

# VA Claim Starter Checklist

Know exactly what to gather before you file, so nothing slips through the cracks. Print this page and take it to your next appointment.

## 1. Gather your service records

- |                                                                     |                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DD-214 (Member Copy 4)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Awards and decorations records      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service treatment records (STRs)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Line of duty determinations, if any |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deployment and duty station history        | <input type="checkbox"/> Reserve or Guard points statements  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performance evaluations that note injuries | <input type="checkbox"/> Separation physical, if you had one |

## 2. Document your current condition

- |                                                            |                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current diagnosis from a provider | <input type="checkbox"/> How symptoms affect work and daily life    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VA and private treatment records  | <input type="checkbox"/> Names of every condition you want to claim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> List of medications and dosages   | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary conditions linked to a primary   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dates symptoms began and worsened | <input type="checkbox"/> Any prior VA decision letters              |

## 3. Build your evidence

- ☐ Personal statement in your own words (what happened, what hurts, how it limits you)
- ☐ Buddy statements from people who saw the event or your symptoms
- ☐ Nexus letter from a provider linking the condition to service, when needed
- ☐ Private medical opinions or DBQs, if you have them

## 4. Before you file

- |                                                                          |                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm your dependents are on file with the VA | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider free help from an accredited representative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Update your direct deposit and address          | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a copy of everything you submit                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decide direct file vs. an Intent to File        | <input type="checkbox"/> Note the date you file and set a follow-up reminder  |

**File for free.** Filing an initial claim is free. No one needs to charge you an upfront fee to prepare and file it. Free, accredited help is available through VSOs like the DAV, VFW, and American Legion, and your state or county Veterans Service Office. Find an accredited representative at [va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representatives](https://va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representatives).

**Disclaimer:** FWD Assist HQ provides educational resources only. Nothing in this checklist is legal, medical, or accredited representation. Always confirm current forms and rules at [va.gov](https://va.gov) and consult an accredited representative for your situation. Rates and rules change, so check [fwdassisthq.com/rates](https://fwdassisthq.com/rates) before you rely on a printed number. © FWD Assist Publishing.