



New VA Claim Starter Checklist

The steps of a first disability claim, in the order they actually happen. Filing is free, and a free VSO can do all of this with you.

BEFORE YOU FILE

- ☐ File an Intent to File (VA Form 21-0966) to lock your effective date
- ☐ Gather your evidence (use the evidence checklist)
- ☐ Get a current diagnosis for each condition you are claiming

FILING YOUR CLAIM

- ☐ Complete VA Form 21-526EZ, online at VA.gov or with a free VSO
- ☐ Consider a free VA-accredited VSO to file with you, it costs nothing
- ☐ List every condition, and consider secondary conditions too

AFTER YOU FILE

- ☐ Attend your C&P exam (use the C&P prep checklist)
- ☐ Track your claim status on VA.gov
- ☐ Read your decision letter carefully when it arrives
- ☐ If you are denied, you have three appeal lanes, so do not give up

Start here: bootstobenefits.com/guides/start-here

bootstobenefits.com · Free, plain-English VA claims help. This is general education, not legal advice, and not from the VA. For your claim, work with a free VA-accredited VSO.