 Examiner's name: _____ Exam ended: _____

What the examiner did (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Reviewed my records or asked my history | ☐ Asked about flare-ups |
| ☐ Measured motion with a goniometer (measuring tool) | ☐ Tested motion after repeated movements |
| ☐ Tested with and without weight (if it applies) | ☐ Checked the other side for comparison |
| ☐ Tested strength, reflexes or sensation | ☐ Asked how it affects work and daily life |
| ☐ Asked about medications and side effects | ☐ Accepted my log or noted that I offered it |
| ☐ Mental health: asked about work, family, sleep | ☐ Hearing: booth test and speech test |

What was skipped or rushed:

What I told the examiner (key points):

Anything the examiner said:

Who was with me (possible witness):

Next steps:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Upload a statement if anything was wrong or skipped | ☐ Ask a witness for VA Form 21-10210 |
| ☐ Request the report (VA Form 20-10206) | ☐ File travel pay |

Report review

Compare the examiner's report to your rating criteria and your own records.

Item in the report	What the report says	What's true / what's missing	What I'll send
Flare-ups	"Not reported"	I said 2x/week, 2-3 days; log uploaded 3/27	Statement + flare log; ask new exam
Side examined	Left knee	My claim is for the right knee	Statement asking for right knee exam



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- ☐ Correct condition and side
- ☐ Flare-ups addressed
- ☐ Opinion has reasons
- ☐ Specialist used if needed

- ☐ Range of motion measured (if joints)
- ☐ My statements and logs considered
- ☐ Answered "caused by" and "made worse by" (secondary)
- ☐ Facts and history correct

Found a problem? Send a statement before the decision, or within 1 year after it ask for a Higher-Level Review or file a Supplemental Claim.

Official sources

The rules in this guide come from these official sources. Click or type any link.

- VA pages: [VA: Your VA claim exam](#) · [VA: Contract exam vendors](#) · [VA: Public DBQs](#) · [Ask VA](#)
- Forms: [VA Form 21-4138 \(statement\)](#) · [VA Form 21-10210 \(lay/witness statement\)](#) · [VA Form 20-10206 \(Privacy Act request\)](#)
- Exams and duty to assist: [38 CFR § 3.159](#) · [§ 3.326](#) · [§ 3.655](#) missed exams
- Rating rules: [§ 4.40](#) · [§ 4.45](#) · [§ 4.46](#) · [§ 4.59](#) · [§ 4.85](#) · [§ 4.118](#) · [§ 4.124a](#) · [§ 4.130](#)
- Court cases: [Barr v. Nicholson, 21 Vet. App. 303 \(2007\)](#) · [Dalton v. Nicholson, 21 Vet. App. 23 \(2007\)](#) · [Nieves-Rodriguez v. Peake, 22 Vet. App. 295 \(2008\)](#) · [Correia v. McDonald, 28 Vet. App. 158 \(2016\)](#) · [Sharp v. Shulkin, 29 Vet. App. 26 \(2017\)](#)
- More free guides: [C&P Exams page](#) · [Evidence & Records](#) · [CFR Explained](#) · [Reviews & Appeals](#) · [Statement Writer](#)

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