

VA Claim AI Evidence Builder

Use AI, BuddySign, and Organized Evidence to Build Your VA Claim File Without Inventing Facts

By a disabled OEF/OIF AFSOC Air Force veteran
Founder, BuddySign

Important Disclaimer

This handbook is for educational and organizational purposes only. It is not legal advice, medical advice, claim representation, or a guarantee of any VA result.

The author is not acting as your attorney, claims agent, VSO, medical provider, or VA representative. BuddySign and VA Claim Battle Buddy are not affiliated with, approved by, or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Always verify current VA forms, filing rules, deadlines, benefits, and procedures through VA.gov or a qualified accredited representative before filing. You are responsible for reviewing anything created with AI, BuddySign, templates, prompts, or this handbook for truth, accuracy, and completeness before using it.

Current ecosystem websites: BuddySign.com is the witness-statement signing app; VAClaimBattleBuddy.com is the AI assistant landing page; VAclaimAIEvidenceBuilder.com is the book, starter kit, and evidence-system hub.

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Foreword

Author's Note

Dear Veteran,

I write this guide as a disabled Air Force veteran from the OEF/OIF era. My background was not the Hollywood version of special operations. It was the support side of the mission: long hours, short staffing, pressure that never seemed to shut off, and the quiet expectation that you would keep moving no matter what your body or mind were telling you.

A large part of that service world for me was AFSOC and Hurlburt Field. For people outside that world, special operations often brings to mind only the high-visibility operators they see in movies, video games, or news stories. That was never the full picture. Behind every mission were support troops, maintainers, logisticians, communicators, transportation people, supply people, medics, clerks, planners, and a lot of exhausted human beings keeping the machine running.

At Hurlburt Field, special operations meant a wartime tempo even when much of the country believed we were at peace. For support troops, that often meant long shifts, constant mission pressure, physical wear, mental stress, and very little ceremony. It also taught a lot of us to minimize pain, bury stress, and keep pushing long after a smarter person would have stopped.

The deeper reason this handbook exists, though, reaches back before my own service. It reaches back to my father.

My father was a Cold War U.S. Air Force veteran whose service included Vietnam. Something changed in him after the Tet Offensive in 1968 at Da Nang Air Base. Like many veterans of that generation, he came home carrying things he rarely explained and pain he rarely admitted.

He worked around the machinery of war in ways most people never see. He served in and around Da Nang, moved supplies and equipment, worked near the flight line, and handled the kind of daily military labor that leaves marks on the body and mind. Vietnam was not only firefights and history-book battles. It was toxic exposures, rocket and mortar attacks, exhaustion, silence, and years of carrying what happened without asking for much help afterward.

He did what many veterans do. He carried it. He buried it. He kept moving.

For a long time, I did not understand that. Growing up around military culture, I saw the hardness before I understood the wound underneath it. Later, as I watched what age, illness, untreated pain, pride, and silence can do to a veteran and a family, the lesson became impossible to ignore: many veterans pay a price for service long before anyone helps them document it.

This public edition intentionally avoids publishing private claim identifiers, names of witnesses, docket numbers, claim numbers, addresses, and other personal case details that do not need to be public. Some personal details have been generalized. The lessons are real. The records work is real. But the public product is about the evidence-building system, not exposing a private VA claim file.

What Finally Pushed Me to Write This Book

What finally pushed this project into existence was not just frustration with denials. It was seeing how much could be missed, buried, misunderstood, or left disconnected inside a veteran's own file. Years after an earlier denial, AI made it possible to go line by line through old VA records, rating decisions, examination language, and medical evidence. That review showed a painful pattern: sometimes the issue is not that the veteran has no evidence. Sometimes the evidence exists, but the file is too disorganized, the argument is unclear, the right records are not connected to the right issue, or critical records are not actually reviewed the way the veteran believed they were.

That realization matters. A veteran can spend years believing the VA fully looked at the record and simply disagreed. But a careful review may show something different: missing record review, weak rationale, overlooked favorable evidence, a bad exam, an unclear claim theory, or a filing packet that did not make the truth easy to see.

AI did not invent evidence. It did not change the facts. The value was that it helped organize the truth, compare records across years, spot contradictions, build timelines, and identify failure points that were already sitting in the file. That is the difference between using AI as a gimmick and using AI as a workhorse.

That is one reason this handbook exists. Veterans do not need another pile of vague encouragement. They need a repeatable method for gathering records, organizing evidence, understanding what VA actually said, building truthful statements, preparing for exams, and deciding what to do next without drowning in paperwork.

This handbook is for the veteran who was taught to shut up and drive on.

It is for the veteran who minimized symptoms for years.

It is for the veteran who does not know where to start.

It is for the veteran who is exhausted, in pain, discouraged, and tired of being buried in forms, denials, records, and bureaucracy.

This handbook exists to help you fight smarter.

It is not about lying.

It is not about gaming the system.

It is about telling the full truth, documenting it properly, organizing your evidence, and using modern tools like VA.gov, ChatGPT, VA Claim Battle Buddy, BuddySign, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Print to PDF, secure messaging, screenshots, and the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder Starter Kit to build the clearest, strongest, most supportable claim file you can build from the truth and evidence you actually have.

Too many veterans have already paid for these benefits with their bodies, their minds, their marriages, their careers, and years of their lives.

Then they come home and face a system so inconsistent, bureaucratic, and exhausting that many give up before they ever get what they earned.

This guide is my attempt to help keep that from happening.

If it helps even one veteran organize the evidence, write the statement they could not write alone, understand the denial they did not understand before, collect the witness signature that would otherwise never get completed, or finally file the claim they have been putting off for years, then it was worth writing.

You served.

You paid the price.

Now it is time to build your case the right way.

What Sets This Handbook Apart

Mission

This handbook is built to reduce friction, reduce guesswork, and reduce how much clerical labor the veteran has to do personally.

Why This Matters

Most claim guides still assume the veteran will do most of the work.

They assume the veteran will:

- read a mountain of rules
- organize every record alone
- figure out the right form
- draft the right language
- understand the denial letter
- chase buddy statements
- prepare for C&P exams
- keep track of filing packets and receipts
- and somehow keep their energy and sanity through all of it

This handbook is built to stop that cycle.

The VA Claim AI Evidence Builder is not just a book.

It is a system.

The book is the operating manual.

VA Claim Battle Buddy is the guided AI assistant.

BuddySign is the remote buddy and lay witness signing tool.

The Starter Kit is the evidence organization system.

The Prompt Farm gives the veteran reusable copy/paste instructions.

The current-workflow prompt guide helps the veteran get unstuck when the screen makes no sense.

Together, the system is designed to help the veteran move from confusion to action.

End State

By the time the veteran finishes this handbook system, they should be able to:

- organize their records
- upload records in manageable chunks
- use AI to build a claims roadmap
- use AI to draft truthful statements and evidence action plans
- identify easy, medium, and difficult targets
- use BuddySign to collect witness signatures remotely
- save signed outputs, summaries, receipts, and filing packets in the Starter Kit
- prepare better for medical appointments and C&P exams
- understand denial letters more clearly
- file cleaner, stronger, more deliberate claim packets
- repeat the process issue by issue without starting from zero every time

Execution Concept

This handbook is AI-first by design.

ChatGPT and VA Claim Battle Buddy are not afterthoughts in this system. They are the workhorses.

The veteran should not be expected to do a ton of reading, a ton of writing, or a ton of manual sorting just to get moving.

The AI should help:

- review uploaded records
- build timelines
- spot favorable evidence
- identify evidence gaps
- suggest the best claim path
- draft statements
- rewrite weak language into stronger truthful language
- prepare for medical appointments
- prepare for C&P exams
- decode denial letters
- route buddy statements into BuddySign
- create Claim Session Summaries
- reduce the whole process into simple next steps

The veteran's job should stay as small as possible:

- gather records
- upload records in chunks
- answer follow-up questions
- review everything for truth
- collect signatures when needed
- save the finished work
- file the finished product

That is the point.

Not more bureaucracy.

Less.

Recommended Setup Note

This handbook can be used with the free version of ChatGPT, but ChatGPT Plus is strongly recommended for veterans who are serious about building claims with lots of records, multiple issues, reusable prompts, and longer-running project threads.

If the veteran is broke, start with free and work one issue at a time.

If the veteran can spare the money, Plus is the better tool for this job.

Either way, do not let the tool choice become an excuse to stall.

Start with what you have.

Build one issue.

Save your work.

Keep moving.

Core Rule

The system is powerful, but it has one hard rule:

- Do not invent facts.
- Do not exaggerate.
- Do not fabricate symptoms, diagnoses, stressors, treatment, witnesses, dates, or events.
- Do not sign for someone else.
- Do not use AI to make a weak claim fake.
- Use AI to organize the truth, not manufacture it.

The strongest claim is not the loudest claim.

The strongest claim is the clearest, best-supported, most truthful claim the veteran can build.

First Prompt to Use

Use this prompt when starting the system:

I want to use the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder in the most automated way possible. Assume I am a tired disabled veteran and do not want long reading assignments or complicated task lists. I want simple steps, exact prompts, and the minimum amount of manual work. For every stage of this process, tell me what to upload, what you need from me, what form or statement I may need, and give me copy/paste language whenever possible. Do not invent facts.

Second Prompt to Use

Use this prompt when starting a specific issue:

I want you to act as the AI workhorse for this VA claim issue. I will upload records, decision letters, forms, and rough notes. Your job is to review the evidence, build my timeline, identify favorable facts, identify evidence gaps, tell me what type of claim or review lane makes the most sense, and draft the strongest truthful statement language you can for me to review. Keep your instructions simple and step-by-step. Do not give me a giant reading assignment. Do not invent facts.

Low-Energy Prompt

Use this when you are overloaded:

Assume I am low on energy, in pain, and mentally overloaded. Break this process down into the smallest possible next step. Tell me only what I need to do right now, what I need to upload right now, and what prompt I should paste right now.

Coaching Prompt

Use this when you need the AI to interview you:

I want you to coach me through this VA claim like a smart, practical claims strategist. Ask me simple questions one at a time in plain English. Start with what hurts, when it started, whether I went to a military doctor, whether I went to a VA or civilian doctor, whether I have those records, whether the issue got worse, and how it affects my daily life and work. After you ask enough questions, build me a claims roadmap, an evidence action plan, and a target priority hit list divided into easy, medium, and difficult. Then tell me exactly what statement or evidence I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Chapter 1 — Get Set Up Once So the Rest of the Process Moves Fast

Mission

Set up the accounts, apps, folders, templates, AI workflows, BuddySign workflow, and basic screenshot habits one time so the veteran does not keep wasting energy on repetitive setup work every time a new issue comes up.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans lose momentum before they even really begin.

They get stuck on:

- sign-in problems
- scattered files
- missing forms
- bad file names
- giant PDFs
- confusing VA.gov screens
- buddy statements that never get signed
- AI chats with no structure
- or evidence that gets lost after one session
- This chapter fixes that by establishing one repeatable setup system.
- The veteran should not have to rebuild the machine every time a new issue comes up.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should have:

- access to VA.gov
- access to My HealtheVet on VA.gov
- Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on phone and computer
- Windows Print to PDF ready on desktop/laptop

- a clean VA disability claims folder structure
- prefilled master copies of VA Form 21-4138 and VA Form 21-10210
- a BuddySign-ready workflow for remote buddy/witness signatures
- a simple screenshot workflow
- one clean AI issue-thread workflow
- one Claim Session Summary habit for continuity
- one ready-to-use master AI prompt

Quick Eligibility / Discharge Checkpoint

Before you spend energy building a claim packet, do a fast eligibility and discharge check. This is not a full legal review. It is a simple screen to catch problems early.

Ask yourself:

- Do I have my DD214 or separation records?
- What was my character of discharge?
- Did I have more than one service period?
- Was the injury, disease, or event tied to active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty training, or another status?
- Is discharge status or character of service blocking benefits?

If discharge character, Reserve/National Guard duty status, or multiple-service-period issues are confusing, consider help from an accredited VSO, accredited claims agent, or veterans law attorney before filing something that may create a bigger problem.

Copy/paste prompt

I am starting a VA disability claim. Before I build the claim, help me do a quick eligibility and discharge checkpoint. Ask about my DD214, service periods, discharge character, active duty or training status, and whether anything looks like it needs accredited help. Do not make legal guarantees.

Evidence Builder Rule: save everything

The VA claim process rewards organization and proof. Save every form, upload, VA letter, claim receipt, exam notice, secure message, BuddySign output, decision letter, and Claim Session Summary in your Starter Kit.

Do not rely on memory. Do not rely on Downloads. Do not rely on a portal screen being easy to find later. Let the folder system remember for you.

Execution

Step 1 – Sign in to VA.gov and make sure health tools work

What to do

- Go to VA.gov.
- Sign in.
- Confirm you can access the health and benefits area.
- Confirm you can reach My HealtheVet on VA.gov.
- Confirm you can see medical records.
- Confirm you can access secure messaging.
- Confirm you can find claims, decision letters, and upload areas if available.

Why it matters

- If the veteran cannot sign in cleanly, the whole process slows down before it even begins.
- Do not wait until the day you need a record or need to file something to discover that your login does not work.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-001 — VA.gov Sign-In or Access Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-002 — VA Health Tools / My HealtheVet Access](#)
- [Prompt Card B-003 — Secure Messaging Access Point](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am starting my VA claim setup. Assume I am tired and do not want to waste energy. Give me a

simple checklist for what I need to have working on VA.gov before I do anything else. Keep it short and practical.

Step 2 – Install Adobe Acrobat Reader on computer and smartphone

What to do

- Download and install Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Open a sample PDF.
- Confirm you can view, scroll, fill, and save a PDF.
- Confirm the Fill & Sign tools are available.
- Confirm you can save a completed PDF.
- Install Adobe Acrobat Reader on your phone.
- Confirm you can open, view, share, fill, and sign forms from the phone.

Why it matters

- Adobe Acrobat Reader is still a core free PDF tool for this handbook.

You may use it to:

- open records
- review VA forms
- fill basic PDF fields
- paste AI-generated statements into forms
- review PDFs before upload
- sign your own forms
- use a backup manual signature workflow if BuddySign is not used
- In this handbook system, BuddySign is the preferred workflow for remote buddy/witness signatures when it fits the situation.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-020 — Adobe Acrobat Reader Download / Install](#)
- [Prompt Card B-021 — Acrobat Reader on Phone](#)
- [Prompt Card B-022 — Acrobat Fill & Sign Area](#)
- [Prompt Card B-023 — PDF Ready to Save](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on my phone and computer. Tell me the minimum things I need to test right now so I know I am ready to use it for VA forms, statement templates, and signing my own forms without paying for extra Acrobat features.

Step 2A — Learn the screenshot habit now

What to do

- Use the Snipping Tool on Windows, the screenshot buttons on your phone, or the screenshot tool on your computer whenever you get stuck.

Take screenshots of confusing:

- VA.gov pages
- forms
- Acrobat screens
- appointment notices
- claim status pages
- error messages
- denial language
- portal screens
- contractor scheduling screens

- secure messaging screens
- medical-record download pages
- upload pages
- BuddySign screens
- VA Health Chat or nurse-chat screens
- Then upload that screenshot into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy and ask what you are looking at.

Why it matters

- A lot of veterans get stuck because they are looking at a screen they do not understand and then freeze.
- They are not lazy.
- They are not stupid.
- The system is confusing, the screens change, and the language is often written like it was made by a committee.

The fastest way to break that freeze is simple:

- Take a screenshot. Upload it. Ask the AI what the screen means and what to do next.
- This turns a confusing screen into a solvable problem.
- If you get lost on VA.gov, do this
- If you get stuck anywhere on VA.gov, do not sit there frustrated trying to decode it alone.
- Take a screenshot of the page and upload it into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.

Then ask:

- I am stuck on this VA.gov screen. I am uploading a screenshot. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should click or do next. If there is more than one possible option, explain the safest next move.

This works especially well for:

- claim status pages

- medical-record download pages
- Blue Button report screens
- secure messaging screens
- form upload pages
- decision review pages
- Supplemental Claim screens
- Higher-Level Review screens
- Board Appeal screens
- appointment notices
- contractor scheduling pages
- error messages
- confusing VA.gov navigation menus
- The goal is not to make you memorize VA.gov.
- The goal is to give you a recovery move when you get stuck.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT](#)
- [Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example](#)
- Prompt Card B-060 through B-071 — Secure Messaging workflow
- Prompt Card B-080 through B-086 — VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat workflow

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am stuck on this screen. I am uploading a screenshot. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should click or do next. If there are any risks, deadlines, missing

information, or better options I should understand before clicking, explain those clearly.

Warning

Warning

Do not upload screenshots that show your full SSN, VA file number, full claim number, bank information, private medical details, or anything you would not want exposed.

If the screen shows sensitive information, crop it or black it out first when possible.

Battle Drill

If you are overwhelmed, do this:

- Take a screenshot of the confusing page.
- Upload it into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.
- Paste the screenshot prompt.
- Ask what the page means.
- Do only the next safe step.
- That is enough to get moving again.

Step 3 – Build the master folder structure one time

What to do

- Make the root folder.
- Make the master folders exactly once.
- Put blank forms in one place.
- Put raw records in master records.
- Put issue-specific work under claims by issue.
- Put final filing packets in active filing packets.
- Put signed BuddySign outputs in the buddy/lay statement area.
- Put Claim Session Summaries where you can find them later.

Why it matters

- The veteran should not scatter records all over the computer.
- One clean root folder makes the whole system easier to run.
- This is not busywork.
- This is how you stop losing evidence, drafts, receipts, signed statements, and AI summaries.

Recommended folder structure

VA DISABILITY CLAIMS/

00 START HERE/

MASTER CLAIM INDEX

MASTER CONDITIONS LIST

MASTER CURRENT RATINGS

MASTER TIMELINE

MASTER TO-DO CHECKLIST

PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS/
CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

01 BLANK VA FORMS/

VA 21-526EZ

VA 20-0995

VA 20-0996

VA 21-4138

VA 21-10210

VA 21-0966

VA 10182

02 MASTER RECORDS/
C-FILE/
BLUE BUTTON/
SERVICE TREATMENT RECORDS/
SERVICE PERSONNEL RECORDS/
PRIVATE MEDICAL/
VA DECISION LETTERS/
C&P EXAMS/
DBQS/

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/
 MENTAL HEALTH/
 MUSCULOSKELETAL/
 HEADACHES/
 OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA/
 GERD/
 IBS/
 ALLERGIC RHINITIS/
 CHRONIC SINUSITIS/
 HYPERTENSION/
 ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION/
 CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME/
 TOENAIL FUNGUS/
 GULF WAR SYNDROME/
 TDIU/
 VR&E/

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

06 ARCHIVE OLD OR DUPLICATE FILES/

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/
 BuddySign_Outputs/
 Drafts/
 Witness_Contact_Worksheets/
 Legacy_Acrobat_Signed_PDFs/

Inside serious issue folders, keep a repeatable structure like:

ISSUE FOLDER/
 01 ISSUE SUMMARY/
 02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/
 03 SERVICE EVIDENCE/
 04 LAY STATEMENTS/
 05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
 06 NEXUS DBQ OPINIONS/
 07 DECISION LETTERS/
 08 C&P EXAMS/
 09 FILING PACKET/
 10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/
 CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-041 — START HERE Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank](#)
- [Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want a clean file structure for my VA disability claims. Based on my claimed conditions, tell me exactly which folders I should create and how I should name them so I do not lose track of evidence, statements, BuddySign outputs, Claim Session Summaries, and filing packets.

Step 4 — Create reusable form templates now

What to do

Prepare reusable templates for:

- VA Form 21-4138 for the veteran’s support and clarification statements
- VA Form 21-10210 for lay/witness statements, including the veteran’s own lay statement when appropriate
- Buddy/witness statement drafts
- BuddySign-ready final witness statements

If using official VA form templates:

- keep clean master copies
- duplicate before editing
- do not overwrite the blank originals
- prefill only what is safe and appropriate
- leave statement text and dates for the final version

- Before using any VA form, download the current version directly from VA.gov. Do not rely on an old saved copy if VA has updated the form.

Why it matters

- The veteran should not keep retyping the same identity information or rebuilding the same statement format.
- This makes statement production much faster.

Rapid workflow

- Keep one clean master 21-4138.
- Keep one clean master 21-10210 for veteran lay statements.
- Keep one buddy/witness worksheet template.
- Keep one BuddySign-ready statement draft template.
- Duplicate the right template when needed.
- Delete old statement content.
- Paste in the new AI-generated statement.
- Review for truth.
- If it is a witness statement, use BuddySign for review and signature.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-050 — 21-4138 Master Template](#)
- [Prompt Card B-051 — 21-10210 Master Template](#)
- [Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields](#)
- [Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have a prefilled 21-4138 and 21-10210. Give me a simple workflow for how to turn these into

reusable templates so I can quickly paste in a new statement, update the date, and handle witness review and signature using BuddySign when appropriate.

Step 5 – Start one clean AI workspace per major issue

What to do

- Use one main AI thread or ChatGPT Project per major body system, condition cluster, or appeal project.
- Do not upload records, screenshots, or documents containing information you are not comfortable sharing with the AI tool you are using. Redact or crop sensitive information when practical.

Examples:

- one project for PTSD and mental health
- one project for musculoskeletal issues
- one project for headaches
- one project for sleep apnea
- one project for ENT / hearing / sinus / rhinitis
- one project for a specific Supplemental Claim
- one project for a specific HLR or Board appeal
- Upload the key decision letter, best issue-specific medical chunk, lay statement draft, buddy statements, nexus material, DBQs, and relevant notes for that issue.

Why it matters

- Do not throw every issue into one giant chat.
- Cleaner issue threads produce cleaner AI outputs.
- If you use ChatGPT Projects, they may help keep issue work more organized. But do not assume any AI chat will permanently preserve your entire claim file forever. Keep your own folder system and save summaries.

Project Chat setup prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want to create a VA Claim Evidence Builder project for this issue. Use VA Claim Battle Buddy style. Do not invent facts. Use only what I say and what my uploaded records show. Ask simple questions one at a time. Keep track of confirmed facts, possible facts, missing evidence, and next questions. Build my service timeline, symptom history, evidence map, statements, C&P prep, and top 3 next moves. At the end of each meaningful session, create a Claim Session Summary I can save in my Starter Kit and re-upload later if needed.

Standard issue-thread prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want you to do the heavy lifting for this VA claim issue. I am a disabled veteran and do not want to manually search my records unless necessary. I will upload my records in chunks. Your job is to analyze them, build my timeline, identify favorable evidence, identify evidence gaps, tell me whether this should be filed as direct, secondary, increase, supplemental, HLR, or Board support, and tell me exactly what document or statement I should create next. Do not invent facts.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-100 — ChatGPT Issue-Thread Setup](#)
- [Prompt Card B-101 — VA Claim Battle Buddy Prompt Example](#)
- [Prompt Card B-102 — Project Chat Setup Prompt](#)
- [Prompt Card B-103 — Claim Session Summary Example](#)

Step 5A — Save a Claim Session Summary after meaningful AI work

What to do

- At the end of any serious AI session, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it in:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

and, if it belongs to a specific issue, also save a copy in:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

- Long AI claim work can get complicated.
- You may switch chats, start a new Project, upload more records, or come back days later.
- A Claim Session Summary keeps the work portable.
- It helps the next session pick up without forcing you to rebuild everything from memory.

Claim Session Summary should include

- claim area or issue worked
- records reviewed
- confirmed facts
- possible facts needing confirmation
- useful evidence found
- evidence gaps
- statements drafted
- top 3 next moves
- questions for next session

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Step 6 — Use chunked uploads instead of giant record dumps

What to do

- Do not upload giant mixed files if they can be split cleanly.
- Keep chunks manageable.

- Label them clearly.
- Tell the AI what the chunk is.
- Use Windows Print to PDF to break large PDFs into smaller chunks.

Why it matters

- The veteran does not need to manually keyword-search everything first.
- They only need to break giant files into manageable chunks so the AI can work efficiently.

How to use Windows Print to PDF

Open the original PDF.

Press Ctrl + P or click Print.

In the printer list, choose Microsoft Print to PDF.

In the page range box, type a smaller range such as 1-150 or 1-200.

Click Print.

Save the new file with a clear name.

Repeat for the next page ranges until the large file is broken into chunks.

Example chunk file names

```
BlueButton_Part_1_pages_1-200.pdf
BlueButton_Part_2_pages_201-400.pdf
PrivateRecords_Back_Part_1_pages_1-125.pdf
```

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog](#)
- [Prompt Card B-111 — Page Range Selected](#)
- [Prompt Card B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk](#)
- [Prompt Card B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading one chunk of records for [condition]. This chunk is part of a larger claim file. Analyze it for favorable evidence, timeline points, functional loss, occupational impact, continuity, nexus clues, and rating-related severity. Then tell me what this chunk proves, what it does not prove yet, and what upload I should give you next.

Step 6A — Online witness-signature workflow using BuddySign

What to do

- Use BuddySign after a buddy/witness statement draft is ready.
- Do not enter unnecessary sensitive veteran information into a witness statement. Keep the statement focused on what the witness personally knows, saw, heard, or observed.

The clean workflow is:

- Draft the buddy statement using VA Claim Battle Buddy, ChatGPT, or by hand.
- Review the draft for truth and accuracy.
- Remove anything unsupported, exaggerated, unclear, or outside what the witness personally knows.
- Log in to BuddySign.com.
- Create a new document.
- Enter the veteran-controlled buddy information: buddy name, buddy email, phone number (optional, 10 digits), and relationship.
- Use the starter template if helpful, then paste or draft the final statement text and remove any bracket prompts before locking.
- Lock the statement for signature.
- Send the signing invite to the buddy.
- The witness opens the link, reviews the statement, types their full name, checks the certification box, and signs.
- The witness does not enter veteran PII. Veteran identifying information used for the local print output is entered by the veteran in the browser, not by the witness and not during signing.
- After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.
- Save the final output in the Starter Kit under Buddy/Lay Statements.

Why it matters

- If BuddySign is not an option, the Adobe Acrobat workflow in Step 6B works. But Acrobat requires the buddy to open a PDF, find the signature tool, sign, save, and email it back.
- For a lot of buddies — especially older veterans, family members, or people who are not comfortable with technology — that is where the process breaks down.
- BuddySign removes most of those friction points.
- The buddy does not install anything.
- They do not need an account.
- They do not need to find a printer, scanner, or PDF tool.
- They click a link, read the statement, type their name, check the certification box, and sign.

What BuddySign records

BuddySign output may include:

- witness typed full name
- witness certification
- date signed
- witness contact information entered by the veteran
- document ID
- timestamp information
- document hash / integrity information
- signing record details

Important boundary

- BuddySign helps collect and organize a remote witness signature.

Do not describe BuddySign as:

- VA-approved
- VA-certified
- guaranteed accepted

- legal representation
- HIPAA compliant
- FedRAMP compliant
- ESIGN compliant
- legally binding
- unless those claims are separately verified and approved.

Warning

Warning

Do not draft the statement and then sign it yourself on your buddy's behalf, with or without their verbal approval.

That is not a valid witness workflow.

The witness must personally review and personally sign only if the statement is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Cost

- BuddySign is intended as a low-friction witness-statement workflow for veterans. Do not describe pricing or availability as permanent unless the current BuddySign site says so.
- The witness does not need a BuddySign account.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields](#)
- [Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box](#)
- [Prompt Card B-203 — BuddySign Signing Invite Email](#)
- [Prompt Card B-204 — BuddySign Witness Review and Certification Page](#)
- [Prompt Card B-205 — BuddySign Local PDF Output / Print Preview](#)
- [Prompt Card B-206 — BuddySign Dashboard Signed Status](#)

Copy/paste prompt for AI assistance

Copy/paste prompt

I have drafted my buddy statement and I am ready to collect the signature. Walk me through using BuddySign to prepare the statement, send the signing link to my buddy or witness, and save the signed output when they are done.

Step 6B — Backup free signature workflow using Adobe Acrobat Reader

What to do

- Use this only if BuddySign is not the right fit for that witness.
- Draft the buddy statement using AI or by hand.
- Save it as a PDF.
- Email the PDF to your buddy and ask them to read it before signing.
- Your buddy opens the PDF in Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Your buddy uses Sign, Fill & Sign, Add Signature, or Add Initials.
- Your buddy places their signature on the signature line.
- Your buddy saves the signed PDF.
- Your buddy emails the signed PDF back to you.

- You save the signed PDF to the claim folder.

Use a clear file name such as:

BuddyStatement_[BuddyLastName]_[Condition]_SIGNED.pdf

Why it matters

- BuddySign is the recommended method because it removes most of the friction for the buddy.
- But not every buddy will follow a link. Some prefer email. Some already know how to use Acrobat.
- For those situations, this workflow gets the job done with tools your buddy may already have.

Tradeoff

- The Acrobat workflow produces less signing-record detail than BuddySign.
- The Acrobat workflow usually does not create the same kind of BuddySign document hash, signing record, or locked-text review trail.
- What you have is a PDF with the buddy's electronic signature placed on it.
- That is still a common way veterans submit buddy statements. It is simply a lighter record than what BuddySign produces.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-024 — Acrobat Reader Signing Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-025 — Add Signature Panel](#)
- [Prompt Card B-026 — Signed PDF Ready to Save](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I need the cheapest and simplest backup buddy-signature workflow possible. Explain how I should draft the statement, convert it to PDF, send it to the buddy for review, have them sign their own copy for free using Adobe Acrobat Reader, and get it back ready to save in my VA claim folder and upload with my claim.

Warning

Warning

Under no circumstance should the veteran fill in and sign their buddy's signature themselves — not with verbal approval, not with the buddy watching, not for any reason.

The buddy must open the PDF themselves, read it themselves, and place their own signature.

Caution

Caution

Do not build this process around paid Acrobat features.

The veteran and buddy should use Acrobat Reader's free signing tools. If the signing tool is not visible, the toolbar may look different depending on the version of Acrobat Reader.

Look for tools named Sign, Fill & Sign, Add Signature, or Add Initials.

Do not start a paid trial just to sign the statement.

Note

Note

A lot of veterans get stuck because they are looking at a screen they do not understand.

When that happens, take a screenshot, upload it into VA Claim Battle Buddy or ChatGPT, and ask for the next move in plain English.

AI Battle Drill

If you are overwhelmed, do this:

- Sign into VA.gov.
- Confirm your health tools work.
- Install Acrobat Reader.
- Set up the root claims folder.
- Create one prefilled 21-4138 and one prefilled 21-10210.
- Start one clean AI issue thread or Project.
- Upload one record chunk and paste one prompt.
- Save a Claim Session Summary when the session produces useful work.

- If a buddy statement is ready, use BuddySign to collect the witness signature.
- Do not try to build the whole machine in one sitting.

Quick Reaction Checklist

- VA.gov sign-in works
- My HealtheVet on VA.gov works
- Medical records area is accessible
- Secure messages area is accessible
- Adobe Acrobat Reader works on computer
- Adobe Acrobat Reader works on smartphone
- Windows Print to PDF works
- Snipping Tool or screenshot workflow is ready
- Master claims folder structure exists
- Blank forms folder exists
- Prefilled 21-4138 template exists
- Prefilled 21-10210 template exists
- Buddy/witness worksheet exists
- BuddySign output folder exists
- Claim Session Summary folder exists
- One issue-specific AI thread or Project has been started
- Master AI prompt has been saved

Chapter Recap

The veteran does not need to become a records clerk.

The veteran needs a system.

This chapter creates that system once so the AI can carry more of the load from here forward.

The basic machine is:

- VA.gov for official access and records
- Acrobat Reader for PDF handling
- Windows Print to PDF for chunking large files
- screenshots for getting unstuck
- VA Claim Battle Buddy / ChatGPT for analysis, drafting, and next steps
- BuddySign for remote witness signatures
- the Starter Kit for organizing the whole fight

Next Move

Go to Chapter 2 and start feeding the machine: gather records, upload them in chunks, let the AI interview you in plain English, and build your first claims roadmap.

Chapter 2 — Get Your Records and Let AI Build Your Claim Roadmap

Mission

Gather the right records, feed them into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy in manageable chunks, and make the AI build a first-pass claims roadmap so the veteran stops guessing and starts working the strongest targets first.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans waste time chasing random documents, uploading messy files, or trying to figure out their whole case in their head.

This chapter fixes that.

The point is not to gather every document on earth before getting help. The point is to gather the core record buckets, upload them cleanly, and let the AI start doing the heavy lifting.

The veteran does not need a perfect file to begin.

The veteran needs enough evidence for the AI to identify:

- what issues may exist
- what records already help
- what is missing
- what claim path may fit
- what should be built next
- what should wait

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should have:

- core VA medical records
- any available private records
- any available service records
- key decision letters
- existing lay statements, buddy statements, DBQs, nexus letters, or C&P exam records if available

- records saved in the Starter Kit
- enough uploaded evidence for the AI to produce a first-pass claims roadmap
- a Claim Session Summary saved after the roadmap session

Execution

Step 1 – Gather the five record buckets that matter most

Privacy reminder

Before uploading records into any AI tool, understand what you are sharing. Do not upload documents containing full SSNs, bank information, full claim numbers, or other sensitive information unless you are comfortable using that tool for that purpose. Redact or crop sensitive information when practical.

What to do

Start with five core record buckets:

- VA medical records / Blue Button records
- VA decision letters and prior rating decisions
- Private medical records
- Service treatment records and service personnel records, if available
- Existing lay statements, buddy statements, DBQs, nexus letters, or C&P exam records
- Do not freeze if one bucket is missing.
- Gather what you can and start.

Why it matters

- The veteran does not need every document in existence before asking AI for help.
- Start with the core buckets first.
- That is enough to get the machine moving.
- The AI can help identify what is missing after it reviews what already exists.

Where to save them

Save raw records in:

02 MASTER RECORDS/

Save issue-specific working copies in:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/

Save important AI summaries in:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

and, if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am starting to gather records for my VA claims. Tell me the minimum record buckets I should collect first so you can start building my claims roadmap without making me chase every possible document before we even begin. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 – Download VA medical records and Blue Button material**What to do**

- Log in to VA.gov.
- Go to the health records area.
- Download available medical records or Blue Button material.
- Save the file in the Master Records area.
- If the file is huge, split it into chunks.
- Upload one relevant chunk at a time into the correct AI issue thread or Project.

Why it matters

- VA medical records usually contain the most recent treatment trail.

They often give the best first look at:

- symptoms
- diagnoses
- worsening
- treatment history
- medication history
- specialist care
- functional impact
- continuity over time

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-002 — VA Health Tools / My HealtheVet Access](#)
- [Prompt Card B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog](#)
- [Prompt Card B-111 — Page Range Selected](#)
- [Prompt Card B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk](#)
- [Prompt Card B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I downloaded my VA medical records. I want you to review them and tell me what conditions, symptoms, diagnoses, worsening patterns, treatment history, and functional impacts stand out. Then tell me what claim paths look most realistic. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 — Gather VA decision letters and past denials

What to do

- Gather old rating decisions.
- Gather denial letters.

- Gather decision-review letters, if any.
- Save them in the VA Decision Letters folder.
- Upload the most important ones early in the issue thread.

Save them here:

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

and, if issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

Why it matters

- Decision letters tell the AI what VA already granted, denied, conceded, or got wrong.

They also show:

- evidence VA listed
- favorable findings
- reasons for decision
- denial language
- rating percentages
- effective dates
- missing evidence
- possible review-lane options
- A decision letter often tells you exactly what problem needs to be fixed next.

Prompt Card Reference

For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- [Prompt Card B-001 — VA.gov Sign-In or Access Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading my rating decisions and denial letters. Read them and tell me what VA has already conceded, what it denied, what favorable findings I should keep using, what issues may support secondary claims, and what arguments or evidence gaps matter most now. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 — Gather private medical records if they exist

What to do

- Gather what private records the veteran already has.

This may include:

- primary care records
- specialist records
- urgent care records
- emergency room records
- imaging reports
- physical therapy records
- chiropractic records
- surgery records
- sleep studies
- mental health treatment records
- medication history
- outside DBQs or opinions

Save raw copies in:

02 MASTER RECORDS/PRIVATE MEDICAL/

Save issue-specific copies in:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/

- Upload the strongest chunks first.

Why it matters

- A lot of veterans have outside treatment that should not be ignored.

Civilian records may contain:

- imaging
- specialist opinions
- therapy notes
- surgery history
- diagnosis history
- severity documentation
- functional findings
- treatment failures
- Those records can materially strengthen a claim.

Simple intake questions the AI should ask

The AI should ask:

- Have you seen a civilian doctor for this?
- When was the last time?
- Do you have those records?
- Was there imaging?
- Was there specialist care?

- Was there urgent care?
- Was there therapy?
- Was there surgery?
- Was there a diagnosis?
- Did the provider say anything about cause, aggravation, or work impact?

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have private medical records for some of my issues. Help me figure out which of these private records matter most, which claim issue each one supports, and which ones I should upload first for analysis. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 – Gather service records if available, but do not freeze if they are missing

What to do

- Gather any service treatment records already in hand.

Gather personnel records or documents that help show:

- where the veteran served
- what jobs they performed
- what units they were assigned to
- deployments
- duty locations
- physical demands
- exposures
- incidents
- performance changes
- disciplinary or behavioral markers if relevant

- Upload them if they directly support an issue.
- If service records are missing, make a note of what is missing and where you may need to request it later. Do not let the missing records stop all progress, but do not forget the gap exists.

Why it matters

- Service treatment records and personnel records can be powerful.
- But the veteran should not get stuck waiting forever on perfect records before using AI.
- Missing records are a problem.
- They are not a reason to freeze the whole process.

The AI can help build a missing-record bridge using:

- truthful lay statements
- buddy statements
- personnel records
- duty history
- post-service treatment
- continuity evidence
- medical opinions when needed

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have some service records, but not everything. Review what I do have and tell me what they help prove, what they do not prove yet, and whether I can still move forward on any claim issues without the missing records. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 – Let the AI interview the veteran in simple language

What to do

- Do not make the veteran do a giant written intake form.

- Let ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy ask simple questions and build the roadmap from the answers.
- Answer one question at a time in plain English.

Why it matters

- This is one of the main ways this handbook reduces workload.
- The veteran should not have to produce a perfect legal intake summary on day one.
- The AI should pull the story out through simple conversation.

The AI should start with questions like these

- What hurts or what is wrong?
- When did it start?
- Did it start in service?
- Did you ever go to a military doctor for it?
- When did you last go to a VA doctor for it?
- When did you last go to a civilian doctor for it?
- Do you have those records?
- Has it gotten worse?
- What does it stop you from doing?
- Does it affect work?
- Are you already rated for something that might connect to it?
- Is this a new claim, increase, secondary claim, Supplemental Claim, HLR, Board appeal, or are you not sure?

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want you to coach me through my possible VA claims in plain English. Ask me simple questions one at a time. Start with what hurts, when it started, whether I went to a military doctor, whether I went to a VA or civilian doctor, whether I have those records, whether the issue got worse, and

how it affects my daily life and work. After you ask enough questions, build me a claims roadmap, an evidence action plan, and a target priority hit list divided into easy, medium, and difficult. Then tell me exactly what statement or evidence I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 – Have the AI produce a first-pass claims roadmap

Planning note

The roadmap is a planning tool, not a final filing decision. The veteran still needs to review the roadmap for accuracy and verify important filing choices before submitting anything to VA.

What to do

- Upload the records.
- Answer the plain-English intake questions.
- Tell the AI to produce a first-pass roadmap, not just a summary.

Why it matters

- The veteran needs more than a document summary.

The veteran needs a roadmap that says:

- what issues exist
- what claim path may fit
- what evidence helps
- what is missing
- what should be built next
- what should wait

The roadmap should say for each issue

- issue
- likely claim path or theory
- evidence that already helps

- evidence that is missing
- best next document or statement to build
- whether the issue is easy, medium, or difficult
- top 3 next moves

Suggested roadmap format

Current issue snapshot

- Issue:
- Likely lane or theory:
- What evidence already helps:
- What is missing:
- Best next document or statement to build:
- Priority: easy / medium / difficult

Top 3 next moves

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on everything I have uploaded so far, build me a first-pass VA claims roadmap. For each issue you identify, tell me the likely claim path, the evidence that already helps, the missing evidence, the next statement or document I need, and whether the issue belongs in easy, medium, or difficult priority. Keep it simple and practical. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 – Build the target priority hit list

Deadline warning

Do not ignore deadlines just because an issue is harder. Priority means work order, not permission to miss appeal or filing deadlines.

What to do

Have the AI divide likely claim actions into:

- easy

- medium
- difficult
- Make the veteran work the highest-value targets first.
- Do not attack every issue at once.

Why it matters

- The veteran needs to know what to work first.
- Not every issue should be attacked at once.
- Not every issue is equally ready.

Priority definitions

- Easy means strong evidence or low-friction next steps.
- Medium means plausible but needs more development.
- Difficult means weak, incomplete, missing key proof, not ready, or better saved for later.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Build me a target priority hit list from my uploaded records and answers. Divide the possible claim actions into easy, medium, and difficult. For each one, tell me why it landed there and what specific action would move it closer to success. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 – Tell the AI the top 3 next moves only

What to do

- After analysis, tell the AI to narrow the field.
- Ask for only the top 3 next actions.
- Execute one at a time.

Why it matters

- Do not overwhelm the veteran.
- Too many tasks at once usually kills momentum.

- The goal is not to create a giant list.
- The goal is to create motion.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Do not give me 20 tasks. Based on everything so far, give me only the top 3 next actions I should take right now to improve my VA claims position.

Step 10 – Remind the AI what it already has

What to do

If the thread gets long:

- remind the AI that records were already uploaded
- name the issue again
- tell the AI what task it should do with those records now
- ask it to re-analyze the earlier uploads in light of the current question

Why it matters

- On long claim projects, the veteran may sometimes feel like the AI forgot part of the file.
- That can happen in long, complex threads.
- Do not panic.
- Tell it to look back and use the earlier uploads.
- Also, do not assume an AI chat will permanently preserve your claim work forever. Save summaries in the Starter Kit.

Important reality check

AI may be able to help interpret messy, handwritten, or low-quality records, but it is not perfect.

Not every handwritten page will be perfectly readable.

If something is too sloppy, cut off, blurry, or truly illegible, the AI should say so instead of pretending.

Copy/paste prompt – Re-analysis**Copy/paste prompt – Re-analysis**

You already have my earlier uploaded records in this thread. Please look back at them and analyze them again for this issue. I want you to use the records I already uploaded, not just the latest message. Tell me what earlier records matter most for the task at hand.

Copy/paste prompt – Reminder for a long thread**Copy/paste prompt – Reminder for a long thread**

You already have my records in this chat. Please do not ignore the earlier uploads. Re-check the records I already gave you and use them together with my latest message to answer this question and update my claims roadmap.

Copy/paste prompt – Handwritten records**Copy/paste prompt – Handwritten records**

Some of my records are handwritten, messy, or hard to read. Do your best to read and analyze them. If any part is too unclear to read confidently, tell me exactly what is unclear instead of guessing.

Step 11 – Save a Claim Session Summary before you stop**What to do**

- At the end of a meaningful AI session, ask the AI to create a Claim Session Summary.

Save it in:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

- Claim work can stretch across days, weeks, or months.
- Chats get long.
- Projects change.

- The veteran gets tired.
- A Claim Session Summary preserves the work so the veteran can pick it back up later without rebuilding everything from memory.

A good Claim Session Summary includes

- claim issue
- records reviewed
- confirmed facts
- possible facts needing confirmation
- useful evidence found
- evidence gaps
- statements drafted
- top 3 next moves
- questions for next session
- files created or saved

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Step 12 – Be patient when the thread gets heavy

What to do

- Expect slower replies as the file grows.
- Let the AI work through the pile.
- Ask for the clearest next step after review.

Why it matters

- As the veteran builds out a serious claim file, the AI may slow down.
- That is normal.
- A complex thread with many uploads, many issues, and long records takes more work.
- Slower replies do not automatically mean failure.
- Often it means the AI is trying to do a more careful job.

What the veteran should remember

- longer claim threads may slow down
- re-analysis can take time
- the better the record set, the more there is to process
- building something useful is usually slower than giving a shallow answer
- saving a Claim Session Summary helps keep the work portable

Copy/paste prompt — Low-frustration

Copy/paste prompt — Low-frustration

Take your time and review the records carefully. I know this is a large claim file. I would rather have a slower, more useful answer than a fast shallow one. After you review everything, give me the clearest next step.

Copy/paste prompt — Evidence-based strength check

Copy/paste prompt — Evidence-based strength check

Based on everything I have uploaded so far, tell me how strong this claim looks right now and what additional evidence would most improve it. Do not guarantee outcomes. Give me a rough honest assessment and the next best evidence to develop.

Warning

WARNING:

Warning

Do not freeze waiting for a perfect file.

Missing records are common.

Start with the core buckets, upload what you have, and let the AI tell you what the real gaps are.

Also, do not let the AI invent facts to fill missing gaps.

Missing means missing.

Caution

CAUTION:

Caution

Do not attack every possible issue at once.

The point of the roadmap is to rank targets and work the strongest next move first.

A good roadmap reduces chaos.

It should not create more chaos.

Note

NOTE:

Note

The veteran does not need to manually keyword-search everything first.

The point of this chapter is to organize enough of the record so the AI can do most of that work.

The veteran still has to review the AI's output for truth and accuracy.

AI Battle Drill

If you are overwhelmed, do this:

- Gather the five core record buckets.
- Upload one key decision letter.
- Upload one medical chunk for one issue.
- Paste the master coaching prompt.
- Let the AI ask simple questions.
- Tell it to give you a roadmap and top 3 next moves only.

- Save a Claim Session Summary.
- That is enough to get traction.

Common Failure Points

- chasing every possible document before starting
- uploading a giant mixed mess with no issue focus
- not giving the AI a clear task
- trying to attack every issue at once
- panicking when the thread gets long
- assuming the AI should guess which issue matters most without being told
- forgetting to ask for top 3 next moves only
- forgetting to save a Claim Session Summary
- treating AI output as automatically correct without reviewing it

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I gathered the five core record buckets
- I downloaded VA medical records / Blue Button
- I gathered decision letters
- I gathered private records if they exist
- I gathered service records if I have them
- I saved records in the Starter Kit
- I uploaded at least one key issue packet
- I used the master coaching prompt
- I asked for a first-pass roadmap

- I asked for an easy / medium / difficult target list
- I asked for the top 3 next moves only
- I saved a Claim Session Summary

Chapter Recap

This chapter is where the veteran stops guessing.

The veteran gathers the core records.

The veteran uploads records in manageable chunks.

The AI asks plain questions.

The AI builds the roadmap.

The AI ranks the targets.

The veteran saves a Claim Session Summary.

Then the veteran attacks the strongest next move first.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 3 and start learning how to build the evidence story around each issue: what theory fits, what proof matters, and how to turn scattered facts into a claim plan.

Chapter 3 – The Basic Formula for a Strong VA Claim

Mission

Teach the veteran the basic claim formulas so they can stop guessing what kind of claim they are dealing with and start building the right evidence for the right lane.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans know something is wrong, but they do not know what kind of claim they are actually building.

That creates chaos.

They may file:

- a weak secondary claim that should have been an increase
- a Higher-Level Review when they actually need new evidence
- a direct claim without enough service evidence
- a Supplemental Claim without truly new and relevant evidence
- a Board Appeal before the record is ready
- or a messy follow-up without understanding what lane fits the problem

This chapter fixes that by giving the veteran a simple framework.

The point is not to turn the veteran into a lawyer.

The point is to help the veteran understand:

- what kind of claim they are building
- what evidence usually matters
- what is missing
- what lane fits the problem
- what to ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to help develop next

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should be able to tell whether an issue most likely fits one of these buckets:

- direct service connection

- increased rating
- secondary service connection
- Supplemental Claim
- Higher-Level Review
- Board Appeal

The veteran should also understand what kind of evidence each one usually needs.

Important boundary

This chapter covers the main claim and review paths most veterans will deal with. It is not an exhaustive list of every VA benefit, special issue, survivor benefit, pension issue, 1151 claim, CUE argument, or TDIU scenario. If an issue is unusual, high-stakes, or legally complex, consider getting help from an accredited VSO, accredited claims agent, or veterans law attorney.

Execution

Formula 1 – Direct Service Connection

Use this when

Use direct service connection when:

- the condition started in service
- the symptoms started in service
- or the cause traces back to an in-service event, injury, illness, duty condition, or exposure

Basic formula

A direct service connection claim usually needs:

- current diagnosis or current symptoms
- in-service event, injury, disease, symptoms, duty condition, or exposure
- nexus between the two

What usually helps

- service treatment records

- service personnel records
- duty records
- deployment records
- performance reports
- veteran lay statement
- buddy statement
- current VA or private treatment records
- continuity evidence
- nexus opinion when needed

What usually hurts

- no current diagnosis or documented symptoms
- no service event, injury, exposure, or symptom history
- no continuity after service
- no medical link between service and the current condition
- vague statements that do not explain what happened or how symptoms continued

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records, tell me whether this issue looks like a direct service connection claim. Break it down into: (1) current diagnosis or symptoms, (2) in-service event, injury, disease, symptoms, duty condition, or exposure, and (3) nexus. Then tell me what part is strongest, what part is weakest, and what I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Presumptive note

Some conditions may qualify under presumptive rules based on service location, exposure, deployment history, or other VA-recognized categories. A presumptive theory can reduce part of the proof burden, but it does not remove the need for a current condition, correct filing, and rating-severity evidence. Verify current presumptive rules through VA.gov before relying on them.

When You Do Not Have In-Service Medical Records

A lot of veterans do not have clean in-service medical records for every condition.

That does not automatically mean the claim is dead.

It means the veteran has to build the evidence bridge more carefully.

Many veterans did not go to sick call for every injury, symptom, or mental health problem. Some were told to push through. Some were in units where going to medical was discouraged. Some minimized symptoms because of pride, mission pressure, fear of looking weak, or because they thought the problem would go away.

If there is no service treatment record for the issue, the question becomes:

What else can prove the event, symptoms, service circumstances, or continuity?

That is the evidence bridge.

The veteran is trying to build a truthful bridge from:

- service → symptoms or event → after-service continuity → current condition → current impact

What an evidence bridge can include

If the service medical record is weak or missing, look for other truthful evidence that helps connect service to the current condition.

1. Veteran lay statement

The veteran explains:

- what happened
- when symptoms started
- why they did not seek treatment in service, if true
- how symptoms continued
- what the condition does now

This is often the starting point when the service record is thin.

2. Buddy statement from a fellow service member

Use this if someone personally saw the injury, event, symptoms, duty conditions, behavior changes, or physical limitations during service.

Examples:

- saw the veteran get hurt
- saw the veteran limp, struggle, cough, panic, isolate, or change behavior

- served with the veteran during the same deployment, duty assignment, or event
- personally remembers the veteran complaining about symptoms in service

3. Spouse, family, roommate, or friend statement

Use this if someone saw the condition continue after service, get worse over time, or affect:

- sleep
- mobility
- mood
- work
- relationships
- daily life

This can help show continuity when the veteran did not have perfect medical documentation right after service.

4. Coworker or supervisor statement

Use this if someone saw work problems such as:

- missed time
- reduced reliability
- physical limits
- trouble lifting, walking, standing, concentrating, or interacting
- fatigue
- irritability
- needing help with tasks
- leaving early or calling out

This can help prove functional impact.

5. Service personnel records

Use these to show:

- MOS / AFSC / rating

- unit
- deployment
- job duties
- locations
- performance reports
- duty changes
- physical demands
- combat or special operations tempo
- exposure circumstances
- disciplinary, behavioral, or performance changes if relevant

Personnel records can sometimes support the service circumstances even when medical records are missing.

6. Current VA or private medical records

Use these to show:

- current diagnosis
- current symptoms
- treatment history
- severity
- functional impact
- medications
- failed treatments
- specialist care
- imaging or testing

Current records do not automatically prove service connection by themselves, but they help prove the condition exists now.

7. Secure messages and appointment notes

Use these to document:

- current symptoms
- flare-ups
- worsening
- treatment problems
- continuity
- functional limitations
- why the veteran is seeking care now

Do not use secure messaging to manufacture evidence. Use it when symptoms are real and the veteran needs care, clarification, or documentation.

8. Nexus letter or DBQ if needed

If the missing link is medical causation, a medical opinion may be needed to connect the current condition to service or to a service-connected condition.

A buddy statement can describe what someone saw.

A lay statement can describe what the veteran experienced.

But a medical nexus question may need a qualified medical provider.

The key question

The question is not only:

Did I go to medical in service?

The better question is:

Can I build a truthful evidence bridge from service to now?

That bridge may come from records, statements, current treatment, service history, and medical opinions.

Copy/paste prompt – Evidence bridge

I do not have clear in-service medical records for this condition. Help me build an evidence bridge. Based on what I have, tell me what can support: (1) the in-service event, injury, symptoms, duty condition, or service circumstances, (2) continuity after service, (3) current diagnosis or symptoms, (4) current severity and functional impact, and (5) whether I likely need a lay statement, buddy statement, personnel record, current medical record, secure message, nexus letter, or DBQ. Do not invent facts. Mark weak areas as gaps.

Copy/paste prompt – Claim readiness assessment

Based on the claim evidence I have right now, give me a rough evidence-based readiness assessment. Do not guarantee the outcome. Tell me whether this claim looks weak, fair, good, or strong in its current state, explain why, identify the biggest evidence gaps, and tell me the top three things that would most improve the claim before filing.

Warning

Do not pretend a missing service treatment record does not matter.

It can matter.

But do not quit just because it is missing.

A missing service record means the veteran has to build the claim more deliberately. The job is to prove the truth through the best available evidence.

Formula 2 – Increased Rating Claim**Use this when**

Use an increased rating claim when:

- the veteran is already service connected
- the condition has gotten worse
- the current rating no longer reflects the actual severity

Basic formula

An increased rating claim usually needs:

- the veteran is already service connected for the condition
- the condition has gotten worse or is more severe than the current rating reflects
- the veteran has records and statements showing current severity, functional loss, and impact

What usually helps

- updated VA treatment records
- updated private treatment records
- current symptom evidence
- flare-up evidence
- functional loss evidence

- work impact evidence
- daily-life impact evidence
- lay statements
- spouse or coworker observations
- updated DBQ if available
- C&P exam prep that prevents underreporting

What usually hurts

- only proving the condition still exists without proving it got worse
- vague symptom descriptions
- no discussion of flare-ups
- no work impact
- no daily-life impact
- relying only on old records
- walking into the C&P exam unprepared
- minimizing symptoms out of habit

Copy/paste prompt

I am already service connected for this condition. Review my records and tell me whether this looks like a realistic increased-rating claim. Focus on worsening, current severity, flare-ups, functional loss, daily-life impact, and work impact. Then tell me what evidence is strongest and what is still missing. Do not invent facts.

Formula 3 – Secondary Service Connection

Use this when

Use secondary service connection when:

- the veteran already has a service-connected condition

a separate current condition was caused by, resulted from, or was worsened beyond its natural progression by an already service-connected condition

Basic formula

A secondary claim usually needs:

- an already service-connected primary condition
- a separate current condition or persistent symptoms

evidence that the already service-connected condition caused, resulted in, or worsened the separate condition beyond its natural progression

What usually helps

- records showing the primary service-connected condition
- records showing the new condition
- treatment notes hinting at the link
- altered gait evidence
- medication side-effect evidence
- aggravation evidence
- specialist notes
- nexus opinion when needed
- lay statement explaining symptoms and history

What usually hurts

- claiming something is “related” without a real bridge
- trying to file a symptom as a separate condition when it may just be part of the already-rated issue
- no records showing the connection
- no diagnosis or persistent symptom evidence for the new condition
- no clear causation or aggravation theory
- filing secondary claims just because two conditions exist at the same time

Secondary does not mean “everything is connected”

Veterans need to be careful here.

A secondary claim is not strong just because two conditions exist at the same time.

The veteran needs a believable bridge.

Examples:

- a service-connected knee or foot condition may affect gait and contribute to back or hip problems
- medication for a service-connected condition may cause side effects
- service-connected mental health symptoms may worsen sleep, stomach issues, or other symptoms
- service-connected allergic rhinitis or sinus problems may be part of a broader respiratory or sleep picture

But the bridge needs evidence.

Do not rely on casual language like “I think these are related.” A stronger secondary theory explains the actual bridge: how the service-connected condition caused the second condition, made it worse, changed body mechanics, caused medication side effects, aggravated symptoms, or made the second condition harder to control.

Sometimes the better move is not a new secondary claim. Sometimes the better move is an increased rating for the already service-connected condition.

Copy/paste prompt

I already have a service-connected rating for [primary condition]. Review my records and tell me whether [new condition] looks like a realistic secondary claim. Tell me the theory, what evidence already helps, what evidence is missing, and whether this sounds stronger as a true secondary claim or an increase on the primary issue instead. Do not invent facts.

Formula 4 – Supplemental Claim

Use this when

Use a Supplemental Claim when:

- VA already denied or rated something
- the veteran now has new and relevant evidence
- the new evidence helps answer the reason VA denied or underrated the claim

Basic formula

A Supplemental Claim usually needs:

- VA already denied or decided something
- the veteran has new and relevant evidence
- the new evidence helps answer the reason VA denied or underrated the claim

What usually helps

- new nexus letter
- updated diagnosis evidence
- stronger lay statement
- stronger buddy statement
- new private records
- new VA treatment records
- new DBQ
- new service records
- records that directly answer the denial reason
- evidence that VA did not previously review

What usually hurts

- re-sending the same weak evidence in a different pile
- not understanding what VA said was missing
- filing a Supplemental Claim without truly new and relevant evidence
- submitting new evidence that does not address the actual denial reason
- uploading a bloated packet with no explanation

The denial letter is the target

For a Supplemental Claim, the denial letter matters.

The veteran should ask:

What did VA say was missing?

Then ask:

What new and relevant evidence directly answers that?

Do not just throw more pages at the VA.

Build the missing piece.

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading a denial letter and new evidence I have now. Tell me whether this is best handled as a Supplemental Claim. Explain exactly what part of the denial the new evidence helps fix and whether the evidence is strong enough to matter. Do not invent facts.

Formula 5 – Higher-Level Review

Use this when

Use Higher-Level Review when:

- VA made a mistake based on the record already in the file
- the veteran is not adding new evidence

Basic formula

Higher-Level Review usually means:

- VA made a mistake based on the evidence it already had
- the file already contained enough evidence for a better decision
- the veteran is asking a more senior reviewer to review the decision

What usually helps

- favorable evidence already in the file
- bad reasoning in the decision letter
- visible factual errors
- visible legal or rating errors
- VA ignored lay evidence
- VA ignored favorable medical evidence
- VA relied too heavily on a weak exam
- the rating does not match documented severity

- the decision misunderstood the timeline

What usually hurts

- trying to use HLR when the problem is actually missing evidence
- being angry without identifying the actual error
- not understanding what was already in the record at the time of decision
- trying to add new evidence in a lane that is not built for that

HLR is not “I disagree because I am mad”

Higher-Level Review is not just a louder appeal.

It works best when the veteran can say:

The evidence was already there, and VA got it wrong.

If the evidence was not already there, a Supplemental Claim may be the better lane.

Simple HLR rule

If your argument depends on new evidence VA has not reviewed yet, HLR is usually the wrong lane. HLR is mainly for arguing that VA made an error based on the record it already had.

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading my decision letter and the evidence VA already had at the time. Tell me whether this looks strongest as a Higher-Level Review issue. Identify what error VA may have made and whether the evidence already in the file was enough to support a better outcome. Do not invent facts.

Formula 6 — Board Appeal

Use this when

Use a Board Appeal when:

- the veteran wants a Veterans Law Judge to review the case
- the issue is more complex, more disputed, or earlier lanes did not fix the problem
- the veteran understands which Board lane fits the situation

Basic formula

A Board Appeal usually means:

- the issue remains contested or unresolved
- earlier lanes did not fix it, or the dispute is more complex

- the veteran wants Board-level review

What usually helps

- clearly developed record
- preserved favorable findings
- clear procedural history
- well-identified errors or evidence gaps
- strong lay or buddy statements
- useful medical evidence
- clear reason for choosing Board review
- understanding whether Direct Review, Evidence Submission, or Hearing lane fits

What usually hurts

- going to the Board just because the veteran is frustrated
- not understanding whether the issue could be fixed faster at a lower lane
- filing into the Board lane without a clear theory
- submitting a messy record
- not understanding the difference between Direct Review, Evidence Submission, and Hearing lanes

Board is not always the first move

The Board can be the right move for serious, complex, or persistent disputes.

But it is not automatically the right move just because the veteran got a bad decision.

Before choosing the Board, the veteran should understand whether the problem is:

- missing evidence
- bad VA reasoning
- bad exam
- wrong rating

- wrong effective date
- more complex legal or factual dispute

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this claim history, denial letter, and evidence summary, tell me whether this issue should stay in Supplemental or Higher-Level Review, or whether it has become a Board-level issue. Explain why in plain English. Do not invent facts.

Deadline warning

Do not let lane analysis cause you to miss a filing or appeal deadline. If a decision has a response deadline, verify the current deadline on the decision letter and VA.gov, and consider getting accredited help if you are close to the deadline.

The Fast Rule

If the veteran gets confused, use this rule:

Direct claim = it started in service or comes from service.

Increase claim = it is already service connected and got worse.

Secondary claim = an already service-connected condition caused, resulted in, or worsened a separate current condition beyond its natural progression.

Supplemental Claim = the veteran now has new and relevant evidence.

Higher-Level Review = VA got it wrong based on evidence already in the file.

Board Appeal = the issue is more contested, more complex, or not fixed in earlier lanes.

That is the fast map.

Effective-date warning

The lane you choose and the timing of your filing can affect potential back pay. Do not abandon, delay, or restart a claim path without thinking about effective-date consequences.

Ask the AI Before You Pick the Lane

If the veteran is not sure which lane fits, do not guess.

Ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to classify the issue based on the evidence.

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records, decision letters, and current situation, tell me whether this issue looks strongest as direct service connection, increased rating, secondary service connection, Supplemental

Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Explain why in plain English, identify the biggest evidence gap, and tell me what document or evidence I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Ask for a Readiness Assessment Before Filing

Before filing, the veteran should ask whether the claim is actually ready.

This is not asking the AI to guarantee the outcome.

It is asking the AI to judge the current evidence stack.

Copy/paste prompt

Review this claim in its current state. Do not guarantee the outcome. Tell me whether the evidence looks weak, fair, good, or strong right now. Explain why. Identify the weakest part of the claim and the top three things that would most improve it before filing.

What the AI should look for

The AI should look at:

- current diagnosis or symptoms
- service event, symptoms, exposure, or duty condition
- continuity
- nexus or medical bridge
- current severity
- functional loss
- work impact
- lay statement strength
- buddy statement strength
- whether the right lane has been chosen

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is to avoid filing blind.

Claim Evidence Scorecard

Before filing or choosing a review lane, score the issue like an evidence project. This is not a prediction and it is not legal advice. It is a practical way to see what is strong, what is weak, and what is missing.

For each claimed condition, rate these categories as Green, Yellow, or Red:

- Current diagnosis or current symptoms
- In-service event, injury, disease, exposure, duty condition, or already service-connected primary condition
- Nexus, continuity, aggravation, or presumptive bridge
- Current severity and rating evidence
- Lay or buddy support
- Correct claim or review lane
- Effective-date or deadline risk

Then identify the top three evidence gaps and the top three next moves.

Copy/paste prompt

Build a Claim Evidence Scorecard for this issue. Rate current diagnosis, in-service event or primary service-connected foundation, nexus or continuity, current severity, lay or buddy support, correct lane, and effective-date risk as Green, Yellow, or Red. Then give me the top three evidence gaps and top three next moves. Do not invent facts.

Run the Denial Risk Scan Before You File

Before you file, ask the AI to attack the claim like a denial reviewer. That does not mean it can predict the VA decision. It means it can look for obvious weak points before VA finds them for you.

A claim usually fails for one of five plain-English reasons:

1. VA does not see a current disability.
2. VA does not see what happened in service, what exposure occurred, or what primary service-connected condition caused or worsened the claimed condition.
3. VA does not see the bridge between service and the current condition.
4. VA does not see enough severity evidence for the rating.

5. The veteran lost ground procedurally by missing an exam, deadline, VA request, form requirement, or appeal step.

Fix what can be fixed before you file. Do not wait for a denial letter to tell you what was missing.

Copy/paste prompt

Run a denial risk scan on this claim before I file. Look for missing diagnosis, weak service event or primary-condition foundation, weak nexus or continuity, weak severity evidence, missing lay or buddy support, wrong-lane risk, missed deadlines, missing forms, and inconsistent statements. Do not guarantee an outcome. Mark gaps clearly.

Presumptive Does Not Mean Automatic Payment

A presumptive rule may help prove that VA should connect a condition to service. It does not automatically prove the veteran has the condition now. It does not automatically prove the correct rating percentage. It does not automatically prove the best effective date.

If a presumptive theory may apply, still build current diagnosis evidence, severity evidence, functional-impact evidence, and deadline/effective-date awareness. Verify current presumptive rules through VA.gov or an accredited representative before relying on them.

Copy/paste prompt

Check whether a presumptive theory may apply to this issue, but separate the analysis into: qualifying service or exposure, qualifying condition, current diagnosis, current severity, effective-date risk, and what official-source verification is needed. Do not assume presumptive means automatic payment.

Acute Injury vs. Cumulative Wear-and-Tear

Do not give up on a musculoskeletal claim just because you do not have one perfect sick-call note. Some service injuries happen all at once: a fall, awkward lift, hard landing, twist, pop, or strain. Other service injuries build over time from repeated military physical stress.

Running, marching with heavy gear, lifting equipment, climbing in and out of vehicles, standing for long periods, kneeling, carrying loads, wearing body armor, and pushing through pain can create a cumulative service theory when the facts and medical evidence support it.

Your job is not to invent an injury. Your job is to build the bridge clearly: what happened, whether it was acute, cumulative, or both, when symptoms began, why treatment may be missing, how symptoms continued, what records show now, who saw the symptoms, and what the condition limits today.

Copy/paste prompt

I am developing a musculoskeletal VA claim for [body part/condition]. Interview me for both theories: one acute service injury and cumulative overuse from military duties such as running, marching with loads, lifting, equipment handling, falls, vehicles, stairs, kneeling, awkward movement, PT, or deployment work. Then tell me what evidence is strong, weak, or missing. Do not invent facts.

Example: How to Develop a Headache or Migraine Claim

Headache and migraine claims often fail or get underrated because the evidence only says "headaches" without explaining what the headaches actually do.

Develop headache evidence around onset, frequency, duration, severity, prostrating behavior, work or economic impact, household and social impact, associated symptoms, triggers, treatment, medication history, and possible direct or secondary theories.

Ask: How often do the headaches happen? How long do they last? Do they force you to stop activity, lie down, shut off lights, avoid sound, leave work, miss obligations, or cancel plans? Do they cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, visual changes, light sensitivity, sound sensitivity, ringing in the ears, weakness, cognitive fog, or exhaustion?

A useful headache statement does not exaggerate. It gives the rater and examiner a clear picture of what happens during a bad headache and how often that happens.

Copy/paste prompt

I am developing a VA claim for headaches or migraines. Interview me one question at a time. Help me document onset, frequency, duration, severity, prostrating behavior, missed work, reduced productivity, household impact, social impact, associated symptoms, triggers, medication history, treatment history, and possible direct or secondary theories. Do not invent facts.

Save the Claim Theory in the Starter Kit

After the AI helps classify the issue, save a short issue summary in the Starter Kit.

Save it here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Also save any meaningful session summary here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Copy/paste prompt

Create a short issue summary for my Starter Kit. Include the likely claim lane, evidence that already helps, evidence gaps, best next document to build, and top 3 next moves. Do not invent facts.

Warning

WARNING:

- Do not confuse “this issue matters to me” with “this issue belongs in this lane.”

The right lane depends on the actual problem, not on how frustrated the veteran feels.

Caution

CAUTION:

Do not file every related symptom as a separate secondary claim without checking whether it is truly a separate ratable condition or just part of the already-rated issue.

Do not use Higher-Level Review when the real problem is missing evidence.

Do not use a Supplemental Claim when the real problem is that VA ignored evidence already in the file.

Match the lane to the problem.

Note

NOTE:

A lot of claim problems are not about whether the veteran is disabled.

They are about whether the veteran picked the right lane and built the right proof for that lane.

AI Battle Drill

If you are overwhelmed, do this:

Pick one issue only.

Paste this prompt:

Based on my records, tell me whether this issue looks strongest as a direct claim, increased-rating claim, secondary claim, Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review issue, or Board issue. Explain why simply and tell me what evidence matters most. Do not invent facts.

Let the AI classify the issue.

Ask for a weak / fair / good / strong readiness assessment.

Save the issue summary in the Starter Kit.

Build only the next thing the AI tells you to build.

That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- filing a direct claim with no real service event evidence
- quitting too early because there are no in-service medical records
- failing to build an evidence bridge
- filing an increase claim without proving worsening
- filing a secondary claim with no bridge between the conditions
- filing a Supplemental Claim without real new and relevant evidence
- using HLR when the problem is actually missing proof
- jumping to the Board without understanding whether a lower lane could fix it first
- asking the AI for a summary but not asking it for a claim theory
- filing before asking what evidence is still missing
- trying to attack every issue at once
- failing to save the claim theory and next steps in the Starter Kit

Quick Reaction Checklist

Do I know whether this is direct, increase, secondary, Supplemental Claim, HLR, or Board?

Do I understand the basic formula for that lane?

Do I know what evidence already helps?

Do I know what evidence is missing?

If service records are missing, did I build an evidence bridge?

Did I ask the AI which lane fits best?

Did I ask the AI whether the claim looks weak, fair, good, or strong right now?

Do I know the next document or statement I should build?

Did I save the issue summary in the Starter Kit?

Chapter Recap

This chapter gives the veteran the basic formulas for the six main claim paths.

The point is not to turn the veteran into a lawyer.

The point is to stop blind filing.

A veteran should know:

- what kind of claim they are building
- what proof usually matters
- what evidence already helps
- what is still missing
- what lane fits the problem
- what to build next

If there are no clean in-service medical records, the answer is not to quit.

The answer is to build a truthful evidence bridge from service to now.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 4 and learn how the core tools work together: ChatGPT, VA Claim Battle Buddy, VA.gov, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Print to PDF, screenshots, BuddySign, and the Starter Kit.

Chapter 4 — The Core Tools

Mission

Teach the veteran what each core tool is for, what job it does best, and how to make the tools work together as one system instead of as a pile of random apps.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans fail here before they even realize it.

They have:

- records in one place
- screenshots in another
- forms somewhere else
- AI chat threads with no structure
- buddy statements that never get signed
- final evidence scattered across downloads, email, and desktop folders
- and no clear understanding of which tool is supposed to do what

That creates confusion, wasted time, and bad results.

This chapter fixes that by assigning each tool a job.

The veteran should not have to become a records clerk, PDF technician, claim strategist, medical-record analyst, and writer all at the same time.

The system works better when every tool has a clear mission.

End State

- By the end of this chapter, the veteran should understand:
- what ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy is for
- what VA.gov is for
- what Adobe Acrobat Reader is for
- what Windows Print to PDF is for
- what screenshots and Snipping Tool are for

- what BuddySign is for
- what the Starter Kit is for
- how Claim Session Summaries help preserve continuity
- how all of those tools work together in one repeatable workflow

Execution

Tool 1 – ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy

Primary mission

Use ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy as the main workhorse.

What ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy should do

- review uploaded records
- summarize medical evidence
- build timelines
- identify favorable evidence
- identify evidence gaps
- compare evidence to likely rating logic
- draft lay statements
- draft buddy statements
- rewrite weak language into stronger truthful language
- prepare C&P cheat sheets
- analyze decision letters
- help choose the next review lane
- build a claims roadmap
- build an evidence action plan

- rank targets as easy, medium, and difficult
- create Claim Session Summaries
- tell the veteran the top 3 next moves only when overwhelmed

Why it matters

The veteran should not be expected to do all the reading, sorting, writing, organizing, and strategy work alone.

ChatGPT is the main tool that reduces that burden.

VA Claim Battle Buddy is the ecosystem version of that workflow: it is built to behave like a claim project manager, record triage assistant, statement drafter, lane-selection coach, and next-step simplifier.

Important rule

The AI is not there to invent facts.

It should use only what the veteran says and what appears in uploaded records.

If something is missing, it should say exactly what is missing.

Privacy reminder

Do not upload records, screenshots, or documents containing information you are not comfortable sharing with the AI tool you are using. Redact or crop sensitive information when practical.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-100 — ChatGPT Issue-Thread Setup](#)
- [Prompt Card B-101 — VA Claim Battle Buddy Prompt Example](#)
- [Prompt Card B-102 — Project Chat Setup Prompt](#)
- [Prompt Card B-103 — Claim Session Summary Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want you to act as the main workhorse for this VA claim issue. Review my uploaded records, build my timeline, identify favorable evidence, identify evidence gaps, tell me what kind of claim or review lane fits best, and tell me exactly what statement or document I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Tool 2 – VA.gov

Primary mission

Use VA.gov as the official portal for records, claims, letters, secure messages, and status.

Official-source reminder

VA.gov is the official source for current VA forms, filing tools, decision letters, claim status, and account access. The screens and paths may change, so verify the current process on VA.gov before filing or relying on an old saved instruction.

What VA.gov is for

- downloading medical records
- accessing Blue Button material
- accessing My HealtheVet tools on VA.gov
- using secure messaging
- reviewing claim status
- downloading decision letters
- submitting claims and evidence
- accessing review lane tools
- tracking official VA activity

Why it matters

VA.gov is the front door for much of the official process.

ChatGPT helps think and build.

VA.gov is where much of the real documentation, record access, communication, and filing activity happens.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-001 — VA.gov Sign-In or Access Screen**
- **Prompt Card B-002 — VA Health Tools / My HealtheVet Access**
- **Prompt Card B-003 — Secure Messaging Access Point**
- Prompt Card B-060 through B-071 — Secure Messaging workflow
- Prompt Card B-080 through B-086 — VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat workflow

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am using VA.gov for this step. Tell me exactly what I should be looking for, what I should download, and what I should save into my claims folder before moving on.

Tool 3 — Adobe Acrobat Reader

Primary mission

Use Adobe Acrobat Reader as the core free PDF tool.

What Acrobat Reader is for

- opening PDFs
- reviewing records
- filling out VA forms
- pasting AI-generated statements into forms
- saving completed PDFs
- signing the veteran's own forms
- reviewing PDFs before upload
- using a backup manual signing workflow when BuddySign is not used

Why it matters

The veteran needs a reliable PDF tool that is free, common, and simple enough to use without getting dragged into paid features unless absolutely necessary.

In this handbook system, BuddySign is the preferred workflow for remote buddy/witness signatures when it fits the situation, but Acrobat Reader still matters because veterans will handle many other PDFs during the claim process.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-020 — Adobe Acrobat Reader Download / Install](#)
- [Prompt Card B-021 — Acrobat Reader on Phone](#)
- [Prompt Card B-022 — Acrobat Fill & Sign Area](#)
- [Prompt Card B-023 — PDF Ready to Save](#)
- [Prompt Card B-024 — Acrobat Reader Signing Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-025 — Add Signature Panel](#)
- [Prompt Card B-026 — Signed PDF Ready to Save](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am using Adobe Acrobat Reader for this step. Tell me exactly how I should use it for this task using the free version only.

Tool 4 — Windows Print to PDF

Primary mission

Use Windows Print to PDF to split giant record files into manageable chunks.

What Windows Print to PDF is for

- breaking huge PDFs into smaller page ranges
- creating upload-sized chunks
- preserving the original file while making working copies
- avoiding paid Acrobat extraction tools
- turning Word/text drafts into simple PDFs if needed

Why it matters

The veteran should not have to buy software just to break down a 400-page or 1,000-page record file. This is the free workaround that keeps the system practical.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog](#)
- [Prompt Card B-111 — Page Range Selected](#)
- [Prompt Card B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk](#)
- [Prompt Card B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files](#)

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I need to break a large PDF into smaller chunks using Windows Print to PDF. Give me the simplest possible step-by-step instructions and tell me how to name the resulting files so I stay organized.

Tool 5 — Screenshots and Snipping Tool**Primary mission**

Use screenshots to get unstuck fast.

What screenshots are for

- confusing VA.gov screens
- appointment notices
- denial-letter language
- contractor scheduling pages
- Acrobat issues
- form confusion
- portal messages
- claim status screens

- secure messaging screens
- VA Health Chat screens
- BuddySign screens
- any screen where the veteran does not know what they are looking at

Why it matters

A lot of veterans stall out because they hit one screen they do not understand and then stop working the claim.

A screenshot fixes that faster than a long explanation.

Take the screenshot, upload it into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy, and ask what the screen means.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT](#)
- [Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading a screenshot because I am stuck. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should do next.

Tool 6 — BuddySign

Primary mission

Use BuddySign to collect remote buddy, lay, and witness signatures after the statement draft is ready.

What BuddySign is for

- creating a buddy/witness statement signing workflow
- letting the veteran control buddy contact fields, relationship, condition, and statement text
- sending the buddy a signing invite email

- letting the witness review the statement remotely
- letting the witness type their name, check the certification box, and sign
- generating a signed output and, when needed, a local print/PDF packet for the veteran to save
- reducing printing, scanning, PDF-signing, and email-back friction

Why it matters

Buddy statements often fail at the last mile.

The statement gets drafted, but the buddy never figures out how to sign it, scan it, save it, or email it back.

BuddySign is designed to make that final step simple.

The veteran organizes the statement.

The witness still personally reviews and signs.

That is the balance.

Important boundary

Do not sign for the witness.

Do not rely on verbal permission to sign for someone.

The witness must personally review and sign only if the statement is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Do not overclaim

- Do not describe BuddySign as:
- VA-approved
- VA-certified
- guaranteed accepted
- legal representation
- HIPAA compliant
- FedRAMP compliant
- ESIGN compliant
- legally binding

unless those claims are separately verified and approved.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields](#)
- [Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box](#)
- [Prompt Card B-203 — BuddySign Signing Invite Email](#)
- [Prompt Card B-204 — BuddySign Witness Review and Certification Page](#)
- [Prompt Card B-205 — BuddySign Local PDF Output / Print Preview](#)
- [Prompt Card B-206 — BuddySign Dashboard Signed Status](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have drafted my buddy statement and I am ready to collect the signature. Walk me through using BuddySign to prepare the statement, send the signing link to my buddy or witness, and save the signed output when they are done.

Tool 7 — The Starter Kit Folder System

Primary mission

Use the Starter Kit as the home base for the whole claim project.

What the Starter Kit is for

- storing raw records
- storing issue-specific evidence
- storing statements and drafts
- storing BuddySign signed outputs
- storing Claim Session Summaries
- storing filing packets
- storing receipts

- storing decision letters
- keeping the whole system from turning into a junk drawer

Why it matters

AI can help build the claim, but the veteran still needs a clean place to save the work.

If the veteran does not save the outputs, signed statements, receipts, and summaries, the work can disappear into downloads, old chats, emails, or desktop clutter.

The Starter Kit is the claim command center.

Core folders to remember

```
VA DISABILITY CLAIMS/
00 START HERE/
01 BLANK VA FORMS/
02 MASTER RECORDS/
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/
04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/
05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/
06 ARCHIVE OLD OR DUPLICATE FILES/
07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/
```

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-041 — START HERE Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank](#)
- [Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me organize this claim issue inside my Starter Kit. Tell me where to save raw records, working drafts, BuddySign outputs, Claim Session Summaries, final filing packets, and submission receipts.

Tool 8 – Claim Session Summaries

Primary mission

Use Claim Session Summaries to preserve progress between AI sessions.

What a Claim Session Summary is for

- saving what the AI reviewed
- saving what facts were confirmed
- saving possible facts that still need confirmation
- saving evidence found
- saving evidence gaps
- saving statements drafted
- saving the top 3 next moves
- helping the next AI session pick up faster

Why it matters

Do not assume one AI chat will permanently hold your entire claim file forever.

Long claim projects need portable summaries.

At the end of a meaningful session, ask the AI to summarize the work so you can save it in the Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Save it here

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

- and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

The AI-First Workflow

This is how the tools work together:

VA.gov gives the veteran access to records, messages, decisions, and filing tools.

Windows Print to PDF breaks giant files into manageable chunks.

Adobe Acrobat Reader opens, fills, saves, reviews, and signs PDFs when needed.

Screenshots help the veteran get unstuck instantly when a screen is confusing.

ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy analyzes the records, drafts the language, builds the roadmap, and tells the veteran the next move.

BuddySign collects remote witness signatures after buddy/witness statements are ready.

The Starter Kit stores the records, drafts, signed outputs, filing packets, receipts, and summaries.

Claim Session Summaries preserve continuity across long projects and future sessions.

That is the machine.

The book is the operating manual.

VA Claim Battle Buddy is the guided assistant.

BuddySign is the remote witness-signature tool.

The Starter Kit is the evidence organization system.

Do Veterans Need to Keyword-Search Their Own Records?

Usually, no.

The veteran does not need to do a giant manual keyword hunt just to make the system work.

If the veteran:

- uploads organized chunks
- labels them clearly
- tells the AI what issue is being worked
- and asks the AI the right question

then ChatGPT can often do much of the heavy lifting.

Manual searching is only a backup method when:

- the file is too large or messy to upload cleanly
- the veteran wants a fast first split

- the AI asks for narrower packets
- the veteran is trying to isolate one specific record quickly
- The default rule should be:

Organize enough for AI to work. Do not do AI's job for it unless there is a practical reason.

Warning

Do not rely on memory, vibes, or random browsing.

Each tool has a job.

Use the tool that fits the task.

For witness statements, do not sign for the witness. The witness must personally review and personally sign their own statement.

Caution

Do not make the process more complicated than it needs to be by using five different apps for the same simple job.

Stick to the core tool stack unless there is a real need to branch out.

Do not let AI invent facts. Do not let a witness statement say things the witness could not personally know.

Note

The whole point of this system is not to make the veteran become a PDF technician, records clerk, claims strategist, and writer all at once.

The point is to assign those jobs intelligently across the tools and let the AI carry more of the load.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Download the record or letter from VA.gov.
- Split it with Windows Print to PDF if needed.

- Open it in Acrobat Reader if you need to review it.
- Save it in the Starter Kit.
- Upload it into the correct ChatGPT issue thread or VA Claim Battle Buddy workflow.
- Paste one prompt only.
- Ask for the top 3 next moves only.
- Save a Claim Session Summary when the session produces useful work.
- If a buddy statement is ready, use BuddySign for the witness signature.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- using VA.gov but not saving downloaded records properly
- opening giant PDFs without chunking them first
- trying to use paid Acrobat workflows when free options are enough
- not using screenshots when stuck
- asking ChatGPT vague questions with no clear task
- mixing too many issues into one chat thread
- forgetting which tool is supposed to do what
- drafting a buddy statement but never getting it signed
- signing for a witness instead of having the witness sign
- failing to save BuddySign outputs
- failing to save Claim Session Summaries
- letting the folder system turn into a junk drawer

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know what ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy is for
- I know what VA.gov is for
- I know what Acrobat Reader is for
- I know what Windows Print to PDF is for
- I know what screenshots are for
- I know what BuddySign is for
- I know what the Starter Kit is for
- I know what Claim Session Summaries are for
- I know how these tools work together
- I am not trying to do all the work manually
- I know my next tool-based move

Chapter Recap

This chapter assigns jobs to the tools.

VA.gov handles access and official activity.

Windows Print to PDF handles chunking.

Acrobat Reader handles PDFs and forms.

Screenshots help the veteran get unstuck.

ChatGPT / VA Claim Battle Buddy does the heavy thinking, drafting, and planning.

BuddySign handles the remote buddy/witness signature step.

The Starter Kit stores the whole fight.

Claim Session Summaries keep long AI work portable.

Once the veteran understands that division of labor, the whole system gets easier.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 5 and build the file structure, naming system, and organization rules that keep this whole machine from turning into a mess.

Chapter 5 — Build a Claim Folder Structure That Does Not Suck

Mission

Build a clean file and folder system so the veteran can find records fast, stop losing evidence, keep AI work organized, save signed BuddySign outputs, preserve Claim Session Summaries, and make it easier for ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to work issue by issue instead of drowning in chaos.

Why This Matters

A lot of claims get weaker for a dumb reason:

the veteran cannot find their own stuff.

They have:

- rating decisions mixed with medical records
- buddy letters buried in downloads
- signed statements sitting in email
- old versions of statements everywhere
- giant PDFs with useless file names
- AI summaries lost inside old chats
- no clear separation between raw records and final filing packets
- no single place for BuddySign outputs
- no single place for Claim Session Summaries

That creates drag, confusion, and mistakes.

This chapter fixes that by building a file structure that is simple, repeatable, and hard to screw up.

End State

- By the end of this chapter, the veteran should have:
- one clean root claims folder
- clearly named master folders
- issue-specific subfolders
- consistent date-first file names

- separate areas for raw records, working drafts, final packets, receipts, and archived material
- a dedicated Buddy/Lay Statement Bank
- a dedicated place for BuddySign signed outputs
- a dedicated place for Claim Session Summaries
- a dedicated place for Project Chat prompts
- a structure that makes it easier to upload the right files into the right AI thread or Project

Execution

Step 1 – Create one root claims folder

What to do

- Create one main folder on the computer called:
- VA DISABILITY CLAIMS

Put everything related to the disability claim process inside that root folder.

Privacy reminder

If you store claim files in cloud folders, shared drives, or email, understand who has access. Keep sensitive records in a place you control and avoid sharing folders that contain unnecessary personal information.

Stop scattering claim files across:

- Desktop
- Downloads
- email attachments
- random folders
- phone files
- old AI chats
- cloud folders you forgot about

Why it matters

If the veteran has no single home base, the system starts breaking immediately.

One root folder gives the entire project a center of gravity.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want to set up one master root folder for all my VA disability claim work. Tell me the cleanest structure to use so I can keep records, forms, statements, BuddySign outputs, Claim Session Summaries, filing packets, and receipts organized without losing track of anything.

Step 2 — Build the master folder structure

What to do

- Create these main folders inside the root claims folder:

```
VA DISABILITY CLAIMS/
```

```
00 START HERE/
01 BLANK VA FORMS/
02 MASTER RECORDS/
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/
04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/
05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/
06 ARCHIVE OLD OR DUPLICATE FILES/
07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/
```

Inside those, use this working structure:

```
00 START HERE/
```

- MASTER CLAIM INDEX
- MASTER CONDITIONS LIST
- MASTER CURRENT RATINGS
- MASTER TIMELINE
- MASTER TO-DO CHECKLIST

```
PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS/
```

CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

01 BLANK VA FORMS/

VA 21-526EZ

VA 20-0995

VA 20-0996

VA 21-4138

VA 21-10210

VA 21-0966

VA 10182

02 MASTER RECORDS/
C-FILE/
BLUE BUTTON/
SERVICE TREATMENT RECORDS/
SERVICE PERSONNEL RECORDS/
PRIVATE MEDICAL/
VA DECISION LETTERS/
C&P EXAMS/
DBQS/

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/
MENTAL HEALTH/
MUSCULOSKELETAL/
HEADACHES/
OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA/
GERD/
IBS/
ALLERGIC RHINITIS/
CHRONIC SINUSITIS/
HYPERTENSION/
ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION/
CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME/
TOENAIL FUNGUS/
GULF WAR SYNDROME/
TDIU/
VR&E/

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

06 ARCHIVE OLD OR DUPLICATE FILES/

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/
BuddySign_Outputs/
Drafts/
Witness_Contact_Worksheets/
Legacy_Acrobat_Signed_PDFs/

Why it matters

This separates:

- blank tools
- raw evidence
- issue-specific work
- filing-ready packets
- proof of submission
- old junk you do not want mixed into live work
- buddy/witness statement drafts
- signed BuddySign outputs
- AI continuity summaries

That alone cuts down confusion.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder**
- **Prompt Card B-041 — START HERE Folder**
- **Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder**
- **Prompt Card B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank**
- **Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my claims and likely issues, help me customize my master claims folder structure without making it bloated or confusing. Include folders for BuddySign outputs, witness contact worksheets, Project Chat prompts, and Claim Session Summaries.

Step 3 — Create issue-specific working folders

What to do

- Inside each issue folder, use a repeatable subfolder structure like this:

```
ISSUE FOLDER/
01 ISSUE SUMMARY/
02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/
03 SERVICE EVIDENCE/
04 LAY STATEMENTS/
05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
06 NEXUS DBQ OPINIONS/
07 DECISION LETTERS/
08 C&P EXAMS/
09 FILING PACKET/
10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/
CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

- Use this structure for serious issues like:
- BACK
- NECK
- PTSD
- HEADACHES

- OSA
- FEET
- GERD
- KNEES
- SHOULDERS
- TDIU

Where BuddySign outputs go

- For issue-specific signed witness statements, save a copy in:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
```

- Also save a master copy in:

```
07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/
```

- That gives you both:
 - one copy inside the issue folder
 - one central witness statement bank

Why it matters

The veteran should be able to open one issue folder and see the whole fight in one place:

- what the issue is
- what evidence exists
- what statements are built
- what BuddySign outputs support it
- what packet is ready
- what got submitted
- what the AI already figured out

That makes both filing and AI analysis easier.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank](#)
- [Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me build a clean subfolder structure for each claim issue so I can keep medical evidence, service evidence, lay statements, BuddySign outputs, C&P material, Claim Session Summaries, and final filing packets separated and easy to find.

Step 4 — Use date-first file names

What to do

- Use a consistent naming rule:
- YYYY-MM-DD_Issue_DocumentType
- Examples:

```
2026-04-20_Back_Lay_Statement.pdf
2026-04-20_PTSD_Buddy_Letter_John_Smith_DRAFT.docx
2026-04-20_PTSD_BuddySign_Output_John_Smith_SIGNED.pdf
2026-04-20_Rating_Decision.pdf
2026-04-20_BlueButton_Back_2018-2020.pdf
2026-04-20_Back_Filing_Packet.pdf
2026-04-20_Back_Claim_Session_Summary.md
```

- For chunked PDFs, use:
- YYYY-MM-DD_Issue_Source_Part_PageRange
- Examples:

```
2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_1_pages_1-150.pdf
2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_2_pages_151-300.pdf
2026-04-20_PTSD_CFile_Part_1_pages_1-200.pdf
```

Why it matters

Date-first file names sort cleanly.

They make it easier to:

- find the newest version
- avoid duplicate confusion
- see sequence at a glance
- know what file belongs to what issue
- separate drafts from signed outputs
- find what was actually filed

Bad file names create unnecessary pain.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Give me a dead-simple file naming system for my VA claims records, statements, BuddySign outputs, Claim Session Summaries, and filing packets that keeps everything sortable and easy to find later.

Step 5 — Separate raw records from working packets**What to do**

- Use this simple rule:
- MASTER RECORDS = raw originals
- CLAIMS BY ISSUE = working copies organized by issue
- BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK = witness/lay statement drafts and signed outputs
- ACTIVE FILING PACKETS = final cleaned packet ready to submit
- SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS = what was actually filed plus proof
- ARCHIVE = old, duplicate, or retired material

Do not edit your only copy of a raw original if you can help it.

Keep the full untouched original in MASTER RECORDS.

Work from copies.

Why it matters

Veterans get into trouble when:

- they overwrite originals
- they lose the final filed version
- they do not know which file was the submitted copy
- they mix rough drafts with final packet versions
- they lose signed BuddySign outputs
- they forget what the AI already analyzed

This separation fixes that.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Explain the cleanest way to separate my raw original records, working issue files, BuddySign signed outputs, final filing packets, submitted copies, and archived duplicates so I always know what is original, what is draft, what is signed, and what was actually filed.

Step 6 – Save every final version and every receipt

What to do

- Always save:
- final statements
- final buddy letters
- final BuddySign outputs
- final issue packets
- upload confirmations
- QuickSubmit receipts if used

- decision letters
- follow-up requests from VA
- updated versions when you materially revise something
- Claim Session Summaries after meaningful AI work
- Put filed/submitted proof in:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

- and inside the issue folder under:

10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

- Put signed BuddySign outputs in:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

- and also inside the related issue folder under:

05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Why it matters

Do not trust memory.

Do not rely on a single portal view as your only record.

Do not trust that you will remember which version got filed.

Keep the proof.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Give me a clean method for storing every final filed packet, signed BuddySign output, receipt, and decision letter so I can prove what was submitted, what was signed, and when.

Step 7 – Build one “START HERE” control center

What to do

- Inside 00 START HERE/, keep these working control documents:
- MASTER CLAIM INDEX
- MASTER CONDITIONS LIST
- MASTER CURRENT RATINGS
- MASTER TIMELINE
- MASTER TO-DO CHECKLIST

PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS/
CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

These do not have to be fancy.

They just need to be useful.

Suggested contents

- MASTER CLAIM INDEX
- issue name
- current lane
- current status
- folder location
- next step
- MASTER CONDITIONS LIST
- every known issue
- direct / secondary / increase / unknown
- currently claimed or not yet claimed
- MASTER CURRENT RATINGS
- condition

- percentage
- effective date
- MASTER TIMELINE
- big service dates
- diagnosis dates
- filing dates
- denial dates
- appeal dates
- exam dates
- MASTER TO-DO CHECKLIST
- top current action items
- top 3 next moves only
- PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS
- Evidence Builder Project setup prompt
- Mental Health Project prompt
- Musculoskeletal Project prompt
- ENT / hearing / sinus prompt
- Medical Record Upload prompt
- Service Timeline Interview prompt
- Claim Session Summary prompt
- BuddySign next-step prompt
- CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES
- summaries from important AI sessions

- issue handoffs
- record-review summaries
- next-move summaries

Why it matters

This gives the veteran a command center.

When the case gets messy, this folder keeps the project from turning into a swamp.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-041 — START HERE Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me create a simple START HERE control center for my VA claims folder with a master issue index, current ratings sheet, timeline, to-do list, Project Chat prompts, and Claim Session Summary folder that I can actually keep updated.

Step 8 — Match the folder system to your AI workflow

What to do

- Use the same issue names in:
 - folder names
 - file names
 - ChatGPT thread titles
 - ChatGPT Project titles
 - VA Claim Battle Buddy sessions
 - final packet names
 - Claim Session Summary names

- Example:

```
Folder: 03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/MUSCULOSKELETAL/BACK/
Chat thread: BACK CLAIM
Project: VA Claim AI Evidence Builder – Back / MSK
Packet: 2026-04-20_Back_Filing_Packet.pdf
Session Summary: 2026-04-20_Back_Claim_Session_Summary.md
```

Keep naming aligned across the system.

Why it matters

When folder names, packet names, and thread names all match, the veteran wastes less energy figuring out what belongs where.

That also makes it easier to upload the right file into the right thread.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me align my folder names, file names, ChatGPT thread names, Project names, BuddySign outputs, and Claim Session Summary names so my VA claim workflow stays consistent across everything.

Step 9 – Save Claim Session Summaries so the work stays portable

What to do

At the end of any meaningful AI session, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it in:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

- and if it belongs to a specific issue, also save a copy in:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

AI work can get long.

Chats can slow down.

Projects can change.

The veteran may come back days later and forget what was already done.

A Claim Session Summary keeps the work portable and recoverable.

It gives the next session enough context to continue without making the veteran start over.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Warning

Do not let your claim system turn into a junk drawer.

Once files get scattered, duplicated, mislabeled, and mixed together, the claim gets harder to manage and easier to screw up.

Signed statements, receipts, and decision letters must not be left floating in Downloads or email.

Caution

Do not create fifty folders you will never use.

Build enough structure to stay organized, but not so much structure that maintaining it becomes its own job.

The system should reduce friction, not become a second full-time job.

Note

A clean folder structure is not busywork.

It is part of the claim strategy.

It reduces mistakes, reduces upload confusion, preserves signed BuddySign outputs, and makes it easier for AI to analyze the right issue with the right evidence.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Create the root folder.

- Create the eight main folders.
- Create one issue folder only.
- Create the issue subfolders inside it.
- Create one CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES folder.
- Create one BuddySign_Outputs folder.
- Move the files for that one issue into place.
- Stop there for the day if needed.
- That is enough to create momentum.

Common Failure Points

- keeping everything in Downloads
- mixing raw originals with final filing packets
- using vague file names like scan1.pdf or medical.pdf
- not separating issues into their own folders
- losing track of which statement is final
- not saving upload receipts
- not saving signed BuddySign outputs
- not saving Claim Session Summaries
- renaming nothing and expecting memory to do the job
- scattering AI outputs across chats without saving them

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I created one master claims root folder
- I created the eight main folders

- I created issue-specific folders
- I created issue subfolders
- I am using date-first file names
- I separated raw records from working copies
- I separated drafts from signed outputs
- I separated final packets from submitted packets
- I created a START HERE control center
- I created Project Chat prompt storage
- I created Claim Session Summary storage
- I created BuddySign output storage
- My folder names and AI thread/Project names match
- I know where my next file goes

Chapter Recap

This chapter was about building order.

A strong claim system is not just about evidence.

It is about being able to find, sort, build, save, and submit the right file at the right time without drowning in your own mess.

The updated system now has a place for:

- raw records
- working issue evidence
- lay statements
- buddy statements
- signed BuddySign outputs
- AI Claim Session Summaries

- final filing packets
- receipts
- decision letters
- old duplicate files

That is how the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder stays usable.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 6 and start learning how to mine giant PDFs with ChatGPT and free PDF tools without wasting hours manually searching through hundreds of pages.

Chapter 6 — How to Mine a Giant PDF With ChatGPT and Free PDF Tools

Mission

Teach the veteran how to break down giant record files into manageable chunks, upload them intelligently, and let ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy do the heavy lifting instead of trying to manually dig through hundreds or thousands of pages.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans get buried right here.

They have:

- Blue Button reports that are hundreds of pages long
- C-files that are massive
- private medical packets that are mixed together
- old scans with bad labels
- handwritten pages
- duplicate records
- bad file names
- and no clue where to start
- So they either:
- freeze
- upload a giant mess and get weak results
- or waste hours manually searching records when the AI should be doing most of that work

This chapter fixes that.

The veteran does not need to become a human search engine.

The veteran needs to:

- split giant files into workable chunks
- label them clearly

- save them in the Starter Kit
- tell the AI what the chunk is
- give the AI a clear extraction task
- save useful summaries after the AI analyzes them

End State

- By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:
- split giant PDFs into manageable pieces
- keep the original file untouched
- name chunks clearly
- save chunks in the right Starter Kit folders
- upload the right chunk into the right issue thread or Project
- tell the AI what task to perform on that chunk
- use AI to extract diagnosis, continuity, nexus clues, severity, and functional impact
- build issue packets from giant raw record files without losing their mind
- save a Claim Session Summary after meaningful record review

Execution

Step 1 – Stop trying to brute-force the whole file at once

Privacy reminder

Before uploading records into any AI tool, understand what you are sharing. Do not upload documents containing full SSNs, bank information, full claim numbers, or other sensitive information unless you are comfortable using that tool for that purpose. Redact or crop sensitive information when practical.

What to do

Do not try to manually read a 500-page or 1,500-page record from top to bottom before using AI.

Do not upload giant mixed files blindly if you can reasonably split them first.

Treat the giant file as raw source material, not as something you must personally digest in full before getting help.

Why it matters

The veteran's job is not to manually master the whole file before the AI gets involved.

The veteran's job is to organize enough for the AI to work efficiently.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have a very large medical or VA records file. Tell me the smartest way to break it down into manageable pieces so you can analyze it without me having to manually search everything first. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 – Split giant PDFs using free tools

What to do

Open the original PDF.

Use Windows Print to PDF to print smaller page ranges into separate files.

Keep the original full file untouched.

Work from copies only.

Save the chunks in the Starter Kit.

Basic rule

Try to keep chunks manageable.

A practical target is often around 150-200 pages per chunk, unless the packet is already narrowly focused. If the AI tool rejects the file or struggles with it, make the chunks smaller.

How to do it

Open the giant PDF.

Press Ctrl + P or click Print.

Choose Microsoft Print to PDF.

Enter a page range such as:

1-150
151-300
301-450

Save each chunk with a clear file name.

Repeat until the file is broken down.

Where to save chunks

- Save the untouched original in:

02 MASTER RECORDS/

- Save issue-specific chunks in:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/

- or, if they are service records:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/03 SERVICE EVIDENCE/

Why it matters

The veteran should not have to pay for Acrobat extraction features just to make records workable. Windows Print to PDF is the free workaround that keeps the system practical.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog](#)
- [Prompt Card B-111 — Page Range Selected](#)
- [Prompt Card B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk](#)
- [Prompt Card B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I need to break a giant PDF into manageable chunks using Windows Print to PDF. Give me the simplest possible step-by-step workflow and tell me how large each chunk should be. Also tell me how to name and save the chunks in my Starter Kit.

Step 3 — Name the chunks so they actually make sense

What to do

- Use a naming system that tells you:
- the date
- the issue
- the source
- the part number
- the page range

Use this format

- YYYY-MM-DD_Issue_Source_Part_PageRange

Examples

```
2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_1_pages_1-150.pdf
2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_2_pages_151-300.pdf
2026-04-20_PTSD_CFile_Part_1_pages_1-200.pdf
2026-04-20_Migraines_PrivateRecords_Part_1_pages_1-85.pdf
```

Why it matters

If the file names are garbage, the workflow becomes garbage.

Good names make it easier to:

- upload the right chunk
- remember what was already analyzed
- build issue-specific evidence packets later
- avoid redoing work
- save the right file in the right place

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Give me a dead-simple naming system for chunked VA claim PDFs so I can always tell what issue, source, and page range each file covers.

Step 4 – Chunk by issue when possible

What to do

If you already know the giant file contains mixed issues, split it further by issue when practical.

Good chunking categories include:

- condition
- source
- time period
- purpose
- Examples:
 - back
 - neck
 - PTSD
 - headaches
 - GERD
 - sleep apnea
 - service records
 - private ortho
 - mental health treatment
 - continuity evidence
 - severity evidence
 - nexus evidence

Why it matters

A 100-page packet about one issue is more useful than a 100-page packet about six unrelated things.

The more focused the chunk, the better the AI can:

- summarize it

- identify what matters
- build a timeline
- find gaps
- map it to a claim theory
- tell the veteran what to do next

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have a large mixed record file. Help me decide the best way to split it by issue, source, or time period so each packet is more useful for claim analysis. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 – Tell the AI what the chunk is before uploading it

What to do

- Before uploading a chunk, tell ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy:
 - what issue it relates to
 - what kind of records are in it
 - what time period it covers
 - whether it is part of a larger file
 - what you want the AI to extract from it

Example setup

This is Part 2 of my Blue Button file for my back claim. It covers 2019–2021 treatment notes. I want you to extract diagnosis evidence, continuity, worsening, functional loss, and any work-impact language.

Why it matters

Do not make the AI guess the task.

Give it a mission.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading one chunk of records for [condition]. This chunk is part of a larger claim file. It contains [type of records] from about [time period]. Analyze it for diagnosis evidence, timeline points, continuity, nexus clues, severity, functional loss, and work impact. Then tell me what this chunk proves, what it does not prove yet, and what upload I should give you next. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 — Make the AI extract the right things

What to do

- For each uploaded chunk, have the AI actively look for:
- diagnosis evidence
- symptom history
- onset clues
- continuity over time
- treatment history
- worsening
- flare-ups
- objective findings
- functional loss
- occupational impact
- nexus clues
- aggravation clues
- rating-related severity evidence

Why it matters

The point is not just to summarize pages.

The point is to extract claim-useful evidence.

A summary tells you what the file says.

An evidence extraction tells you how the file helps the claim.

Review reminder

AI can miss things, misunderstand handwriting, or overread weak clues. Use the extraction as a working aid, then verify important facts against the actual record before filing or making a claim decision.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this chunk and organize the useful evidence under these categories: diagnosis, onset, continuity, treatment history, worsening, flare-ups, objective findings, functional loss, work impact, nexus clues, aggravation clues, and rating-related severity. Do not invent facts. If something is not in this chunk, mark it as not found.

Step 7 – Have the AI keep a running summary across chunks

What to do

- As you upload chunk after chunk, tell the AI to maintain a running summary of:
 - what has already been established
 - what evidence keeps repeating
 - what new facts this chunk added
 - what gaps still remain
 - what chunk should come next

Why it matters

The veteran should not have to manually stitch together ten chunk summaries after the fact.

The AI should maintain the developing evidence picture.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Treat this upload as one part of a larger record set for this issue. Keep a running summary of what has already been established, what this new chunk adds, what evidence gaps still remain, and what chunk or document I should upload next. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 – Use the AI to decide what is worth turning into an issue packet

What to do

- After several chunks are analyzed, tell the AI to identify:
- which pages or chunks matter most
- which records are strongest
- what belongs in the eventual filing packet
- what is weak or redundant
- what still needs development

Why it matters

Not every page in a giant file belongs in the final claim packet.

The AI should help narrow the signal from the noise.

The final packet should be clear enough that another person can understand why the evidence is included.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on all the chunks I have uploaded so far for this issue, tell me which records matter most, which ones are strongest for my claim, which ones are redundant or weak, and what should go into the final issue packet. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 – Use screenshots when the PDF itself is confusing

What to do

- If a page is:
- hard to read
- weirdly formatted
- clipped
- handwritten

- visually confusing
- or not being interpreted correctly

take a screenshot of that page or section and upload it.

Why it matters

Sometimes a screenshot of the problem page works better than asking about the whole file. Screenshots can help the AI focus on the exact page or visual issue causing confusion.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT](#)
- [Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading a screenshot of a page from my records because it is confusing, messy, or hard to read. Tell me what you can read, what matters for my claim, and what parts are too unclear to rely on confidently. Do not guess if something is unreadable.

Step 10 — Re-run the AI against earlier chunks when your goal changes

What to do

Later in the claim, you may need the same records analyzed for a different purpose.

Example:

- first you were looking for diagnosis
- now you are looking for continuity
- later you may be looking for rating severity
- later you may need work impact
- later you may need aggravation evidence

Tell the AI to go back and re-check the earlier chunks with the new task in mind.

Why it matters

One chunk can serve multiple roles in the claim.

Do not assume earlier analysis exhausted its usefulness.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

You already have my earlier uploaded chunks for this issue. Re-check them now with a different goal: I want you to focus specifically on [continuity / nexus clues / rating severity / work impact / flare-ups / aggravation]. Tell me which earlier chunks matter most for that purpose. Do not invent facts.

Step 11 – Save a Claim Session Summary after major record review**What to do**

After the AI has reviewed important chunks, ask it to create a Claim Session Summary.

Save it in:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

- and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

Record review work is easy to lose inside a long chat.

A Claim Session Summary turns the AI's work into a portable file the veteran can save, re-upload, and use later.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Create a Claim Session Summary for this record-review session. Include the issue, chunks reviewed, useful evidence found, repeated patterns, evidence gaps, strongest records, weak or redundant records, recommended final packet evidence, top 3 next moves, and what I should upload next. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit.

Warning

Do not upload giant mixed files blindly and expect precision.

If the veteran gives the AI a swamp, the results usually get swampy.
Give the AI manageable chunks and a clear mission.

Caution

Do not over-split files into tiny meaningless fragments either.
The goal is manageable chunks, not random scraps.
A chunk should still have enough context to make sense.

Note

The veteran does not need to read every page first.
The veteran needs to:
split the file
label it
save it in the Starter Kit
upload it
give the AI a clear task
save the useful summary
That is enough to get strong traction.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Take one giant file.
- Keep the original untouched.
- Split it into 150-200 page chunks.
- Name the chunks clearly.
- Upload one chunk only.
- Paste this prompt:

- I am uploading one chunk of records for [condition]. Analyze it for diagnosis, continuity, worsening, functional loss, work impact, and nexus clues. Then tell me what this chunk proves and what I should upload next. Do not invent facts.
- Save the useful output or ask for a Claim Session Summary.
- Do not think past the next chunk.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- trying to read the whole giant file manually first
- uploading a giant mixed file with no instructions
- using terrible file names
- not saving chunks in the Starter Kit
- not telling the AI what issue the chunk relates to
- not asking the AI to extract claim-useful categories
- not keeping a running summary
- not saving a Claim Session Summary
- forgetting that earlier chunks can be re-analyzed for new purposes
- assuming every page belongs in the final filing packet

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I broke the giant PDF into manageable chunks
- I kept the original full PDF untouched
- I named the chunks clearly
- I saved the chunks in the Starter Kit

- I know what issue each chunk belongs to
- I told the AI what task to perform on the chunk
- I asked for diagnosis, continuity, nexus clues, severity, and work impact
- I told the AI to keep a running summary
- I know which chunk to upload next
- I saved a Claim Session Summary after meaningful review
- I am not trying to manually do the AI's job

Chapter Recap

This chapter was about turning giant record files from a source of paralysis into a workable evidence pipeline.

The veteran does not need to master the whole file personally.

The veteran needs to split it, label it, save it, upload it, and let the AI extract what matters.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 7 and start turning raw facts into strong lay statements by letting the AI interview the veteran, organize the timeline, and draft the statement language.

Chapter 7 — The Lay Statement Formula

Mission

Teach the veteran how to build a strong lay statement by having a real conversation with ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy first, pulling out the full story, and then turning that story into a clear, truthful, claim-useful statement.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans hurt their own claims here.

They:

- stare at a blank page
- write something vague
- leave out flare-ups
- leave out work impact
- leave out daily-life limitations
- minimize symptoms out of habit
- ramble without giving VA a clean timeline
- or forget to connect symptoms to actual functional loss

That is fixable.

The veteran does not need to be a great writer.

The veteran needs to:

- tell the truth
- dump out the facts
- let the AI organize the story
- review the finished statement for accuracy
- save the final version in the Starter Kit

That is what this chapter is for.

End State

- By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:
- talk through an issue with the AI before drafting
- use a repeatable lay-statement template
- turn rough notes into a polished statement
- make the statement specific, credible, and useful
- tie symptoms to function, work impact, and daily-life impact
- stop minimizing important facts
- save the final lay statement in the correct claim folder

Execution

Step 1 – Do not draft the final statement first

What to do

Do not start by trying to write a perfect final lay statement from scratch.

Start by having a conversation with the AI.

Tell the AI everything relevant, even if the notes are messy.

Talk to the AI about:

- what happened in service
- what symptoms started then
- how symptoms changed over time
- what your worst days look like
- what movements, stressors, or activities make it worse
- what work tasks you struggle with
- what home tasks you struggle with
- how it affects sleep, mood, concentration, driving, relationships, and reliability

- what treatment you tried
- what the VA denial said was missing, if there was a denial

Why it matters

The goal is to let ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy pull the full story out of the veteran before writing the final draft.

That usually produces a much better statement than trying to write the whole thing cold.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I need help building a VA lay statement for [condition]. Do not draft it yet. First interview me like a smart claims assistant. Ask me targeted questions one at a time about onset, in-service events, symptoms, progression, flare-ups, treatment, daily limitations, work impact, and anything else needed to make the statement strong and complete. After I answer, turn my answers into a clean, truthful VA lay statement without inventing facts.

Step 2 – Use a repeatable lay-statement template

What to do

- Create one reusable lay-statement worksheet with these headings:
- Condition claimed
- When it started
- In-service event, injury, illness, or exposure
- Symptoms during service
- Symptoms after service
- Current symptoms
- Flare-ups
- Functional impact at work
- Functional impact at home
- Sleep impact

- Treatment history
- Medications and side effects
- Important dates
- Key records that support the statement

What the VA denial said was missing, if any

- Then for each issue:

Copy the template.

Fill in rough notes under each heading.

Paste that into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.

Ask the AI to turn it into a finished statement.

Review every line for truth.

Remove any sentence that sounds stronger than the facts support.

Save the final version with a clear file name.

Why it matters

This prevents the veteran from starting from zero every single time.

It also makes it easier to build multiple issue statements fast.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-100 — ChatGPT Issue-Thread Setup](#)
- [Prompt Card B-101 — VA Claim Battle Buddy Prompt Example](#)
- [Prompt Card B-103 — Claim Session Summary Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am going to give you rough notes for a VA lay statement using my issue template. Organize them under timeline, onset, symptoms, progression, flare-ups, treatment, functional impact, work impact, and current severity. Then draft a polished first-person statement that is truthful, specific, and ready to paste into a VA form. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 – Make the statement do real work

Lay evidence boundary

A lay statement is strongest when it describes what the veteran personally experienced, observed, did, missed, avoided, or struggled with. Do not use a lay statement to pretend to be a doctor, diagnose yourself, or give a medical nexus opinion unless you are actually qualified to do that. Let the statement explain observable facts, symptoms, timeline, continuity, flare-ups, treatment history, and functional impact.

What to do

- Make sure the lay statement covers these things:
- who you are
- what condition you are talking about
- what happened in service or when symptoms began
- what symptoms you had then
- how symptoms continued after service
- how the condition affects daily life now
- how it affects work and reliability
- what flare-ups look like
- what treatment you tried
- a short closing sentence saying the statement is true

Why it matters

A strong lay statement is not just:

- “I hurt all the time.”

It should tell a clean story with timeline, continuity, severity, and function.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Draft a VA lay statement for my claim for [condition]. Use a clear, credible first-person voice. Include: when it started, what happened in service, symptoms during service, continuity after service, current symptoms, flare-ups, treatment history, and specific functional impact on work,

sleep, household chores, walking, standing, sitting, lifting, concentration, and relationships where applicable. Keep it honest, detailed, and persuasive without exaggeration. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 – Tie symptoms to function

What to do

Do not just list symptoms.

Tie each symptom to what it actually does to your life.

Examples:

- pain → difficulty standing, bending, lifting, walking, sleeping
- anxiety → concentration problems, stress intolerance, irritability, social difficulty
- headaches → need to lie down, reduced light/noise tolerance, missed work, loss of function
- fatigue → poor reliability, poor endurance, reduced productivity
- stomach problems → bathroom urgency, missed activities, disrupted sleep, reduced work reliability
- sinus or breathing problems → poor sleep, fatigue, missed work, reduced exercise tolerance

Why it matters

VA is not just trying to understand what the veteran feels.

VA needs to understand what the condition actually does.

The more clearly the statement connects symptoms to function, the more useful the statement becomes.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Rewrite my lay statement so that symptoms are tied more clearly to functional loss, work problems, daily limitations, and flare-ups. Do not exaggerate or invent facts.

Step 5 – Strengthen a weak draft without changing the truth

What to do

If the veteran already wrote something weak, do not throw it away.

Use the AI to improve it.

Have the AI:

- remove repetition
- organize the timeline
- pull out frequency, severity, and duration
- clarify flare-ups
- pull out work impact
- pull out daily-life impact
- keep the facts truthful
- remove legal fluff
- keep the veteran's voice natural

Why it matters

A messy truthful draft is still valuable.

The AI can clean it up.

A vague truthful draft can also be improved.

The key is to strengthen the language without changing the underlying facts.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Rewrite this lay statement so it is more specific, organized, and credible for a VA disability claim.

Do not exaggerate or add facts. Pull out functional loss, frequency, severity, duration, flare-ups, and occupational impact. Make sure it reads like a real veteran statement, not legal fluff.

Step 6 – Use low-energy mode when the veteran is smoked

What to do

- If the veteran is too tired to do a clean note set:
- dictate rough notes
- paste in voice-transcribed fragments

- dump half-formed thoughts into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy
- let the AI organize it
- answer follow-up questions one at a time

Why it matters

A lot of veterans wait for the perfect energy level or the perfect first draft.

That is a mistake.

A messy truthful start is enough.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am tired and do not want to stare at a blank page. I am going to give you rough notes, half-thoughts, and messy details about my condition. Your job is to organize them into a strong truthful VA lay statement. Do not invent facts. If something important is missing, ask me simple follow-up questions one at a time.

Step 7 — Make the AI pull out what veterans usually underreport

What to do

- The AI should actively help the veteran describe:
 - when the problem started
 - whether it started in service, shortly after service, or later
 - what the veteran actually felt or experienced
 - how often symptoms happen
 - what flare-ups are like
 - what makes symptoms worse
 - what the veteran can no longer do or struggles to do
 - what treatment has been tried
 - whether the condition affects work, sleep, mood, focus, driving, lifting, walking, standing, or relationships

whether the veteran underreported symptoms in service because of military culture, pride, fear of looking weak, or mission pressure

Why it matters

A lot of veterans do not lie.

They do the opposite.

They leave out important facts because they are used to minimizing problems.

This chapter is supposed to fix that.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my notes and answers, tell me what symptoms, flare-ups, functional problems, work impacts, or continuity details I may still be underreporting or failing to explain clearly. Do not invent facts. Just tell me what sounds underdeveloped and what follow-up questions I should answer.

Step 8 – Save the lay statement in the Starter Kit

Privacy reminder

Do not include unnecessary sensitive information in a lay statement. Keep the statement focused on claim-relevant facts. Redact or avoid full SSNs, bank information, unrelated medical details, and anything that does not help the issue being claimed.

What to do

Once the statement is final, save it in the correct issue folder.

Save draft versions here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/04 LAY STATEMENTS/

- Save final filing-ready copies here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/09 FILING PACKET/

- If the statement is part of a submitted claim, also save the filed version or filing packet here:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

- and inside the issue folder:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/
```

- Use a clear file name like:

```
2026-05-06_Back_Lay_Statement_DRAFT.docx
2026-05-06_Back_Lay_Statement_FINAL.pdf
2026-05-06_Back_Lay_Statement_FILED.pdf
```

Why it matters

A strong statement is useless if the veteran loses it, overwrites it, or cannot tell which version was actually filed.

The Starter Kit protects the work.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me name and save this lay statement in my Starter Kit. Tell me where the draft version, final version, and filed version should go so I do not lose track of it later.

Step 9 – Save a Claim Session Summary after major statement work

What to do

After the AI helps build or revise an important lay statement, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

- and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

Statement work often reveals important facts, gaps, dates, and next steps.

Do not leave that buried in a chat.

Save a portable summary.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this lay-statement session. Include the issue, facts confirmed, facts still missing, statement drafted, evidence referenced, evidence gaps, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit.

Warning

Do not let the AI invent facts, dates, treatment, diagnoses, symptoms, or events that are not true. The statement must stay grounded in the veteran's real history.

Caution

Do not write like you are trying to prove you can push through everything.

That habit can weaken the statement badly.

A useful lay statement tells the truth clearly. It does not minimize and it does not exaggerate.

Note

The veteran does not need to write beautifully.

The veteran needs to be truthful, specific, and complete.

The AI can help with organization, clarity, structure, and emphasis.

The veteran must still review the final draft for truth before using it.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Pick one issue only.
- Paste this prompt:
- I need help building a VA lay statement for [condition]. Do not draft it yet. First interview me one question at a time in plain English. After I answer, turn it into a strong truthful lay statement with timeline, symptoms, flare-ups, treatment, work impact, and daily-life impact. Do not invent facts.
- Answer the questions.

- Review the draft for truth.
- Save the final draft in the Starter Kit.
- Ask for a Claim Session Summary.
- Stop there for the day if needed.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- trying to write the final draft cold
- being too vague
- leaving out functional loss
- leaving out work impact
- leaving out flare-ups
- minimizing symptoms out of habit
- rambling without a clear timeline
- treating the statement like an emotional rant instead of a useful claim document
- forgetting to review the AI draft for truth
- failing to save the final statement in the Starter Kit
- losing track of draft, final, and filed versions

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I had a real conversation with the AI before drafting
- I used a repeatable template or rough-note structure
- My statement explains onset
- My statement explains symptoms during and after service if relevant

- My statement explains current symptoms
- My statement explains flare-ups
- My statement explains treatment history
- My statement ties symptoms to work impact
- My statement ties symptoms to daily-life impact
- I reviewed the draft for truth and accuracy
- I saved the final version in the Starter Kit
- I saved a Claim Session Summary if the session produced important work

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about turning rough facts into a strong lay statement.

The veteran does not need to be a polished writer.

The veteran needs to tell the truth, let the AI pull the story out, and then review the finished draft for accuracy and completeness.

Then the veteran needs to save the statement where it belongs so the work is not lost.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 8 and use the same system to build strong buddy statements by pulling witness facts out first, drafting them cleanly, and sending them out for review and personal signature.

Chapter 8 — The Buddy Letter Formula

Mission

Teach the veteran how to build strong buddy statements by pulling witness facts out first, drafting the statement cleanly with AI, sending it to the witness for review, and making sure the witness personally signs their own final statement.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans know they need buddy statements, but the process breaks down because:

- the buddy does not know what to write
- the veteran does not know what facts matter most
- the statement comes out vague
- the statement sounds fake or overly legal
- the witness says things they could not really know
- or the signature workflow becomes sloppy

That is fixable.

The buddy's job is not to become a writer.

The buddy's job is to tell the truth about what they personally saw.

The veteran and the AI can do the organizing.

End State

- By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:
- identify what each witness can actually say
- collect rough notes from a witness or from memory of what the witness observed
- turn those notes into a clean witness-ready draft
- make the draft sound natural and observation-based
- send it out for review
- get the witness to personally sign their own final statement
- save the signed output in the Starter Kit

- avoid the common mistakes that weaken buddy statements

Execution

Step 1 — Use AI to pull the witness facts out first

What to do

- Before drafting the buddy statement, talk to ChatGPT about:
- who the buddy is
- how they know you
- what years they knew you
- what events they personally witnessed
- what changes they observed
- what symptoms they saw
- how often they saw those problems
- what work or daily-life impacts they personally noticed

Then have ChatGPT turn that conversation into a witness-ready draft.

Draft reminder

The AI draft is only a starting point. The witness must be allowed to correct it, reject it, remove anything they cannot personally support, and sign only the final version they personally reviewed as true.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans already know what a buddy could honestly say, but they have not organized the facts well enough to hand that buddy a clean draft.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I need help building a VA buddy statement for a witness. Do not draft it yet. First interview me like a claims assistant and ask targeted questions about who the witness is, how they know me, what they personally saw, what time period they knew me, what changed over time, and what facts they can honestly say from personal observation. After I answer, turn it into a clean draft from the

witness perspective for them to review and approve.

Step 2 – Use a repeatable buddy-statement template

Privacy reminder

Do not put unnecessary sensitive veteran information into a buddy statement. The statement should focus on what the witness personally knows, saw, heard, or observed. Avoid full SSNs, bank information, unrelated medical details, and facts that do not help the issue.

What to do

- Make one reusable buddy-letter worksheet with these headings:
- Witness full name
- Witness phone number
- Witness email address
- Relationship to veteran
- Time period known
- How often they saw the veteran
- Event personally witnessed, if any
- Symptoms personally observed
- Changes over time personally observed
- Daily-life or work problems personally observed
- Closing statement that the contents are true to the best of their knowledge
- Then:
- duplicate the template for each friend, spouse, coworker, supervisor, or service buddy
- fill in rough notes under the headings
- paste into ChatGPT

- generate a witness-specific draft
- send it to the witness for review
- have the witness personally sign their own final copy

Why it matters

This lets the veteran create multiple witness statements quickly without reinventing the wheel every time.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am going to give you rough notes for a VA buddy statement. Before you draft it, organize the facts under: relationship to veteran, years known, events witnessed, symptoms observed, changes over time, and work or daily-life problems personally observed. Then draft a clean statement in first person from the witness perspective using only facts the witness could honestly know.

Step 3 – Keep the statement based on firsthand observation

Witness evidence boundary

A buddy statement is strongest when it reports firsthand observations. Unless the witness is actually qualified to give medical opinions, do not use the statement to diagnose the veteran, assign a rating, or claim a medical nexus. Use it to describe observable facts, timeline, symptoms, behavior changes, functional limits, and events the witness personally knows about.

What to do

- Make sure the buddy statement answers:
 - who is writing
 - how they know the veteran
 - when they knew the veteran
 - what they personally observed
 - what changes they saw
 - how often they observed the problem

- why this witness is credible

Keep it grounded in what the witness directly saw or personally knew.

Why it matters

A good buddy letter is strongest when it sticks to personal observations, not medical opinions outside the witness's expertise.

Good examples

- "I saw him limp after work."
- "He frequently woke up at night gasping and exhausted."
- "He stopped doing activities he used to do."
- "He missed work, left early, or needed help lifting."
- "I personally witnessed the in-service event."

Weak examples

- "I think the VA should give him 100%."
- "He deserves benefits."
- "I diagnose him with..."

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this buddy statement and make sure it only includes things the witness could honestly know from personal observation. Remove anything speculative, exaggerated, or outside the witness's firsthand knowledge.

Step 4 — Make it sound natural, not robotic

What to do

- After the AI drafts the statement:
- read it
- make sure it sounds like a real person
- simplify or soften anything too robotic

- remove legal fluff
- keep the tone personal and believable

Why it matters

A buddy statement should sound like a real human witness, not a fake legal memo.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Rewrite this buddy statement so it sounds natural, credible, and personal instead of robotic. Keep all facts accurate. Improve structure, clarity, and impact for a VA claim.

Step 5 – Use the fastest clean workflow

What to do

The veteran should not wait around hoping the buddy writes something polished from scratch.

Use this workflow:

- talk to the buddy by phone if needed
- collect rough notes
- use ChatGPT to turn those notes into a clean draft
- send the draft to the buddy for corrections
- have the buddy review, correct, and approve the wording only if it is true
- have the buddy sign their own final copy

Why it matters

This removes most of the friction while keeping the statement accurate and properly signed.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I just spoke with a potential witness by phone and took rough notes. Turn these notes into a clean VA buddy statement draft from the witness perspective. Use only facts the witness could personally know. Keep it natural, specific, and ready for the witness to review.

Step 6 — Use BuddySign to collect the witness signature

What to do

Once the buddy statement draft is ready, use BuddySign to collect the witness signature remotely.

The clean workflow is:

Review the draft for accuracy.

Remove anything unsupported, exaggerated, unclear, or outside what the witness personally knows.

Create the BuddySign document, use the starter template if helpful, then paste or draft the final statement text and remove any bracket prompts before locking.

Enter the veteran-controlled buddy information: buddy name, buddy email, optional buddy phone, and relationship to you.

Send the BuddySign signing invite to the buddy.

The witness opens the link, reviews the statement, types their name, checks the certification box, and signs.

After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.

Save the final output in the Starter Kit under Buddy/Lay Statements.

Upload the final signed output or local print/PDF packet with your claim evidence when appropriate.

Why it matters

BuddySign removes the printing, scanning, emailing, and PDF-signature confusion that stops a lot of buddy statements from getting finished.

The veteran can organize the statement.

The witness still personally reviews and signs.

That is the balance.

Important

Do not sign for your buddy or witness.

The witness must personally review the statement and sign only if it is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Do not describe BuddySign as VA-approved, VA-certified, guaranteed accepted, legal representation, HIPAA compliant, FedRAMP compliant, ESIGN compliant, or legally binding unless those claims are separately verified and approved.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen**
- **Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields**
- **Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box**
- **Prompt Card B-203 — BuddySign Signing Invite Email**
- **Prompt Card B-204 — BuddySign Witness Review and Certification Page**
- **Prompt Card B-205 — BuddySign Local PDF Output / Print Preview**
- **Prompt Card B-206 — BuddySign Dashboard Signed Status**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have a buddy statement draft ready. Review it for truth, clarity, and firsthand observation only. Then give me a final clean version I can copy into BuddySign.com so my witness can personally review and sign it.

Step 7 — Use the AI to catch witness-credibility problems before sending

What to do

- Before sending the draft out, have the AI check for:
 - exaggeration
 - speculation
 - sloppy wording
 - medical conclusions the witness is not qualified to make
 - facts the witness could not really know

Why it matters

A weak buddy statement often fails because it tries to say too much, not too little.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I drafted this buddy statement from rough notes. Review it for anything that sounds exaggerated, speculative, sloppy, or like the witness could not personally know it. Rewrite it so the witness can

comfortably review, approve, and sign it as true.

Step 8 – Match the right witness to the right issue

What to do

- Think about what kind of witness fits the issue best:
- fellow service member = in-service events, service-era symptoms, physical duties, behavior changes
- spouse / partner / family = sleep problems, mood changes, daily limitations, pain behavior at home
- coworker / supervisor = work impact, reliability issues, missed time, functional limits on the job
- friend / roommate = continuity, behavior changes, observed symptoms, daily-life effects

Why it matters

Not every witness is useful for every issue. The right witness has the right vantage point.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this issue, tell me what kind of witness would be most useful: fellow service member, spouse, family member, coworker, supervisor, roommate, or friend. Explain what each one could honestly help prove.

BuddySign Workflow Box

Use this after the statement draft is ready.

BuddySign workflow:

- 1. Review the statement.
- 2. Remove anything unsupported or untrue.
- 3. Create the BuddySign document, use the starter template if helpful, then paste or draft the final statement text and remove any bracket prompts before locking.
- 4. Enter the veteran-controlled buddy information: buddy name, buddy email, optional buddy phone, and relationship.

- 5. Send the signing invite to the buddy.
- 6. The witness personally reviews the statement.
- 7. The witness types their name, checks the certification box, and signs.
- 8. After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.
- 9. Save it in your Starter Kit under Buddy/Lay Statements.
- 10. Upload it with your claim evidence when appropriate.

Do not sign for your witness.

Do not treat BuddySign as a guarantee that VA will accept the statement or give the claim a particular result. It is a signing and organization workflow, not a VA decision-maker.

Warning

Under no circumstance should the veteran fill in or sign their buddy's signature, even with verbal approval.

Witness statements should be personally reviewed and personally signed by the witness.

Do not rely on verbal approval as a substitute for the witness's own signature.

Caution

Do not let the witness drift into speculation, diagnosis language, or facts they could not have personally known.

A buddy statement is strongest when it stays grounded in firsthand observation.

Note

The witness does not need to be a good writer.

The witness needs to tell the truth.

The veteran and the AI can do the organizing, cleaning, and formatting.

BuddySign can help collect the witness's signature remotely after the statement is ready.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:

- pick one witness only
- paste this prompt:
- I need help building a VA buddy statement for a witness. Do not draft it yet. First ask me simple questions about who they are, how they know me, what they personally saw, and what changed over time. Then turn it into a clean witness-ready draft using only firsthand facts.
- answer the questions
- review the draft
- remove anything unsupported
- copy the final statement into BuddySign.com
- send the signing link
- have the witness personally review and sign
- download the signed output
- save it in your Starter Kit under Buddy/Lay Statements
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- asking the buddy to write everything from scratch
- writing a statement the witness could not really support
- making the statement sound robotic
- using legal fluff instead of real observation
- not matching the right witness to the right issue
- failing to have the witness review the final wording
- signing for the witness
- relying on verbal approval instead of personal review/signature

- sloppy or improper signature handling
- forgetting to save the signed final copy
- forgetting to save the signed BuddySign output in the Starter Kit

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I identified what this witness can actually say
- I collected rough notes first
- I used AI to draft the statement cleanly
- The statement is based on firsthand observation
- The statement sounds natural and believable
- The witness reviewed the wording
- The witness personally signed the final copy
- I downloaded the signed BuddySign output
- I saved the signed final output in the Starter Kit
- I know what issue this buddy statement supports

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about taking the friction out of buddy statements.

The witness does not need to produce polished writing from scratch.

The veteran and the AI can pull out the facts, organize the statement, and hand the witness a clean draft to review and sign.

BuddySign adds a last-mile signing workflow: the veteran controls the buddy/contact fields, locks the statement, sends the signing invite, the witness personally reviews and signs, and the veteran saves the signed output or local print/PDF packet for the claim file.

Next Move

When you get to the form step, download the current VA form directly from VA.gov before filing. Do not rely on an old saved copy if VA has updated the form.

Go to Chapter 9 and learn when to use VA Form 21-4138 versus VA Form 21-10210, so the right kind of statement ends up on the right form.

Chapter 9 – Statement in Support of Claim (21-4138) vs. Lay/Witness Statement (21-10210)

Quick rule: use VA Form 21-4138 for your own lay statement. Use VA Form 21-10210 for a buddy or witness statement.

Mission

Teach the veteran when to use VA Form 21-4138 and when to use VA Form 21-10210, so the right kind of statement ends up in the right format and the claim packet stays clean and easy to follow.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans get tripped up here for no good reason.

They have the facts.

They have the evidence.

They may even have a good statement.

But then they do not know:

- which form fits the job
- whether the statement belongs on 21-4138 or 21-10210
- whether the issue is explanation versus observation
- whether a witness statement should be separated out
- how to get the right person to review and sign it

That confusion creates unnecessary friction.

This chapter fixes that by giving the veteran a simple rule set.

This is a practical organization rule, not legal advice. If a deadline is close, the claim history is complicated, or the issue involves a high-stakes appeal, verify the current VA instructions and consider accredited help.

End State

Form-version reminder

Before using VA Form 21-4138, VA Form 21-10210, or any other VA form, download the current version directly from VA.gov. Do not rely on an old saved copy if VA has updated the form or filing instructions.

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know:

- when to use 21-4138
- when to use 21-10210
- how to keep reusable templates ready for both
- how to choose the form based on the job the statement is doing
- how BuddySign fits when a buddy or witness needs to personally sign
- how to stop overcomplicating a form choice that should be simple

Execution

Rule 1 – Use 21-4138 when the veteran is mainly explaining or clarifying

What to do

- Use VA Form 21-4138 when:
 - you need to explain something
 - you need to clarify timeline issues
 - you need to point out evidence
 - you need to identify errors in a VA decision
 - you need to connect exhibits or evidence to your claim
 - you need to submit a concise supporting narrative
 - you want to paste in a fresh ChatGPT-drafted veteran statement that is more explanatory than witness-style
- Think of 21-4138 as:
 - the veteran’s general-purpose support and clarification statement form

Good uses for 21-4138

- “Here is my explanation of how this condition began.”
- “The VA overlooked these treatment notes.”

- “This statement explains why my symptoms were underreported in service.”
- “This is my response to the denial language.”
- “This packet contains the following evidence.”
- “I am clarifying the timeline for this issue.”

Why it matters

21-4138 works best when the veteran is mainly explaining, clarifying, supporting, or responding.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I need to submit a statement to VA. Based on what I am trying to do, tell me whether this belongs on VA Form 21-4138 or VA Form 21-10210. Explain why in simple language, and then draft the statement in the right format.

Rule 2 — Use 21-10210 when the statement is a lay or witness statement

What to do

- Use VA Form 21-10210 when:
 - the veteran is making a formal personal lay statement
 - a spouse, friend, coworker, supervisor, or fellow service member is submitting a supporting statement
 - you want a more structured witness statement format
 - you want a reusable witness template ready to send for review and signature
- Think of 21-10210 as:
 - the cleaner form for lay and witness statements based on firsthand knowledge or observation

Good uses for 21-10210

- a veteran’s formal lay statement, written in the veteran’s own voice
- a spouse statement
- a buddy statement

- a coworker statement
- a supervisor statement
- a fellow service member statement

Why it matters

21-10210 works best when the statement is grounded in firsthand knowledge, lived experience, or direct observation.

For buddy and witness statements, the key is not just the format. The key is that the witness personally reviews and signs only what is true based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take these notes and turn them into a clean VA Form 21-10210 lay/witness statement. Write it in a natural first-person voice that is truthful, specific, and ready for the witness to review. Do not invent facts.

Rule 3 – Use the simple rule of thumb

What to do

Use this fast rule.

Use 21-4138 when you are mainly:

- explaining
- clarifying
- arguing
- pointing something out
- Use 21-10210 when you are mainly:
 - giving a lay statement
 - giving a witness statement
 - collecting a buddy statement

- collecting a spouse or coworker observation statement

Why it matters

Most veterans do not need a law-school analysis of form selection.

They need a practical rule they can remember when tired.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am not sure which form fits this statement. Tell me whether this is mainly an explanation/clarification statement or a lay/witness statement, and then tell me which form to use.

Rule 4 – Keep both forms templated and ready

What to do

- Have at least these ready at all times:
 - one prefilled 21-4138 master template for the veteran
 - one prefilled 21-10210 master template for the veteran’s own lay statements
 - one reusable buddy/witness worksheet for each likely witness
 - one BuddySign-ready final statement draft for each witness after review
- Each time a new statement is needed:
 - duplicate the right template or worksheet
 - delete old statement content
 - paste in the new AI-generated statement
 - update dates and issue labels
 - if it is a witness statement, send the witness copy for review and personal signature
 - save the signed final output in the correct issue folder

Keep untouched backup copies too.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-050 — 21-4138 Master Template**
- **Prompt Card B-051 — 21-10210 Master Template**
- **Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen**
- **Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields**
- **Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box**

Why it matters

This turns form work into a repeatable system instead of a fresh clerical task every time.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me build a reusable form-template system for VA Forms 21-4138 and 21-10210 so I can quickly create new statements without starting from zero every time. Include where buddy/witness statements should go after they are signed.

Rule 5 — Match the form to the purpose, not the emotion

What to do

- Before choosing the form, ask:

Am I mainly explaining something?

Am I mainly clarifying something?

Am I mainly pointing the VA to evidence or responding to a denial?

Or am I mainly giving firsthand lay or witness evidence?

Then choose the form based on the actual job.

Why it matters

The right form is the one that matches the function of the statement, not the one that sounds fancier or more official.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this statement purpose, tell me the right form to use: 21-4138 or 21-10210. Explain the job the form is doing, not just the title of the form.

Rule 6 — Use 21-4138 for support and explanation examples

What to do

- Use 21-4138 when the veteran is doing things like:
- clarifying onset
- explaining continuity
- responding to denial language
- describing why symptoms were underreported in service
- giving a short issue summary tied to evidence
- supporting a secondary theory in explanatory language

Why it matters

21-4138 is flexible and good for explanatory support statements that do not need to be framed as witness-style observation statements.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take these notes and turn them into a clean VA Form 21-4138 statement. Keep it concise, clear, factual, and useful for supporting my claim. Do not invent facts.

Rule 7 — Use 21-10210 for lay and witness examples

What to do

- Use 21-10210-style lay/witness evidence when:
- the veteran is giving a formal lay statement
- a witness is stating what they personally saw
- a spouse is describing sleep, behavior, daily-life impact, or continuity
- a coworker or supervisor is describing work impact
- a fellow service member is describing service-era events or symptoms

Why it matters

21-10210 is the cleaner fit when the statement is really about direct personal knowledge and observation.

If the statement is from someone else, the witness must personally review and personally sign it.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Take these notes and turn them into a clean VA Form 21-10210-style lay/witness statement using a natural first-person voice based on what the writer personally knows or observed. Do not invent facts.

Rule 8 – Use BuddySign when a witness needs to sign remotely**What to do**

When the statement is a buddy, spouse, coworker, supervisor, family, roommate, service buddy, or other witness statement, use BuddySign after the draft is ready.

Use this workflow:

Draft the witness statement with AI.

Review it for truth, accuracy, and firsthand observation.

Remove anything unsupported, exaggerated, unclear, or outside what the witness personally knows.

Create the BuddySign document, use the starter template if helpful, then paste or draft the final statement text and remove any bracket prompts before locking.

Enter the veteran-controlled buddy information: buddy name, buddy email, optional buddy phone, and relationship to the veteran.

Send the signing invite to the buddy.

The witness personally reviews the statement.

The witness types their own name, checks the certification box, and signs.

After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.

Save the final output in the Starter Kit under Buddy/Lay Statements.

Why it matters

BuddySign handles the last-mile signature problem.

The veteran can organize the draft.

The witness still personally reviews and signs.

That keeps the process fast without crossing the line into improper signature handling.

Important

Do not sign for the witness.

Do not rely on verbal permission to sign for someone.

The witness must personally review and sign only if the statement is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Do not describe BuddySign as VA-approved, VA-certified, guaranteed accepted, legal representation, HIPAA compliant, FedRAMP compliant, ESIGN compliant, or legally binding unless those claims are separately verified and approved.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen](#)
- [Prompt Card B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields](#)
- [Prompt Card B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box](#)
- [Prompt Card B-203 — BuddySign Signing Invite Email](#)
- [Prompt Card B-204 — BuddySign Witness Review and Certification Page](#)
- [Prompt Card B-205 — BuddySign Local PDF Output / Print Preview](#)
- [Prompt Card B-206 — BuddySign Dashboard Signed Status](#)

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

This is a buddy/witness statement. Review it for accuracy and firsthand observation only. Then give me a final clean version I can paste into BuddySign.com so the witness can personally review and sign it.

Warning

Do not let form confusion cause you to miss a filing or appeal deadline. If a deadline is close, submit through the safest current VA path you can verify and get accredited help if needed.

Do not use a witness-style form to make the veteran sound like a fake third-party witness, and do not use the wrong form just because it happens to be open on the screen already.

For witness statements, do not sign for the witness. The witness must personally review and personally sign their own statement.

Caution

Do not overcomplicate this.

The most important thing is not picking the “perfect” form every time.

The most important thing is:

getting the truth documented

getting the right person to sign it

making the statement clear, specific, and useful

saving the signed output where you can find it later

Note

If you are unsure, ask the AI which form fits best.

That is a smarter move than guessing or delaying.

If it is a buddy or witness statement, use BuddySign after the draft is ready so the witness can personally review and sign remotely.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- paste the statement or rough notes into ChatGPT
- paste this prompt:
- I need to submit this statement to VA. Tell me whether it belongs on 21-4138 or 21-10210. Explain why in plain English, then rewrite it in the correct format without inventing facts.
- use the form or workflow the AI tells you to use
- if it is a witness statement, copy the final version into BuddySign.com for witness review/signature
- save the result under the correct issue folder

- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- not knowing whether the statement is explanation or observation
- using 21-4138 for everything out of habit
- using 21-10210-style witness language when the veteran is really just making an explanatory argument
- forgetting to keep master templates ready
- mixing multiple witness roles into one statement
- sending a witness statement without proper witness review and signature
- signing for the witness
- making form choice feel harder than it really is
- failing to save the signed final output in the Starter Kit

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know what this statement is trying to do
- I know whether it is explanation/clarification or lay/witness evidence
- I picked 21-4138 or 21-10210-style formatting based on the job
- I used the correct template or workflow
- I pasted in the correct AI-generated language
- I updated the date
- The correct person will sign it
- If it is a witness statement, the witness will personally review and sign it

- If using BuddySign, I entered the veteran-controlled buddy name, email, optional phone, and relationship
- I saved the final version in the right issue folder

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about matching the right form to the right job.

Use 21-4138 for explanation, clarification, support, and response language.

Use 21-10210-style lay/witness formatting for statements grounded in firsthand knowledge or observation.

For buddy and witness statements, use BuddySign after the statement is ready so the witness can personally review, sign, and return a clean signed output.

Keep both workflows ready, use the simple rule, and stop making form choice harder than it needs to be.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 10 and learn how to write for VA raters in a way that makes the truth easier to see, harder to dismiss, and more clearly tied to functional loss and real-world impact.

Chapter 10 — How to Write for VA Raters

Mission

Teach the veteran how to write in a way that makes the truth easy for a VA rater to understand, hard to dismiss, and clearly tied to real-world impairment.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans hurt their own claims here without realizing it.

They write the way they talk when they are:

- tired
- frustrated
- embarrassed
- trying not to complain
- trying to sound tough
- trying to sound legal
- or trying to cram everything into one messy paragraph

That does not help.

VA raters do not know the veteran.

They only know what is in the file.

So the veteran's writing needs to make the truth easy to see.

The goal is not drama.

The goal is clarity.

This is practical writing guidance, not legal advice or medical advice. The veteran should not use writing tricks to create facts, make medical conclusions they are not qualified to make, or turn uncertainty into certainty. The goal is to make the truth easier to understand.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- write in plain English instead of vague emotional language
- tie symptoms to function
- explain severity clearly

- explain frequency, duration, and flare-ups
- stop minimizing out of pride
- avoid exaggeration
- use ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to strengthen rough drafts without inventing facts
- save improved drafts and final versions in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 — Write for clarity, not drama

What to do

- Write like this:
- short paragraphs
- plain English
- exact examples
- dates when known
- symptoms tied to function
- severity tied to real life
- no rambling
- no macho minimization
- no fake legal language
- no vague phrases like “sometimes bad”

Why it matters

VA does not need poetry.

VA needs clarity.

The easier the statement is to follow, the easier it is for a rater to understand what the condition actually does.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Rewrite this statement so it is easier for a VA rater to understand. Keep it truthful. Make it clearer, more specific, and more connected to functional impact. Remove vague language, repetition, and unnecessary fluff. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 — Make sure the rater can answer the basic questions

What to do

- A strong statement should make it easy for the rater to tell:
 - what condition you are talking about
 - when it started
 - what happened in service, if relevant
 - how it continued or worsened
 - how often symptoms happen
 - how bad they get
 - how long they last
 - what flare-ups look like
 - what treatment you tried
 - how the condition affects work and daily life now

If you do not know the exact date, say that. Use an honest estimate such as “around 2019,” “during deployment,” or “after separation” instead of inventing a precise date.

Why it matters

If the rater cannot quickly see those answers, the statement is probably too vague, too messy, or too incomplete.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review my statement like a VA rater. Tell me whether it clearly explains the condition, onset, service connection history, symptom frequency, symptom severity, duration, flare-ups, treatment history, and current work and daily-life impact. Then tell me what is missing. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 — Tie symptoms to function**What to do**

Do not just list symptoms.

Tie them to what they actually do to your life.

Examples

- Instead of:

- “My back hurts a lot.”

- Say:

“My lower back pain is daily. Prolonged standing, bending, and lifting make it worse. During flare-ups I have difficulty putting on socks, getting out of a chair, and lifting more than light objects.”

- Instead of:

- “I have anxiety.”

- Say:

“I have episodes of anxiety with chest tightness, racing thoughts, irritability, poor sleep, and difficulty concentrating. These symptoms affect my ability to handle stress, maintain focus, and interact normally with other people.”

- Instead of:

- “My knee is bad.”

- Say:

“My knee pain gets worse with standing, walking, stairs, and squatting. On bad days it feels unstable and I avoid prolonged walking because it becomes painful and unreliable.”

Why it matters

VA is rating impairment, not just discomfort.

If the writing never explains what the symptoms do, the severity can get understated.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take this statement and rewrite it so the symptoms are tied more clearly to functional loss, daily limitations, and work problems. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 — Kill vague wording

What to do

- Watch for weak phrases like:
- “It bothers me sometimes.”
- “I deal with it.”
- “It is kind of bad.”
- “It flares every now and then.”
- “I just push through it.”
- “I do not complain much.”
- “It affects me in different ways.”
- Replace them with:
- frequency
- severity
- duration
- triggers
- functional effect
- work effect
- flare-up details

Why it matters

Vague language is easy to dismiss.

Specific language is harder to brush aside.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-120 — Weak Wording vs Strong Wording Example**

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this statement like a skeptical VA rater. Tell me which parts are too vague, too weak, too emotional, too confusing, or too easy to dismiss. Then rewrite it in stronger, clearer language without exaggerating anything or inventing facts.

Step 5 — Do not minimize because of pride

What to do

- Cut out language like:
- “It’s fine, I manage.”
- “I just deal with it.”
- “It’s not that bad unless it gets really bad.”
- “I can still push through most of the time.”
- “Other people have it worse.”
- “I do not like to complain.”

If the condition causes real limitations, say so clearly.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans were conditioned to underreport symptoms.

That same habit will weaken a claim if it carries over into the statement.

VA is not rating toughness.

VA is rating impairment.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I tend to downplay my symptoms because of military culture and pride. Rewrite this statement so it still sounds like me but does not minimize what the condition actually does to my life and ability to work. Do not invent facts or exaggerate.

Step 6 — Do not exaggerate either

What to do

- Do not claim:
 - symptoms you do not have
 - limitations you do not have
 - diagnoses you do not have
 - fake timelines
 - made-up treatment history
 - made-up witness facts
 - facts that conflict with the record
 - medical opinions you are not qualified to give
 - statements that a doctor, examiner, or witness never actually made

Keep it honest and grounded.

Why it matters

Good writing is not exaggerated writing.

Good writing is truthful writing that is clear, complete, organized, and easy to connect to evidence.

A statement that sounds inflated can hurt credibility.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this statement and tell me whether any part sounds exaggerated, unsupported, speculative, or inconsistent with the facts I gave you. Rewrite it to be strong but grounded. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 — Use the basic writing formula

What to do

- For most veteran statements, use this structure:

What condition this statement is about.

What happened or when it started.

What symptoms happened then.

How it continued or worsened.

What treatment you tried.

How it affects you now.

How it affects work and daily life.

What flare-ups or bad days look like.

What evidence or records support it, if relevant.

Short truth/accuracy closing.

Why it matters

This structure beats a lot of messy emotional writing because it is simple, chronological, and useful.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take my rough notes and rewrite them using this structure: what condition this is about, what happened, when it started, what symptoms happened then, how it continued or worsened, what treatment I tried, how it affects me now, how it affects work and daily life, and what flare-ups or bad days look like. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 — Ask the AI what still sounds weak

What to do

- Once you have a working draft, ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy:
- what still sounds weak
- what sounds underdeveloped
- what functional impact is still not clear

- what flare-up detail is still missing
- what timeline detail is missing
- what would make the statement more useful without changing the truth

Why it matters

Veterans often cannot see the weak parts of their own writing because they already know what they meant.

The rater does not.

The AI can help spot where the statement needs more clarity before it is used.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Here is my draft. Tell me what still sounds weak, vague, underdeveloped, minimized, or unclear. Then rewrite it in stronger, more specific language without inventing facts.

Step 9 — Save the improved version in the Starter Kit

What to do

Save rough drafts, improved drafts, and final versions separately.

For veteran lay statements, save them here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/04 LAY STATEMENTS/

- For buddy or witness statements, save drafts here:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/Drafts/

- For signed BuddySign outputs, save them here:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

- and inside the issue folder if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

- For filing-ready statements, save copies here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/09 FILING PACKET/

Why it matters

A better statement does not help if the veteran loses track of it.

Separate drafts from finals.

Separate unsigned witness drafts from signed BuddySign outputs.

Keep the filed version easy to prove later.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank](#)
- [Prompt Card B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder](#)

File-name examples

2026-05-06_Back_Lay_Statement_DRAFT.docx
 2026-05-06_Back_Lay_Statement_FINAL.pdf
 2026-05-06_PTSD_BuddySign_Output_John_Smith_SIGNED.pdf
 2026-05-06_Back_Filing_Packet.pdf

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me name and save this improved statement in my Starter Kit. Tell me where the draft, final version, signed witness output if applicable, and filed version should go.

Step 10 — Save a Claim Session Summary after major writing work

What to do

After the AI helps rewrite or strengthen an important statement, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

- and, if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

Major writing work often reveals facts, gaps, weak spots, and next steps.

Do not leave that buried in a chat.

Save the session so the work stays portable.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this writing session. Include the issue, statement worked on, facts confirmed, weak points fixed, facts still missing, files created, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit.

Warning

Do not let AI make the statement sound more certain than the facts support. If something is approximate, uncertain, undocumented, or based only on memory, say so plainly.

Do not try to sound like a lawyer if you are not one.

That often makes the statement worse, not better.

Clear and truthful beats fake legal writing.

Caution

Do not try to sound dramatic just to make the condition seem serious.

That can backfire.

Stay specific, grounded, and factual.

Note

VA does not need your suffering described beautifully.

It needs your condition described clearly, specifically, and in a way that ties symptoms to actual impairment.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Paste your rough statement.
- Paste this prompt:
- Rewrite this statement so it is clearer, more specific, and easier for a VA rater to understand. Pull out frequency, severity, duration, flare-ups, treatment, work impact, and daily-life impact. Do not invent facts.
- Review the result for truth.
- Save the better version in the Starter Kit.
- Ask for a Claim Session Summary if the session produced important work.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- writing too vaguely
- leaving out work impact
- leaving out daily-life impact
- leaving out flare-ups
- minimizing symptoms out of pride
- trying to sound heroic
- trying to sound overly legal
- rambling without structure
- listing symptoms without explaining what they actually do
- failing to save the improved version
- failing to separate drafts, finals, and signed witness outputs

Quick Reaction Checklist

- My writing is in plain English
- I clearly named the condition
- I clearly explained onset
- I clearly explained continuity or worsening
- I tied symptoms to functional loss
- I included flare-ups if they exist
- I included treatment history
- I included work impact
- I included daily-life impact
- I reviewed the statement for weak or vague language
- I reviewed the final version for truth
- I saved the improved version in the Starter Kit

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about making the truth easier to see.

The veteran does not need to sound dramatic, heroic, or legalistic.

The veteran needs to sound clear, specific, grounded, and complete.

Good claim writing makes symptoms, limitations, and real-world impairment impossible to miss.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 11 and use that writing approach to decide whether a claim is actually ready to file or whether it still needs more evidence, better statements, or a cleaner packet first.

Chapter 11 — Preparing a Claim Before You File

Mission

Teach the veteran how to slow down, audit the claim, identify what is strong and what is weak, and decide whether the issue is actually ready to file or still needs more development.

Why This Matters

A lot of weak claims get filed too early.

The veteran gets:

- frustrated
- motivated
- finally ready to act
- and then files:
- a vague statement
- a sloppy evidence packet
- the wrong lane
- or a claim with obvious holes that could have been fixed first

That wastes time.

The goal is not just to file something.

The goal is also not to sit on a claim forever waiting for perfection. Do not let pre-filing review cause you to miss an appeal deadline, lose a filing window, or delay preserving a possible effective date. If a deadline is close, verify the current rule through VA.gov or an accredited representative and act before the deadline passes.

The goal is to file something that is:

- truthful
- organized
- supportable
- easy to review
- and aimed at the right claim lane

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know:

- whether the issue is ready now, almost ready, or not ready yet
- what evidence already helps
- what evidence is still missing
- what statement still needs to be built
- what claim lane fits best
- what the biggest weakness is before filing

Execution

Step 1 – Ask the four basic claim questions

What to do

Before filing, ask:

- Do I have a current diagnosis or at least documented symptoms?
- Do I have evidence of the in-service event, injury, disease, or exposure, or the service-connected primary condition if this is secondary?
- Do I have continuity or nexus evidence?
- Do I have current severity evidence showing what the condition does to me now?

Why it matters

A lot of claims fail because one of those parts is weak or missing. The veteran needs to know which part is the problem before filing.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Act like a tough VA rater reviewing my proposed claim for [condition]. Based on these records and statements, tell me whether I have enough for: (1) current disability, (2) in-service event or primary-condition foundation, (3) nexus or continuity, and (4) current severity. Then tell me the biggest holes and what documents or statements would help most.

Step 2 — Stop and identify what kind of claim this really is

What to do

Before filing, make sure you know whether this issue is:

- direct service connection
- secondary service connection
- increased rating
- supplemental claim
- Higher-Level Review
- Board support

Do not file until you know which lane makes sense.

If you are near an appeal deadline or unsure about the lane, do not guess casually. Verify the current VA rules, forms, and deadlines before filing, and consider getting help from an accredited VSO, accredited claims agent, or veterans law attorney for high-stakes lane decisions.

Why it matters

A lot of claim problems are not evidence problems first. They are lane-selection problems first.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my evidence, tell me whether this issue looks strongest as a direct claim, secondary claim, increased-rating claim, supplemental claim, Higher-Level Review issue, or Board support issue. Explain why simply and tell me what form or filing path fits best.

Step 3 — Decide whether the issue is filing-ready

What to do

Have the AI classify the issue as:

- ready now
- almost ready
- not ready yet

Then have it explain why.

Why it matters

The veteran should not confuse urgency with readiness. Some issues should be filed now. Some need one more statement, one more record packet, or one more clarification before filing.

Not ready yet does not mean never file. It means identify the gap, preserve deadlines, and build the next missing piece as efficiently as possible.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am thinking about filing this claim now. Based on my records, statements, and current evidence, tell me whether I am ready to file now, almost ready, or not ready yet. Explain why in simple language and tell me the top things I should fix first if I am not ready.

Step 4 – Identify the weakest part of the claim**What to do**

Ask the AI what the weakest point is right now.

That could be:

- no clear diagnosis
- weak continuity
- weak service evidence
- weak nexus
- weak severity proof
- weak work-impact evidence
- weak lay statement
- bad organization

Why it matters

The weakest part of the claim often determines whether the whole thing holds up.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this claim like a skeptical VA reviewer. Tell me what part of the claim is weakest right now and what one or two things would strengthen it the most before filing.

Step 5 — Build a filing-readiness checklist for the specific issue

What to do

For each issue, build a short checklist showing:

- what is already in hand
- what is still missing
- what still needs to be written
- what still needs to be uploaded
- whether the packet is organized enough to file

Why it matters

The veteran should not be holding the whole claim in their head. A short issue-specific readiness checklist reduces confusion.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this issue, build me a short filing-readiness checklist showing what I already have, what I still need, and what I should do before I hit submit.

Step 6 — Check whether the packet is clean enough to file

What to do

Before filing, ask:

- Is the issue clearly named?
- Does the statement match the issue?
- Are the best records included?
- Are weak or irrelevant records cluttering the packet?
- Is the packet easy for a stranger to follow?

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-130 — Example Filing Packet Ready to Submit](#)
- [Prompt Card B-170 — Review Lane Comparison Chart](#)

Why it matters

A sloppy packet makes the claim harder to review and easier to misunderstand.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this filing packet before I submit it. Tell me whether the issue is clearly identified, whether the statement matches the evidence, whether anything important is missing, and whether the packet is organized enough for VA to follow easily.

Step 7 — Do not file just because you are angry

What to do

If the veteran feels a surge of motivation from anger, slow down and ask:

- What is the actual gap?
- What proof do I already have?
- What proof is still weak?
- What is the next best supporting document?
- Would one more build step make this claim much stronger?

Why it matters

Anger can create action, but it is not a filing strategy.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am frustrated and want to file this now. Slow me down and tell me whether I am actually ready, what the real evidence gap is, and whether one more build step would make this claim significantly stronger before I submit it.

Step 8 — Ask the AI for a final pre-filing verdict

What to do

Right before filing, make the AI give you a plain-English verdict:

- what is strong
- what is weak
- what is missing
- what the best next move is
- and whether to file now or build one more thing first

The AI verdict is a planning aid, not legal advice, medical advice, or a guarantee. The veteran must still review the facts, verify current filing rules, and make the final filing decision.

Why it matters

The veteran should not go into submission half-guessing.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Before I file this, give me a plain-English pre-filing verdict. Tell me what is strong, what is weak, what is missing, whether I should file now or build one more thing first, and what my smartest next move is.

Warning

Do not let readiness review become procrastination. If a filing deadline, review deadline, or effective-date issue is in play, protect the deadline first.

Do not file blind. Filing something weak just because you are finally motivated can cost time, momentum, and credibility.

Caution

Do not assume the VA will connect scattered evidence for you. If the issue, theory, and support are not clear, the packet is probably not ready.

Note

A claim does not have to be perfect before filing. But it should be clear enough that you understand what you are claiming, why you are claiming it, what evidence supports it, and what still remains weak.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- upload the statement and strongest records for one issue
- paste this prompt:
- Tell me whether this issue is ready now, almost ready, or not ready yet. Tell me what is strongest, what is weakest, what is missing, and what one thing would help most before filing.
- do what it tells you to do next
- do not think beyond that one step
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- filing before understanding the evidence gap
- filing the wrong claim lane
- assuming current pain automatically means filing-ready
- using a weak or vague statement
- failing to show current severity
- failing to show continuity or nexus
- filing a messy packet with no clear issue focus
- confusing motivation with readiness

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know what kind of claim this is
- I know whether I have current diagnosis or symptoms
- I know whether I have service evidence or primary-condition foundation
- I know whether I have continuity or nexus support
- I know whether I have current severity evidence
- I know the weakest part of the claim
- I know what statement still needs to be built
- I know whether the issue is ready now, almost ready, or not ready
- I know what the best next step is before filing

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about not filing blind. The veteran does not need a perfect case before filing, but they do need to know what the issue is, what evidence helps, what evidence is missing, what lane fits, and whether the packet is strong enough to submit now.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 12 and start building the actual filing packet: choosing the right theory, organizing the issue cleanly, and filing in a way that is easier for the VA to follow and harder to brush aside.

Chapter 12 — Filing the Claim

Mission

Teach the veteran how to file the claim cleanly, in the right lane, with the right theory, the right statement, and the right supporting packet, instead of dumping a mess on the VA and hoping for the best.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans finally get motivated, build some evidence, and then blow the filing step by:

- mixing multiple issues together
- filing in the wrong lane
- uploading random records with no structure
- filing a weak secondary claim that should have been an increase
- filing an increase when the real issue may be secondary
- submitting unsigned witness statements
- forgetting to save the final filed version
- or submitting a packet that makes sense only to the veteran

That wastes time and weakens the presentation.

The goal is not just to file.

The goal is also not to miss a filing deadline, lose a review window, or damage a possible effective date while trying to make the packet perfect. If a deadline is close, protect the deadline first and verify the current rule through VA.gov or an accredited representative.

The goal is to file the right issue, in the right lane, with the right support, in a way that is easy for a stranger to follow.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- decide whether a secondary claim is realistic
- organize one issue at a time
- build a clean filing packet

- match the theory to the evidence
- use BuddySign signed outputs when witness statements are part of the packet
- choose fewer, stronger issues instead of filing a pile of chaos
- review the packet before hitting submit
- save the final packet, receipt, and Claim Session Summary in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 - Prepare the issue before you file it

What to do

Before filing each issue, prepare:

- the right form
- the current official version of that form from VA.gov
- the correct claim lane or review lane
- the filing deadline or review deadline, if one applies
- the veteran's statement
- BuddySign signed output if using a buddy/witness statement
- key medical records
- service records or personnel records if they help
- nexus opinion or DBQ if available
- private treatment releases if needed
- a short cover sheet or issue list if the packet is large

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-050 — 21-4138 Master Template**
- **Prompt Card B-051 — 21-10210 Master Template**
- **Prompt Card B-130 — Example Filing Packet Ready to Submit**

Why it matters

The cleaner the packet, the harder it is for VA to claim it could not follow what the veteran was saying.

A clean packet does not guarantee a grant.

But a messy packet makes everything harder.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Before I file this issue, tell me what should be in the packet: the right form, the right statement, the right records, any BuddySign signed witness output, any nexus evidence, and whether I need a short cover sheet. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Decide whether a secondary claim is actually realistic

What to do

A secondary claim can be strong, but do not file one just because two things seem related.

A secondary claim is worth serious consideration only if most of these are true:

- the veteran already has a primary service-connected disability
- the veteran has a separate additional condition or persistent recurrent symptoms
- there is a believable medical pathway between the two
- records already hint at the link
- the veteran can point to records, symptoms, or a doctor opinion that support the connection
- the claim is not just a duplicate way of describing the already-rated condition

Why it matters

Veterans waste time filing weak secondaries that have no real bridge.

Secondary claims require more than "these two conditions both exist."

They need a link. In plain English, the packet should explain whether the claimed secondary condition was caused by, resulted from, or was worsened beyond its natural progression by an already service-connected condition, and what evidence supports that bridge.

Be cautious if

- the primary condition is not yet service connected
- the second condition is vague and poorly documented
- there is no real link evidence
- the "new" condition may just be the same symptoms already rated
- the better move is really an increase on the primary condition

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I already have a VA rating for [primary condition]. I am wondering whether [new condition] is a realistic secondary claim. Ask me targeted questions first. Then tell me whether this looks stronger as: (1) a secondary claim, (2) an increased-rating argument on the primary condition, or (3) not ready to file yet. Do not invent facts. Tell me what evidence already helps me, what evidence is missing, and whether I likely need a medical nexus opinion.

Step 3 - Make sure this is a separate claim, not just a different way of describing the same problem

What to do

Before filing a secondary claim, ask:

- Is this truly a separate ratable condition?
- Or am I just describing another part of the already-rated condition?
- Would this be better handled as an increased-rating argument?
- Would this be better handled by clearer severity evidence?
- Would this be better handled by a stronger statement on the primary condition?

Why it matters

Not every related symptom deserves a separate claim.

Some symptoms belong under the already service-connected condition.

Some symptoms support severity.

Some symptoms support secondary service connection.

The AI can help sort that out before the veteran files blindly.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me whether this looks like a true separate secondary condition or whether I am really describing symptoms that belong under the already-rated primary issue. Explain why simply. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Build the issue theory before filing

What to do

For each issue, be able to answer:

- What exactly am I claiming?
- What is the theory?
- What evidence supports that theory?
- What statement goes with it?
- What lane is this in?
- What is still missing?
- What is the strongest next filing-ready evidence?

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-170 — Review Lane Comparison Chart**
- Common theories include:
 - direct service connection
 - secondary service connection
 - aggravation

- increased rating
- Supplemental Claim with new and relevant evidence
- HLR based on error in the existing record
- Board support

Why it matters

A clean issue packet starts with a clean theory.

If the veteran cannot explain the theory in plain English, the packet is probably not ready.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Draft concise claim language for VA filing for the following issue: [issue]. State the theory of service connection or review lane if known and write a short clean description appropriate for a claim form or supporting statement. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Build a clean issue packet

What to do

A clean issue packet usually includes:

- current official VA form or online filing path, when a form or portal step is required
- one issue clearly named
- one clean veteran statement
- the strongest supporting records
- BuddySign signed output if using a buddy/witness statement
- nexus letter or DBQ if available
- a short cover sheet if the packet is large
- The packet should make it obvious:
 - what the veteran is claiming
 - why the veteran is claiming it

- what evidence supports it
- what VA should pay attention to

Why it matters

Do not upload random records and hope VA sorts it out.

A packet should guide the reader.

The goal is not to bury VA in paper.

The goal is to make the strongest evidence easy to see.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)
- Prompt Card B-200 through B-206 — BuddySign Workflow Prompt Cards
- [Prompt Card B-130 — Example Filing Packet Ready to Submit](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a one-page evidence cover sheet for my VA claim. List the claimed condition and the evidence I am submitting for it, so a VA reviewer can quickly see what is included. Include BuddySign signed witness output if it is part of the packet. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - File fewer issues more clearly if needed

What to do

Do not file five messy issues just because you are finally motivated.

It is often better to file:

- fewer issues
- more clearly
- with better organization
- with stronger evidence linkage

- with cleaner supporting statements

Why it matters

A smaller clean packet usually beats a larger confusing one.

More is not automatically better.

Clearer is better.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my current evidence, tell me whether I should file all these issues now or file fewer issues more cleanly first. Tell me which ones are strongest right now and which ones should wait. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Review the packet before submitting

What to do

Before filing, ask:

- Is the issue clearly identified?
- Does the statement match the evidence?
- Is anything important missing?
- Is the packet too bloated?
- Is the packet organized enough for a stranger to follow?
- Are witness statements signed by the witness?
- Are BuddySign outputs downloaded and saved if used?
- Are file names clear?
- Is the final upload version saved?

Why it matters

A bad final packet can weaken a decent claim.

The veteran should not hit submit until the packet has been sanity-checked.

The AI can help sanity-check the packet, but it is not a substitute for the veteran reviewing every fact, verifying the correct filing lane, and checking current VA instructions before submission.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this filing packet before I submit it. Tell me whether the issue is clearly identified, whether the statement matches the evidence, whether anything important is missing, whether any witness statement needs a signed BuddySign output, and whether the packet is organized enough for VA to follow easily. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Save the final packet and proof**What to do**

Before and after submission, save:

- final statement
- final packet PDF
- exact uploaded version
- BuddySign signed outputs if used
- submission confirmations
- receipts
- date of filing
- screenshots if useful
- Claim Session Summary for what was filed and why
- any follow-up letters from VA
- Store the pre-submission final packet here:

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

- Store the submitted version and proof here:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

- Also save issue-specific proof here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

Why it matters

Do not rely on memory.

Do not rely on the portal alone.

Save the proof.

The filed version matters because months later the veteran needs to know exactly what was submitted.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Give me a final before-and-after filing checklist so I save the exact uploaded packet, BuddySign signed outputs if used, the submission confirmation, and the issue name in a way I can find later without guessing.

Step 9 - Save a Claim Session Summary after filing

What to do

After the packet is filed, ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to create a short filing summary.

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

- and, if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

After filing, the veteran should be able to look back and quickly know:

- what was filed
- when it was filed
- what theory was used
- what evidence was included
- what receipt/proof was saved

- what to watch for next

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this filing. Include the issue filed, claim lane or theory, forms used, statements included, BuddySign outputs included if any, evidence submitted, filing date, where the receipt was saved, and top 3 things I should watch for next.

Warning

Do not let packet cleanup become deadline failure. If a filing deadline, appeal deadline, or effective-date issue is in play, protect the deadline and verify the current rule before waiting on more polish.

Do not file a pile of mixed issues with no structure and assume VA will cleanly separate them for you.

The veteran has to make the issue, theory, and evidence easy to follow.

Caution

Do not file a weak secondary claim that should really be an increase.

Do not file an increase when the better theory is actually secondary.

Do not file HLR when the real problem is missing evidence.

HLR generally fits alleged errors based on the record VA already had. If the fix depends on new evidence, the veteran likely needs a different path, often a Supplemental Claim, but the current VA rules should be verified before filing.

Do not file Supplemental when the real problem is that VA ignored evidence already in the file.

Match the lane to the problem.

Note

The stronger move is often not "file more."

The stronger move is "file cleaner."

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Pick one issue only.
- Ask whether it is direct, secondary, increase, Supplemental, or HLR.
- Build one statement for that issue.
- Attach only the strongest supporting records.
- Include BuddySign signed output if using a witness statement.
- Ask the AI to review the final packet.
- Save the packet and receipt in the Starter Kit.
- File that one clean issue.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- mixing multiple issues into one confusing statement
- filing a weak secondary claim with no bridge
- filing before the theory is clear
- uploading bloated records with no roadmap
- sending a pile of records with no explanation of what matters
- assuming VA will connect the dots for you
- not reviewing the packet before filing
- using unsigned witness statements
- not saving BuddySign outputs
- not saving the final filed version
- not saving submission receipts

- failing to save a filing session summary

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know exactly what issue I am filing
- I know the claim theory
- I know whether this is direct, secondary, increase, Supplemental, or HLR-related
- I built the correct statement
- I attached the strongest supporting records
- I included buddy or spouse statements if they help
- I included BuddySign signed outputs if using witness statements
- I included nexus or DBQ evidence if available
- I created a cover sheet if the packet is large
- I reviewed the packet before filing
- I saved the final submitted version and receipt
- I saved a Claim Session Summary after filing

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about filing on purpose.

The veteran should not just throw evidence at VA and hope for the best.

The veteran should know:

- the issue
- the theory
- the lane
- the support
- the structure of the packet

- where the final filed version and receipt are saved before hitting submit.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 13 and prepare for the C&P exam so the veteran does not walk in cold, minimize symptoms, or accidentally weaken a decent claim by being vague or underprepared.

Chapter 13 — C&P Exam Preparation

Mission

Teach the veteran how to prepare for the C&P exam so they do not walk in cold, minimize symptoms, forget key facts, or accidentally weaken a decent claim by being vague, proud, or underprepared.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans lose ground at the C&P exam for reasons that are completely avoidable.

They:

- assume the examiner already read everything
- show up with no plan
- downplay symptoms out of habit
- forget flare-ups
- forget repeated-use problems
- forget functional loss
- describe average days but not bad days
- leave out work impact entirely
- or fail to explain what the condition does to daily life

That is a bad plan.

The C&P exam is not the time to freestyle.

It is also not the time to exaggerate, argue with the examiner, or rely on a long script. The goal is to be prepared enough to answer clearly, truthfully, and specifically.

The goal is simple:

- know your story
- know your symptoms
- know your flare-ups
- know your functional loss

- know what the condition does to work and daily life
- be ready to explain it clearly without exaggerating or minimizing

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- build an issue-specific C&P cheat sheet
- prepare for the most likely examiner questions
- explain onset, worsening, and current severity clearly
- describe flare-ups and repeated-use problems
- describe work impact and daily-life impact
- avoid the common mistakes that make exams weaker than they should be
- save the prep sheet and post-exam notes in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 - Do not walk into the exam cold

What to do

Before the exam, make sure you know the date, time, location, contractor instructions, and what to bring. If you cannot attend, follow the VA or contractor rescheduling instructions immediately and keep proof of any communication.

Before the exam, make sure you can clearly explain:

- when it started
- how it started
- whether it began in service, shortly after service, or later
- how it changed over time
- what symptoms you have now
- how often they happen
- how severe they get

- how long they last
- what flare-ups look like
- what bad days look like
- what treatment you have tried
- what has helped
- what has not helped
- how the condition affects work
- how the condition affects daily life

Why it matters

A lot of veterans assume they will "just explain it when they get there."

Then the exam starts, the pressure hits, and half the important facts never get said.

Missing an exam or failing to reschedule properly can hurt the claim, so the first preparation step is simply making sure the appointment logistics are handled.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records, help me prepare for my C&P exam for [condition]. Tell me what facts I need to be ready to explain clearly about onset, symptoms, worsening, flare-ups, treatment, work impact, and daily-life impact. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Build a phone-sized C&P cheat sheet

What to do

For each issue, build a short cheat sheet that covers:

- onset
- current symptoms
- flare-ups
- repeated-use problems
- functional loss

- work impact
- daily-life impact
- treatment history
- three to five key facts you must not forget to say

Keep it short enough to review on your phone right before the exam.

Use the cheat sheet as a memory aid, not as a fake script. The answers still need to be yours and they need to be true.

Why it matters

The veteran does not need a 10-page prep packet.

The veteran needs a short, high-value reminder sheet that keeps the important facts from getting lost.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-140 — Example Phone-Sized C&P Cheat Sheet](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records, create a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for [condition]. Include onset, symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional loss, work impact, daily-life impact, treatment tried, and the main facts I should clearly communicate. Keep it concise and truthful. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Prepare for the likely examiner questions

What to do

Have ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy generate the most likely questions for the issue.

Common examiner questions often include:

- When did this start?
- How did it start?
- What symptoms do you have now?

- How often does this happen?
- How severe is it?
- How long does it last?
- What are your flare-ups like?
- What makes it worse?
- What treatment have you had?
- How does it affect your work?
- How does it affect your daily life?
- What are you unable to do during bad days?

Why it matters

The veteran should not be surprised by basic questions they could have prepared for.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Give me the most likely C&P exam questions for [condition] and help me answer them in a truthful, specific, veteran-friendly way using my records and symptoms. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Make sure flare-ups and bad days are clearly explained

What to do

Be ready to explain:

- what triggers flare-ups
- how often they happen
- how long they last
- what they stop you from doing
- how much worse things get during those periods
- whether repeated use makes the condition worse

- whether bad days are different from average days

Do not just describe your average day if your worst days are much worse.

Also do not describe every day as the worst day if that is not true. Explain the difference between average days, bad days, flare-ups, and repeated-use problems clearly.

Why it matters

A lot of conditions get underrated because the veteran describes only the baseline and leaves out the worst part.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me explain my flare-ups clearly for my C&P exam. Ask me what triggers them, how often they happen, how long they last, how bad they get, whether repeated use makes things worse, and what they stop me from doing. Then turn that into clean language I can remember and say clearly. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Make sure functional loss is clear

What to do

Do not stop at symptoms.

Explain what the condition actually limits.

Examples:

- standing
- walking
- bending
- lifting
- sitting
- stairs
- driving
- sleeping
- concentrating

- stress tolerance
- interacting with other people
- completing work reliably
- doing household chores
- following through on tasks
- getting through the day without stopping or lying down

Why it matters

VA is not just evaluating discomfort.

It is evaluating impairment.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take my condition and symptoms and turn them into a clear list of functional limitations I should be ready to explain during the C&P exam. Focus on what I can no longer do, what I struggle to do, and what gets worse with repeated use or bad days. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Prepare differently for different issue types

What to do

Tailor your prep to the condition.

If the issue is musculoskeletal

- Be ready to explain:
- pain
- stiffness
- weakness
- instability
- numbness if relevant
- flare-ups

- repeated-use problems
- range-of-motion limits if known

bending, lifting, standing, walking, squatting, kneeling, reaching, turning, stairs, sitting, or driving limits depending on the body part

If the issue is mental health

- Be ready to explain:
- sleep problems
- irritability
- panic
- anxiety
- depression
- anger
- concentration problems
- isolation
- mood changes
- stress intolerance
- relationship problems
- work reliability problems
- hygiene or motivation problems if true
- avoidance or hypervigilance if true

If the issue is headaches or migraines

- Be ready to explain:
- frequency
- duration

- severity
- whether you need to lie down
- whether you need a dark quiet room
- what triggers them
- what treatment you tried
- whether they reduce or knock out your ability to function
- work impact or missed time if true

If the issue is sleep apnea or respiratory

- Be ready to explain:
- symptoms before diagnosis
- snoring
- gasping
- poor sleep
- fatigue
- concentration problems
- CPAP use or problems
- worsening factors
- daytime impairment

Why it matters

Not every issue needs the same kind of explanation.

Tailored prep is stronger than generic prep.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Build me a condition-specific C&P prep guide for [condition]. Focus on the exact kinds of symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional limits, and work-impact facts that matter most for that issue. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Identify the weak points before the examiner does

What to do

Ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy:

- what parts of the case may be questioned
- what parts may be misunderstood
- what facts may need especially clear explanation
- whether the records and symptoms line up cleanly
- what the examiner may downplay if you do not explain it well
- what negative evidence may need truthful context
- whether there are records that seem inconsistent with what you remember and need to be explained truthfully

Why it matters

It is better to prepare for weak points than to get blindsided.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records and claim history, tell me what parts of my case a C&P examiner may question, minimize, or misunderstand. Then help me prepare truthful, specific answers that address those weak points. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Do not minimize out of pride

What to do

If you know you tend to downplay symptoms, say that out loud to the AI before the exam and make it help you correct for that.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans were conditioned to:

- suck it up

- push through
- not complain
- underreport
- describe the average day instead of the bad day

That mindset may have helped them survive military culture.

It does not help at a disability exam.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I tend to downplay my symptoms because of military culture and pride. Help me prepare for this C&P exam in a way that is still truthful but does not minimize what the condition really does to me. Do not invent facts or exaggerate.

Step 9 - Review the timeline right before the exam

What to do

Before the exam, review:

- when it started
- service event if relevant
- major treatment points
- how it worsened
- what your current worst problems are
- what you must not forget to explain

Do not rely on memory alone if the issue is complicated.

Why it matters

The exam is easier when the timeline is fresh in your head.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Build me a very short last-minute review sheet I can read on my phone before the C&P exam. Keep only the most important timeline, symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, work impact, and functional-loss points. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Save the prep sheet in the Starter Kit**What to do****Prompt Card Reference**

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-140 — Example Phone-Sized C&P Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Prompt Card B-160 — Symptom Prep Note Before Appointment](#)
- Save each C&P prep sheet here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/08 C&P EXAMS/

- Use a file name like:

2026-05-06_Back_CP_Exam_Cheat_Sheet.pdf
2026-05-06_PTSD_CP_Exam_Cheat_Sheet.pdf

- If the prep sheet is part of a larger active filing packet, save a copy here too:

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

Why it matters

The prep sheet is part of the claim record.

It helps the veteran prepare now and remember later what they were trying to explain at the exam.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Help me name and save this C&P exam prep sheet in my Starter Kit so I can find it before the exam and preserve it afterward.

Step 11 - Do a same-day post-exam debrief

What to do

After the exam, while it is still fresh, use ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to document:

- what the examiner asked
- what you answered
- what tests or measurements happened
- what symptoms you reported
- whether flare-ups were discussed
- whether repeated-use problems were discussed
- whether functional loss was discussed
- whether work impact was discussed
- anything important the examiner ignored
- anything that seemed wrong, rushed, or incomplete

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-160 — Symptom Prep Note Before Appointment**
- Save the debrief here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/08 C&P EXAMS/

Why it matters

The veteran's memory fades fast after stressful exams.

A same-day debrief preserves what happened.

It can also help later if the exam report is inaccurate, incomplete, or inconsistent with what the veteran actually reported.

If you later need the final claim exam report, VA says the provider sends the report to VA and the veteran generally needs to request a copy from VA. Use the current VA Form 20-10206 process or

VA.gov online records request path, and verify the current instructions on VA.gov before relying on the report.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I just finished a C&P exam for [condition]. Ask me what happened while it is fresh. Help me document what the examiner asked, what I answered, what measurements or tests happened, what seemed missing or wrong, whether flare-ups and functional loss were discussed, and whether I should write a post-exam note for my records. Do not invent facts.

C&P Exam After-Action Report

After every C&P exam, write down what happened before the details fade. This is not about attacking the examiner. It is about preserving facts while your memory is fresh.

Record:

- exam date, time, location, and contractor
- examiner name if known
- how long the exam actually lasted, excluding waiting time
- conditions or body parts discussed
- tests or measurements performed
- whether range of motion was measured with a goniometer, if relevant
- what the examiner asked
- what you told the examiner
- what the examiner did not ask
- whether flare-ups, repeated use, functional loss, work impact, or daily limitations were discussed
- anything important you forgot to say

If the exam was adequate, say so. If it was incomplete or inaccurate, preserve the specific facts calmly. Do not manufacture a bad-exam argument.

Copy/paste prompt

I just finished a C&P exam. Interview me while my memory is fresh. Ask who examined me, how long the exam lasted, what conditions were examined, what tests were performed,

whether range of motion was measured with a goniometer if relevant, what I told the examiner, what the examiner asked, what the examiner did not ask, whether the examiner listened, and whether I think the exam was incomplete. Then turn my answers into a clean post-exam summary I can save or upload if needed.

Step 12 - Save a Claim Session Summary after exam prep or debrief

What to do

After major exam prep or a post-exam debrief, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

● and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

Exam prep and debrief work often contains key facts, weak points, and follow-up actions.

Do not leave that buried in a chat.

Save it.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this C&P exam prep or post-exam debrief. Include the issue, exam date if known, symptoms prepared or reported, weak points, flare-ups, functional loss, work impact, what happened at the exam, possible concerns, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session.

Warning

Do not miss, skip, or casually reschedule a C&P exam. If there is a problem attending, contact the correct VA or contractor number as soon as possible and keep notes or screenshots showing what happened.

Do not assume the examiner read everything in your file or will pull the full story out of you automatically.

You need to be ready to explain the key facts clearly.

Caution

Do not exaggerate symptoms, but do not minimize them either.

Both are bad.

Be specific, grounded, and honest.

Note

You do not need to sound rehearsed.

You need to sound prepared.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Pick one issue.
- Paste this prompt:
- Based on my records, create a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for [condition]. Include onset, current symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional loss, work impact, treatment tried, and the top facts I need to clearly communicate. Keep it short and truthful. Do not invent facts.
- Save it to your phone.
- Review it before the exam.
- After the exam, do the post-exam debrief prompt.
- Save both in the Starter Kit.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- walking in cold

- assuming the examiner already knows the story
- describing only average days
- forgetting flare-ups
- forgetting repeated-use problems
- leaving out work impact
- leaving out daily-life impact
- minimizing symptoms out of pride
- being too vague
- trying to wing it
- failing to save the prep sheet
- failing to do a same-day post-exam debrief

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know when the condition started
- I know how it started
- I know my current symptoms
- I know how often they happen
- I know how severe they get
- I know what flare-ups are like
- I know what repeated use does
- I know what the condition stops me from doing
- I know how it affects work
- I know how it affects daily life

- I know what treatment I tried
- I have a short cheat sheet on my phone
- I know where to save the post-exam debrief

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about not sabotaging your own exam through poor preparation.

The veteran does not need to memorize a speech.

The veteran needs to know the timeline, symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional loss, and work impact well enough to explain them clearly and truthfully.

Then the veteran should document what happened after the exam while it is still fresh.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 14 and learn how to read the decision letter like a battle document: what VA granted, denied, conceded, misunderstood, and what the smartest next move is from there.

Chapter 14 — After the Decision Comes Back

Mission

Teach the veteran how to read a VA decision like a source document, identify what VA granted, denied, conceded, or misunderstood, and choose the smartest next move instead of reacting blindly.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans make the same mistake the day a decision arrives.

They look at the percentage, get emotional, and either celebrate too early or spiral too fast.

That is understandable.

It is also unhelpful.

A VA decision letter is not just a result.

It is also a deadline document. Before choosing any response, check the decision date, response instructions, and any applicable filing deadline in the decision letter and on VA.gov.

It is also a roadmap.

It tells you:

- what VA granted
- what VA denied
- what VA conceded
- what evidence VA says it reviewed
- what reasons VA used
- what VA thinks is missing
- whether the rating matches the severity documented
- whether VA ignored, misstated, or misunderstood important evidence
- what kind of response may make the most sense

This chapter teaches the veteran how to read that letter with discipline.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- break down a VA decision letter in plain English

- identify favorable findings
- identify VA's stated reason for denial or underrating
- identify what evidence VA relied on
- identify what VA overlooked or misunderstood
- tell whether the problem is missing evidence, bad reasoning, bad exam, wrong rating, or wrong effective date
- choose the best next move on purpose
- save the decision letter and analysis summary in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 - Read the decision before reacting

What to do

When the decision comes back, slow down and read it carefully.

Do not wait so long that you lose your response window. Slow down enough to think clearly, but track the deadline immediately.

Look for:

- what condition was granted
- what condition was denied
- the percentage assigned
- the effective date
- favorable findings
- the evidence list
- the reasons for decision
- what VA says is missing
- whether the severity matches what you documented
- whether the letter ignores or misstates important evidence

Why it matters

A lot of veterans react to the headline and miss the actual value inside the letter.

The useful part is usually in the reasoning.

Where to save it

- Save decision letters here:

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

- If issue-specific, also save a copy here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Explain this VA decision letter to me in plain English. Tell me what VA said yes to, what VA said no to, what VA admitted, what VA said was missing, and what that means for my next move. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Identify favorable findings and preserve them**What to do**

Look for anything VA has already accepted, conceded, or effectively admitted.

Common favorable findings may include:

- current diagnosis conceded
- in-service event conceded
- primary condition conceded
- treatment history acknowledged
- symptom history acknowledged
- exposure acknowledged
- service connection elements partly accepted
- current disability acknowledged

Highlight those and save them.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans focus only on the denial and forget what VA already gave them.

Favorable findings can be useful in future claim development or review strategy.

They should be copied into the issue summary so they are not lost when building the next packet.

Do not waste them.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-150 — Favorable Findings Section of a Decision Letter**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this VA decision letter and identify every favorable finding I should preserve and reuse in future claim development or appeal strategy. Explain why each one matters. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Identify the real reason for the denial or low rating

What to do

Ask what VA is actually saying.

Common problem types include:

- no current diagnosis
- no in-service event
- no nexus
- no chronicity or continuity
- symptoms not severe enough for the next rating level
- examiner found less impairment than the veteran described
- VA ignored or undervalued lay evidence
- VA relied too heavily on a weak exam
- VA misunderstood the timeline

- VA said the evidence does not support the next higher rating
- VA assigned the wrong effective date
- VA treated the issue as already covered under another rating

Figure out which one it is.

Why it matters

Different problems require different responses.

If the veteran misreads the denial reason, they will likely choose the wrong next move.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Read this decision letter and tell me the real reason VA denied or underrated this issue. Do not just summarize it. Tell me what problem I am actually trying to fix. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Compare the decision to the evidence you actually had

What to do

Ask:

- Did VA list the important evidence?
- Did VA ignore strong evidence?
- Did VA mention my statements?
- Did VA mention buddy evidence?
- Did VA rely heavily on one weak C&P exam?
- Did VA describe the symptoms and limitations accurately?
- Did VA understate the severity?
- Did VA misunderstand the timeline?
- Did VA overlook favorable records already in the file?

Why it matters

Sometimes the problem is not missing evidence.

Sometimes the problem is bad reasoning on evidence that was already there.

That distinction matters because it affects the next lane.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Compare this decision letter to the evidence I had already submitted. Tell me what strong evidence VA acknowledged, what it may have ignored, and whether the problem looks more like missing evidence or bad VA reasoning. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Decide whether the issue was denied, underrated, partially won, or wrongly dated

What to do

Classify the outcome correctly.

Possible outcomes:

- denied
- granted but underrated
- granted with wrong effective date
- partially granted with unresolved issues
- denied but with useful favorable findings
- remanded, if at the Board
- deferred, if VA has not decided it yet

Why it matters

Not every bad decision is the same kind of bad.

A low rating needs a different response than a total denial.

A wrong effective date is a different problem than no service connection at all.

Effective-date issues can affect potential back pay, so do not treat them like minor clerical details.

A denial with favorable findings is different from a denial where almost nothing was conceded.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Classify this outcome clearly: was this denied, underrated, partially granted, deferred, remanded, or granted with a different problem such as an effective-date issue? Then tell me what kind of next move usually fits that kind of result. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Ask the AI what the strongest response plan is**What to do**

Have ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy tell you:

- what the strongest evidence in your favor already is
- what the weakest part of VA's reasoning is
- whether you need new evidence
- whether adding new evidence would change which review lane makes sense
- whether the file already should have supported a better result
- whether the problem looks like missing evidence, bad reasoning, bad exam, wrong rating, or wrong effective date
- what next document or lane makes the most sense

Why it matters

The veteran should not move from decision to response blindly.

The response should match the actual weakness in the decision.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this decision like an experienced claim strategist. Tell me the weakest part of VA's reasoning, the strongest evidence in my favor, whether I need new evidence, and what my smartest next move is. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Use the denial language as a development checklist**What to do**

Take the exact denial language and make it useful.

If VA says something is missing, ask:

- Do I already have it and VA ignored it?
- Do I need to build it now?
- What statement, record, medical note, buddy statement, DBQ, or nexus opinion directly answers that specific point?
- Does the missing item point toward Supplemental Claim?
- Does ignored evidence point toward Higher-Level Review?
- Does complexity or persistent dispute point toward Board review?

Use VA's own wording as a development checklist.

Why it matters

The denial letter is often the clearest explanation VA will give about what it thinks the case lacks.

Do not just get mad at the wording.

Use it.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-151 — Reasons for Decision Section of a Decision Letter**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Read this denial letter and pull out the exact reasons VA used to deny or underrate the claim. Then build a response plan that directly answers each reason with the strongest truthful evidence, statement language, and development steps. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Do not jump to the next lane until you understand the problem

What to do

Before choosing Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal, first answer:

- Is the real problem missing evidence?
- Is the real problem weak nexus proof?
- Is the real problem weak severity proof?

- Is the real problem a bad C&P exam?
- Is the real problem VA ignored evidence already in the file?
- Is the real problem a factual or legal error?
- Is the real problem an effective-date issue?
- Is the problem more complex than a simple lane choice?

That determines the next lane.

Simple rule: if the problem is missing evidence, a Supplemental Claim may fit better. If the problem is VA mishandling evidence already in the file, Higher-Level Review may fit better. If the issue is complex, persistent, or needs Board review, a Board lane may be the better discussion. Always verify the current rules and deadline before filing.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans lose time by choosing the next lane emotionally instead of logically.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Before I choose my next lane, tell me whether the real problem here is missing evidence, weak nexus proof, weak severity proof, factual error, legal error, bad exam, wrong effective date, or something more complex. Then tell me what kind of response fits that problem best. Do not invent facts.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-170 — Review Lane Comparison Chart](#)

Step 9 - Save the decision analysis in the Starter Kit

What to do

After the AI reviews the decision letter, save the decision analysis and next-move summary.

Save the decision letter here:

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

- Save issue-specific copies here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

- Save the decision-analysis summary here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

- Save a Claim Session Summary here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

Decision letters drive future strategy.

Do not let the analysis stay buried in a chat.

The veteran should be able to open the issue folder later and immediately see:

- what VA decided
- what VA conceded
- what VA said was missing
- what the likely next lane is
- what evidence needs to be built next

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a decision-analysis summary for my Starter Kit. Include what VA granted, denied, conceded, listed as evidence, gave as reasons, may have missed, what the real problem appears to be, and the top 3 next moves. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Save a Claim Session Summary after decision review

What to do

After reviewing an important decision, ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

- and, if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

A decision review can create the next phase of the claim.

That work needs to be portable.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this decision-review session. Include the decision date if known, issues decided, grants, denials, ratings, effective dates, favorable findings, reasons for decision, evidence VA listed, possible errors, evidence gaps, likely next lane, and top 3 next moves.

Warning

Do not miss a response deadline while you are analyzing the decision. Save the letter, note the decision date, verify the current response options, and get accredited help if the deadline is close or the issue is legally complex.

Do not read only the percentage and stop there.

That is how veterans miss favorable findings, miss weak reasoning, and choose the wrong next move.

Caution

Do not rush into a response the same day out of anger unless you actually understand what the decision says and what problem you are trying to solve.

Emotion is understandable.

Strategy still has to come first.

Note

Even a bad decision can contain useful concessions.
 A decision letter is not just bad news.
 It is also a source document for your next strategy.

Request and Read Your Rating Code Sheet

Your decision letter tells you what VA decided. Your rating code sheet helps show how VA is tracking your whole compensation picture.

A rating code sheet may show diagnostic codes, current ratings, effective dates, past ratings, prior denials, combined rating information, bilateral factor clues, and possible Special Monthly Compensation clues. If you do not have it, ask VA or your accredited representative for a copy and save it in your master records folder.

Then upload it into VA Claim Battle Buddy and ask for a plain-English decode. This can help you avoid guessing about what VA has already granted, denied, or rated under a particular diagnostic code.

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading my VA rating code sheet. Extract every service-connected condition, diagnostic code, current rating, effective date, past rating, prior denial, bilateral factor clue, and SMC clue. Then tell me what this code sheet suggests I should review next, but do not invent claims that are not supported.

Turn Every Denial Into a Fix Plan

A denial is not only bad news. It is a map. Read the evidence list, favorable findings, and reasons for decision. Then convert the decision into a fix plan.

Ask: what did VA concede, what did VA deny, what evidence did VA say was missing, what evidence was ignored, what rating or effective-date issue remains, and which review lane fits the real problem?

Copy/paste prompt

Turn this VA decision into a Denial Fix Plan. Extract what VA granted, denied, deferred, rated at 0%, conceded as favorable findings, listed as evidence, and gave as reasons for decision. Then identify the missing evidence, possible VA error, effective-date issue, and likely next lane. Do not invent facts or guarantee an outcome.

Effective Date Protection Drill

Effective dates can affect back pay. Do not let a claim die by accident because the decision letter sat in a folder and nobody tracked the deadline.

Use this drill:

1. Save every decision letter.
2. Write the decision date in your tracker.
3. Calculate the one-year review deadline when a one-year window applies.
4. Save every upload receipt, fax confirmation, mail receipt, and submission confirmation.
5. Before filing something new, ask whether this should instead be a Supplemental Claim, HLR, Board appeal, or increase.
6. Do not accidentally reset, abandon, or restart a claim path without understanding the effective-date risk.

Copy/paste prompt

Review this decision letter or claim history for effective-date risk. Identify the decision date, one-year deadline if applicable, issue history, whether continuous pursuit may matter, whether this looks like a new claim, Supplemental Claim, HLR, Board appeal, or increased-rating issue, and what documents I should save as proof.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Upload the decision letter.
- Paste this prompt:
- Review this VA decision letter and tell me: (1) what was granted or denied, (2) what favorable findings I should preserve, (3) what reason VA gave, (4) what the real problem is, and (5) what my smartest next move is. Keep it plain English. Do not invent facts.
- Read the output.
- Do not pick the next lane yet unless the problem is clear.
- Save the decision-analysis summary in the Starter Kit.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- reacting emotionally before reading the decision carefully
- ignoring favorable findings
- not identifying the real denial reason
- assuming every denial means you need new evidence
- assuming every bad result should go straight to HLR or the Board
- not comparing the decision to the actual submitted evidence
- failing to separate denial, underrating, effective-date, remand, and deferred-issue problems
- not using VA's own language as a development checklist
- not saving the decision-analysis summary

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know what was granted
- I know what was denied
- I know the assigned percentage
- I know the effective date
- I identified favorable findings
- I identified the evidence list
- I identified the stated reason for the decision
- I know whether the real problem is missing evidence, bad reasoning, bad exam, wrong rating, or wrong effective date
- I know whether the issue was denied, underrated, partially won, deferred, or remanded
- I know my smartest next move

- I saved the decision letter and analysis in the Starter Kit

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about discipline after the decision comes back.

The veteran should not just feel the result.

The veteran should analyze it.

A decision letter tells you what VA granted, denied, conceded, listed, reasoned, and misunderstood.

That makes it one of the most important source documents in the whole claim process.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 15 and use what you learned here to pick the right review lane: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal.

Chapter 15 — Picking the Right Review Lane

Mission

Teach the veteran how to choose the right next review lane after a bad decision so they do not waste months using the wrong tool for the wrong problem.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans lose time here.

They get a bad result and then:

- file the wrong thing
- pick a lane out of anger
- assume every bad decision should go straight to Higher-Level Review
- assume every denial needs new evidence
- jump to the Board without understanding whether a lower lane could have fixed it
- or ask which lane is fastest instead of which lane actually fits

That is how time gets burned.

The right lane depends on one basic question:

Before you choose any lane, verify the current deadline, form, and filing instructions in the decision letter and on VA.gov. If the deadline is close or the issue is complex, consider getting help from an accredited VSO, accredited claims agent, or veterans law attorney.

- Do you need new evidence, or do you need to challenge a bad decision based on the evidence already in the file?

That is the fork in the road.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- tell the difference between a missing-evidence problem and a bad-decision problem
- choose between Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, and Board Appeal
- explain why a lane fits
- avoid common lane-selection mistakes

- stop choosing the next move emotionally
- save the lane-choice summary in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 - Use the simple rule first

What to do

Use this simple rule:

- Supplemental Claim = you need to add new and relevant evidence.

Use the current official VA form or online workflow for the lane you choose. Do not rely on an old saved form if VA has updated it.

- Higher-Level Review = VA made a mistake based on the evidence it already had.
- Board Appeal = the issue is more contested, more complex, or not getting fixed in the earlier lanes.

Why it matters

Most lane choice gets easier once the veteran stops overcomplicating it and starts with that basic distinction.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am providing my decision letter and evidence summary. Tell me whether the best next step is Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Explain why in plain English and tell me what problem each lane would actually be solving in my case. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Use Supplemental Claim when the problem is missing proof

What to do

A Supplemental Claim usually makes sense when:

- the response deadline has been checked and the veteran understands how this filing may affect effective-date preservation
- the file was weak
- the denial happened because something important was missing

- the veteran now has new and relevant evidence
- the missing piece can be built now
- the new evidence directly answers the denial reason
- Examples of new and relevant evidence include:
 - a new nexus letter
 - a new diagnosis
 - updated private treatment records
 - updated VA treatment records
 - a stronger lay statement
 - a stronger buddy statement
 - a signed BuddySign witness output
 - a new DBQ
 - overlooked service records
 - clearer continuity evidence
 - updated severity evidence

Why it matters

If the problem is missing proof, the smart move is usually to build the proof and use the lane that lets you submit it.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading a denial and new evidence I have now. Tell me whether this looks strongest as a Supplemental Claim. Explain what the denial said was missing and whether the new evidence actually fixes that gap. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Use Higher-Level Review when the problem is bad VA reasoning

What to do

A Higher-Level Review usually makes sense when:

- the veteran does not need to add new evidence to prove the point
- the evidence was already there
- VA ignored favorable evidence
- VA misunderstood the timeline
- VA underrated the severity
- VA relied too heavily on a weak exam
- the denial reasoning does not match the file
- the issue is not missing proof, but a bad decision on the existing proof
- This is basically saying:

You already had enough to do better, and you got it wrong.

Why it matters

HLR is not the right answer just because the veteran is angry.

It is the right answer when the record already supported a better result and VA failed to read or apply it properly.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading my decision letter and the evidence VA already had at the time. Tell me whether this looks strongest as a Higher-Level Review issue. Identify what error VA may have made and whether the evidence already in the file was enough to support a better outcome. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Use Board Appeal when the issue is more contested or not fixed in the earlier lanes

What to do

A Board Appeal may make more sense when:

- earlier lanes did not fix the problem
- the issue has a longer history
- the issue is more contested or factually tangled
- the case involves a serious procedural or legal disagreement
- the veteran wants a Veterans Law Judge to review it
- the problem is not getting solved cleanly at the lower levels
- the veteran understands which Board option fits: Direct Review, Evidence Submission, or Hearing
- the veteran understands that Board options can have different evidence rules, timing, and strategic consequences

Why it matters

The Board lane is usually not the first move just because a decision was bad.

It is more often the lane for tougher, more persistent, or more complex fights.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this claim history, denial letter, and evidence summary, tell me whether this issue should stay in Supplemental or Higher-Level Review, or whether it has become a Board-level issue. Explain why simply. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Diagnose the real problem before choosing the lane

What to do

Before choosing a lane, ask:

- Is the real problem missing evidence?
- Is the real problem weak nexus proof?

- Is the real problem weak severity proof?
- Is the real problem factual error?
- Is the real problem legal or rating error?
- Is the real problem a bad C&P exam?
- Is the real problem a wrong effective date?
- Is the real problem more complex than the earlier lanes are likely to fix?

Then choose the lane that matches that problem.

- Do not let the lane choice reset, weaken, or confuse a potentially valuable effective-date path without understanding the consequences.

Why it matters

The lane should match the problem.

That is the whole game.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me what problem I am actually solving here: missing evidence, weak nexus, weak severity proof, factual error, legal error, bad exam, wrong effective date, or a more complex appeal issue. Then tell me which review lane fits that problem best and why. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Compare the lanes for your actual case

What to do

If the answer still is not obvious, have ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy compare the three main lanes directly for your specific situation.

Ask:

- what each lane would try to fix
- what each lane would not fix
- what the pros and cons are
- which lane best fits the facts you already have

- what evidence or argument would be needed for each lane

Why it matters

Some cases sit on the line between two lanes.

Comparison helps force clarity.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-170 — Review Lane Comparison Chart**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Compare Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, and Board Appeal for my situation. Tell me the pros and cons of each based on my facts, evidence, and denial reason. Then tell me which one you recommend and why. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Do not choose a lane based only on speed or emotion

What to do

- Do not ask:
- which lane sounds toughest
- which lane other veterans use
- which lane feels most satisfying
- which lane I am mad enough to file
- which lane sounds fastest without looking at the actual problem

Ask:

- what is the actual problem
- what kind of proof do I have now
- what kind of proof is missing
- whether VA already should have done better on the record it had

- whether this is a missing-evidence problem or a bad-decision problem

Why it matters

The right lane is a strategic choice, not a mood.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am overwhelmed and frustrated. Ignore my emotion and tell me the best next review lane based only on the actual problem in the case, the evidence I already have, and what is still missing. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Make the AI state the lane choice in plain English

What to do

Before you act, make the AI say the answer simply:

- which lane fits
- why it fits
- what that lane is meant to fix
- what that lane cannot fix
- what you should build or submit next
- what you should avoid doing

Why it matters

If the answer is still muddy, the veteran probably is not ready to pick the lane yet.

A clean lane choice should be explainable in plain English.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Explain my best next review lane in plain English. Do not give me legal jargon. Tell me which lane fits, why it fits, what it is meant to fix, what it cannot fix, and what I should build or submit next. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Save the lane-choice summary in the Starter Kit

What to do

After choosing the likely lane, save the decision and reasoning.

Save the decision letter here:

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

- Save issue-specific copies here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

- Save the lane-choice summary here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

- Save a Claim Session Summary here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

Lane choice is a major strategic decision.

- Do not leave the reasoning buried in a chat.

The veteran should be able to look back later and see:

- what VA decided
- what problem was identified
- which lane was chosen
- why that lane fit
- what evidence or argument needs to be built next

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a review-lane summary for my Starter Kit. Include the decision being reviewed, the issue, the real problem, the lane that fits best, why it fits, what that lane can fix, what it cannot fix, what evidence or argument is needed next, and the top 3 next moves. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Save a Claim Session Summary after review-lane planning

What to do

After the AI helps compare lanes and choose the next move, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

● and, if issue-specific:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

Review-lane planning can control months or years of future claim work.

Save the reasoning.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this review-lane planning session. Include the decision date if known, issue reviewed, real problem identified, Supplemental Claim analysis, Higher-Level Review analysis, Board Appeal analysis, recommended lane, why it fits, evidence or argument needed next, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session.

Warning

Do not miss a deadline while analyzing lanes. Save the decision letter, write down the decision date, verify the current response window, and get accredited help if the deadline is close or the appeal path is confusing. Do not choose Higher-Level Review when the real problem is missing evidence; that is one of the fastest ways to waste time.

Caution

Do not add new evidence to the wrong lane or argue an error in a lane built for adding evidence without understanding the difference. Match the lane to the actual problem. Do not assume every bad result should go straight to the Board; some problems can be fixed faster and cleaner at a lower lane.

Note

The right next move is the one that matches the actual weakness in the case, not the one that feels most aggressive.

HLR vs. Supplemental Claim: the hard divider

Do not use Higher-Level Review to fix missing evidence. HLR generally fits when the evidence needed to win was already in the file and VA made an error in how it reviewed or applied that evidence.

If the fix depends on new medical records, a new buddy statement, a new nexus opinion, a DBQ, a new log, or other new evidence, a Supplemental Claim is often the lane to consider instead. Verify current VA rules before filing.

Fast comparison:

- VA missed evidence already in the file: HLR may fit.
- VA applied the wrong rule or ignored a favorable finding: HLR may fit.
- You have new medical records, buddy statements, nexus letter, DBQ, or logs: Supplemental Claim may fit better.
- You want a judge to review the case: Board lane may fit.
- You need to testify or add evidence at the Board: Board Evidence or Hearing lane may fit.

Copy/paste prompt

Review this decision and tell me whether HLR or Supplemental Claim fits better. Only suggest HLR if the evidence needed was already in the file and VA may have made an error. If new evidence is needed, tell me what evidence to build for a Supplemental Claim instead. Do not invent facts.

When DIY May Not Be Enough

This system can help you organize, understand, draft, and develop evidence. It is not legal representation. Some situations are too legally sensitive, too deadline-sensitive, or too high-stakes to freestyle alone.

Consider accredited help for:

- Clear and Unmistakable Error (CUE)
- CAVC appeals
- complex effective-date disputes
- discharge status or character-of-discharge problems
- 1151 claims
- DIC or survivor-benefit disputes
- complex TDIU denials
- severe PTSD/MST stressor disputes
- repeated denials despite strong evidence
- large retroactive-benefit disputes

A good system helps you fight smarter. It does not replace qualified help when the problem is legally complex.

Copy/paste prompt

Look at this VA claim situation and tell me whether it looks like normal DIY evidence development or whether I should seriously consider a VSO, accredited claims agent, or veterans law attorney. Pay special attention to CUE, CAVC, discharge status, 1151, DIC, complex effective dates, repeated denials, TDIU, MST/PTSD stressor problems, and large retroactive-benefit risk.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Upload the decision letter.
- Paste this prompt:
- Tell me whether this issue belongs in Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Explain the real problem in the case, why that lane fits best, and what I should do next. Do not invent facts.

- Read the answer.
- Do not file until the problem and lane match clearly.
- Save the lane-choice summary in the Starter Kit.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- choosing a lane out of anger
- choosing HLR when new evidence is needed
- choosing Supplemental when the file already supported a better result
- jumping to the Board too early
- not identifying the real weakness in the case
- confusing underrating with total denial
- not understanding what the decision actually said
- asking which lane is fastest instead of which lane fits
- failing to save the lane-choice reasoning

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know whether the real problem is missing evidence or bad VA reasoning
- I know whether new evidence is needed
- I know whether the existing file already should have supported a better result
- I know whether the issue is more complex than the lower lanes are likely to fix
- I compared Supplemental, HLR, and Board for my specific facts
- I know which lane fits best
- I know why it fits

- I know what I need to build or submit next
- I saved the lane-choice summary in the Starter Kit

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about matching the next lane to the actual problem.

- Supplemental Claim is for new and relevant evidence.
- Higher-Level Review is for bad VA decision-making on the evidence already in the file.
- Board Appeal is for more contested, more complex, or unresolved fights.

Pick the lane that fits the weakness, not the mood.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 16 and start using medical appointments, secure messages, and nurse-triage records more deliberately so the chart keeps building useful evidence while the claim moves forward.

Chapter 16 — Getting the Most From Medical Appointments

Mission

Teach the veteran how to use medical appointments, secure messages, nurse triage, VA Health Chat, and follow-up communication to build stronger medical evidence instead of wasting visits and leaving the chart vague.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans accidentally waste some of their best evidence opportunities.

They go to appointments and:

- forget half of what they meant to say
- minimize symptoms out of habit
- focus only on treatment and not on documentation
- leave out flare-ups
- leave out functional loss
- leave out work impact
- or walk out without making sure the important facts got into the chart

That is a mistake.

Medical records are often some of the strongest evidence in a VA claim.

That means every appointment is a chance to:

- improve treatment
- improve documentation
- and strengthen the record at the same time

This does not mean manufacturing evidence.

It means making sure real symptoms, real limitations, and real worsening are documented accurately.

Medical care comes first. Claim documentation matters, but do not turn an appointment into a fight with the provider or a demand for special claim language.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- prepare for medical appointments in a way that gets useful facts into the chart
- use secure messaging for non-urgent symptom updates and follow-up documentation
- use nurse triage, VA Health Connect, or VA Health Chat when symptoms are active
- tell providers what needs to be documented clearly
- follow up after appointments if something important was missed
- use denial language and claim strategy to guide what needs to get documented next
- save medical-message screenshots or summaries in the Starter Kit when useful

Execution

Step 1 - Stop treating appointments like random conversations

What to do

Before the appointment, write down:

- top symptoms
- frequency
- severity
- flare-ups
- what makes it worse
- functional limitations
- work limitations
- treatment problems
- what has worsened
- what you want documented

Do not rely on memory if the issue is complicated.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans walk into appointments tired, distracted, stressed, or in pain and forget the most important points.

A short prep note fixes that.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-160 — Symptom Prep Note Before Appointment](#)
- [Prompt Card B-103 — Claim Session Summary Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Turn these symptoms and limitations into a clean note I can bring to my doctor so the visit captures severity, frequency, flare-ups, and functional impact accurately in the medical record.

Step 2 - Make sure the chart captures more than "pain"**What to do**

If true, try to get the chart to reflect:

- diagnosis or symptom pattern
- symptom frequency
- severity
- flare-ups
- worsening over time
- failed treatments
- medication side effects
- sleep disturbance
- work limitations
- physical limitations

- mental or cognitive impact
- why you sought care now

Why it matters

Weak charting often says almost nothing useful:

- "pain"
- "follow-up"
- "stable"
- "doing okay"

That kind of record can badly understate a real problem.

The VA does not only need to know that you have a symptom.

It needs to understand what the symptom does to your life, function, work, sleep, reliability, and daily activities.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my condition and claim strategy, tell me what facts I should try to get documented during my appointment, including symptom severity, frequency, flare-ups, failed treatment, functional impact, and work limitations.

Step 3 - Use secure messages to create fresh medical evidence

What to do

Use VA secure messaging for non-urgent issues to:

- report worsening symptoms
- describe flare-ups
- explain functional problems
- ask for medication or treatment follow-up
- clarify what happened at a recent appointment
- ask that key symptom updates be documented in the chart

- Keep the message:
- short
- factual
- respectful
- symptom-focused
- easy for a provider to understand quickly

Do not write a rant.

Do not turn secure messaging into a legal argument.

Do not use secure messaging for emergencies. If symptoms are urgent, severe, or potentially dangerous, use emergency care, urgent care, 911, or the appropriate crisis/emergency resource instead of waiting on a portal message.

Why it matters

A secure message can create a clean record of worsening, persistence, and functional impact between appointments.

It can also help correct the record if an appointment note missed something important.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-060 — Secure Messaging Entry Point**
- **Prompt Card B-061 — Secure Messaging Inbox**
- **Prompt Card B-062 — Start New Secure Message**
- **Prompt Card B-063 — Select Care Team or Recipient**
- **Prompt Card B-064 — Secure Message Subject Line**
- **Prompt Card B-065 — Secure Message Body**
- **Prompt Card B-066 — Review Before Sending**
- **Prompt Card B-067 — Sent Secure Message Confirmation**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Draft a concise secure message to my VA provider summarizing my symptoms, worsening, functional limitations, and request for these facts to be documented in my record. Keep it factual and non-urgent.

Example secure message structure

Subject: Symptom update for [condition]

Hello [provider/team],

I wanted to document an update about my [condition]. Over the past [timeframe], I have noticed [worsening/change]. My current symptoms include [symptoms]. These symptoms affect [walking/standing/sleep/work/chores/concentration/etc.].

I am not reporting an emergency. I wanted to update my care team and ask whether this should be addressed at my next appointment or if there is anything I should do sooner.

Thank you.

Step 4 - Use nurse triage, VA Health Connect, or VA Health Chat when symptoms are active

What to do

If symptoms are happening now and same-day documentation makes sense:

- call nurse triage
- use VA Health Connect
- use VA Health Chat if available in your area or for your care setting
- follow the medical advice they give you
- save any useful summary or screenshot in your Starter Kit

Use those tools when symptoms are real and active.

Do not use them to manufacture evidence.

Follow the medical advice you receive and save only useful documentation that truthfully reflects what happened.

Why it matters

This can help create same-day documentation of:

- flare-ups
- worsening
- acute symptoms
- treatment advice
- continuity over time
- active functional problems

That can be useful both medically and evidentially.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-080 — VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat Entry Point**
- **Prompt Card B-081 — Starting a Health Chat**
- **Prompt Card B-082 — Choosing the Reason for Chat**
- **Prompt Card B-083 — Describing Active Symptoms**
- **Prompt Card B-084 — Nurse Chat Response**
- **Prompt Card B-085 — Chat Summary or Next Steps**
- **Prompt Card B-086 — Saving the Chat Record or Screenshot**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Turn these current symptoms into a short organized script I can use if I call nurse triage, VA Health Connect, or VA Health Chat today. Focus on symptom onset, severity, what makes it worse, functional impact, and what help I need.

Step 5 - Use the denial language to guide what needs to get documented

What to do

Look at the denial letter and ask:

- What element did VA say was missing?
- What kind of medical documentation would directly answer that?
- What symptoms or limitations need to start showing up more clearly in the chart?
- What did the VA understate or fail to understand?
- What should future appointments document more clearly?
- Examples:
 - if VA says no chronicity, build more continuity in treatment records
 - if VA says no severity, get more detailed functional-loss documentation
 - if VA says no nexus, gather records that show the pattern, aggravation, or medical bridge more clearly

- if VA underrates the issue, document frequency, severity, duration, flare-ups, and functional loss more clearly

Why it matters

The denial letter often tells you exactly what kind of chart evidence would be most useful next.

Do not just get angry at the denial.

Use it as a checklist.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Read this denial language and tell me what kinds of medical facts or chart documentation would most directly help answer it at future appointments, through secure messages, or through follow-up care.

Step 6 - Use the AI before the visit

What to do

Before the appointment, have the AI help build:

- a symptom summary
- a short timeline update
- a worsening summary
- a functional impact summary
- a work-impact summary
- a short note to bring or read from
- a secure message draft if needed
- a follow-up note draft if the visit misses something important

Why it matters

The veteran should not walk into the visit underprepared when the AI can help organize everything first.

This is especially important if the veteran gets stressed, forgets details, minimizes symptoms, or has a complicated timeline.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me prepare for my next medical appointment in plain English. Based on my condition, tell me the top symptoms, flare-ups, functional problems, worsening points, and work limitations I need to clearly communicate so they get documented in the chart.

Step 7 - Use the AI after the visit too

What to do

After the appointment, if something important was missed:

- send a secure message
- summarize what you reported
- politely clarify the symptoms, worsening, or limitations discussed
- ask that the record reflect the update if appropriate
- keep the message respectful and factual; do not accuse the provider or demand claim-support wording
- save the follow-up message or summary in the Starter Kit

Why it matters

Not every important fact makes it into the note the first time.

A clean follow-up can help fix that.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-068 — Follow-Up Secure Message Example**
- **Prompt Card B-069 — Sent Message Record**
- **Prompt Card B-070 — Save Message Screenshot or PDF**
- **Prompt Card B-071 — Store Secure Message Record in Starter Kit**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I just had a medical appointment. Help me write a short follow-up message confirming the symptoms, limitations, and worsening I reported so there is a clean record in the chart.

Step 8 - Make work impact and daily-life impact part of the visit when true

What to do

If true, explain how the condition affects:

- attendance
- concentration
- lifting
- standing
- walking
- sitting
- sleep
- driving
- reliability
- household chores
- family responsibilities
- social functioning
- ability to keep up with treatment

- ability to complete normal daily tasks

Why it matters

A lot of chart notes stay too generic because veterans talk only about symptoms and forget to explain what those symptoms actually do to their lives.

If the provider note says only "back pain" or "headaches," it may not capture the severity.

If the note says the condition affects sleep, standing, bending, walking, concentration, missed work, or household tasks, the record becomes more useful.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me explain my work limitations and daily-life impact in a short, factual way I can use during medical appointments so the chart reflects more than just the symptom name.

Step 9 - Do not minimize out of habit

What to do

If you know you underreport:

- admit that to yourself before the visit
- use a prep note
- use the AI to help pull out what you tend to leave out
- make sure the important limitations get said clearly
- describe bad days and flare-ups if they happen
- avoid "I'm fine" language when you are not fine

Why it matters

Military culture trained a lot of veterans to shut up and drive on.

That habit can quietly wreck the quality of the medical record if it carries over into the appointment.

The goal is not to exaggerate.

The goal is to stop underreporting real impairment.

If you are unsure whether something is medically important, describe the facts and let the provider decide what care or documentation is appropriate.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I tend to minimize symptoms in appointments because of military culture and pride. Help me prepare a clear truthful summary that does not exaggerate but also does not leave out what the condition really does to me.

Step 10 - Save useful medical-message records in the Starter Kit**What to do**

When a secure message, nurse-triage note, VA Health Chat transcript, or follow-up message contains useful documentation, save a copy in the right place.

Use:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/

● or:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

If it relates to a filed packet or pending claim, also save it near the filing materials.

Use a clear file name like:

2026-05-06_Back_Secure_Message_Worsening_Update.pdf
 2026-05-06_Migraine_VA_Health_Chat_Flareup.pdf
 2026-05-06_PTSD_Followup_Message_Sleep_Irritability.pdf

Why it matters

A useful message does not help much if it disappears into the portal and you forget about it.

Save the proof while you still remember why it matters.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Help me name and file this secure message or health chat record in my Starter Kit so I can find it later and use it for the right claim issue.

Warning

Treatment comes first. Do not delay emergency or urgent care because you are trying to create a cleaner record. If symptoms are dangerous, urgent, or crisis-level, seek the right level of care immediately. Do not treat medical visits as if treatment is the only thing that matters; the chart is evidence too. Also, do not use secure messaging, nurse triage, or health chat for emergencies. Use emergency care or urgent care when the situation requires it.

Caution

Do not pressure a provider to write claim language, give a rating opinion, or say something they do not believe. Report real symptoms, limitations, history, and treatment problems clearly, then let the medical record speak honestly. Do not use secure messaging, triage, or health chat to manufacture evidence. Use them when symptoms are real, active, and actually need documentation, care, clarification, or follow-up. Do not write long emotional rants. Keep messages short, factual, and medically useful.

Note

The goal is not to sound dramatic.

The goal is to make the chart accurate, detailed, and useful.

A good medical message says what is happening, how often, how bad, what it affects, and what help or follow-up is needed.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Pick one condition.
- Paste this prompt:
- Help me prepare for my next medical appointment for [condition]. Give me a short note covering symptoms, frequency, severity, flare-ups, functional loss, work impact, and what I want documented in the chart.
- Save it to your phone.

- Use it before the visit.
- Send a follow-up secure message after the visit if needed.
- Save any useful secure message or health chat record in the Starter Kit.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- going to the appointment unprepared
- forgetting flare-ups
- forgetting functional loss
- forgetting work impact
- minimizing symptoms out of pride
- writing long emotional secure messages instead of short factual ones
- not following up when the note misses something important
- ignoring how useful medical records are for claim development
- forgetting to save secure message records or health chat screenshots
- using secure messaging for emergencies instead of urgent/emergency care

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I prepared a short note before the appointment
- I know my top symptoms
- I know my flare-ups
- I know what has worsened
- I know what functional loss I need to explain
- I know what work impact I need to explain

- I know what I want documented in the chart
- I know how to use secure messaging afterward if needed
- I know when nurse triage, VA Health Connect, or VA Health Chat may help
- I saved useful message records in the Starter Kit
- I am not relying on memory alone

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about using medical appointments on purpose.

Every visit is not just a treatment event.

It is also a documentation opportunity.

The veteran should prepare before the visit, communicate clearly during it, and follow up afterward if important facts were missed.

Secure messages, nurse triage, VA Health Connect, and VA Health Chat can help document real symptoms and real follow-up needs when used properly.

The goal is not to manufacture evidence.

The goal is to make the medical record accurate.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 17 and learn the common mistakes that sink otherwise decent claims so you can catch them before they cost you time, evidence, or momentum.

Chapter 17 — Common Mistakes That Sink Claims

Mission

Teach the veteran how to spot the common mistakes that weaken otherwise decent claims so they can fix those mistakes before they cost time, evidence, momentum, or rating percentage.

Why This Matters

A lot of veterans do not lose because their condition is weak.

They lose because their claim presentation is weak.

That usually means the claim is:

- vague
- disorganized
- underdeveloped
- rushed
- filed in the wrong lane
- missing functional impact
- missing signed witness statements
- missing the exact thing VA said it needed
- or buried inside a pile of evidence with no clear roadmap

That is good news in one sense.

A lot of those mistakes are fixable.

This chapter is about catching the avoidable ways a claim gets weakened before they weaken yours.

This is an educational self-check, not legal advice. Do not use mistake-scanning as a reason to miss a filing, appeal, or evidence deadline.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- identify the most common claim-killing mistakes
- diagnose whether the claim is weak because of evidence, presentation, or lane choice
- ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to find weak points before filing

- fix weak statements before they are submitted
- avoid filing unsigned or improperly handled witness statements
- stop repeating the same bad cycle
- tighten the claim before VA punishes the weakness
- save the mistake scan and fix plan in the Starter Kit

Execution

Step 1 - Do not file before you understand the evidence gap

What to do

Before filing, know:

- what you are claiming
- what lane you are using
- what theory fits
- what evidence already helps
- what is still weak
- what the missing element is
- what kind of statement, record, DBQ, opinion, or witness evidence would strengthen it most

Do not just file because you are finally angry enough to move.

Also do not wait forever trying to make a perfect packet if a deadline or effective-date issue is at risk. Readiness matters, but deadlines still matter.

Why it matters

Anger is understandable.

It is not a claim strategy.

A claim filed without understanding the gap is much more likely to get denied, underrated, or delayed.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review my planned claim strategy and tell me what evidence gap I may still be missing. Tell me what part of the claim is weakest and what statement, record, DBQ, opinion, or witness evidence would strengthen it most before filing. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Do not dump bloated, disorganized records on VA**What to do**

Do not send:

- giant mixed packets
- unlabeled evidence
- random downloads
- duplicated records
- weak pages buried in strong pages with no explanation
- records that do not connect to the issue being filed
- A better packet is:
- issue-specific
- clearly named
- clearly organized
- tied to the theory of the claim
- easy for a stranger to follow

Why it matters

A bloated packet makes it easier for VA to miss the signal.

It also makes it easier for the veteran to think they "submitted a lot" without actually submitting a strong case.

Volume is not the same thing as clarity.

Do not hide your strongest evidence inside a giant upload. Organize it so the key records, statements, and issue theory are easy to identify.

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- **Prompt Card B-130 — Example Filing Packet Ready to Submit**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this evidence packet like a skeptical VA reviewer. Tell me whether it is too bloated, too vague, too disorganized, or too easy to misunderstand. Then tell me how to tighten it up. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Kill vague statements before they weaken the claim

What to do

Watch for weak language like:

- "It hurts a lot."
- "It bothers me sometimes."
- "It affects me in many ways."
- "I deal with it."
- "It has gotten worse."
- "I just push through it."
- Replace that with:
- frequency
- severity
- duration
- triggers
- flare-ups

- failed treatment
- functional loss
- work impact
- daily-life impact

Why it matters

Vague statements are easy to ignore.

Specific truthful statements are much harder to brush aside.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Look at my statement and identify any language that is too vague, too weak, too minimized, too emotional, or too unclear. Rewrite it in stronger, more specific, more useful language without exaggerating anything or inventing facts.

Step 4 - Do not leave out work impact and daily-life impact

What to do

Make sure the claim explains:

- what work tasks are affected
- what physical activities are limited
- what mental tasks are harder
- what daily living tasks are now difficult
- what sleep, mobility, concentration, reliability, or interaction problems exist
- what the condition does on bad days
- what the condition stops the veteran from doing

Why it matters

A lot of veterans describe the symptom but forget to describe what the symptom actually does.

That is one of the fastest ways to get underrated.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on my records and notes, tell me what work impact, daily-life impact, or functional loss I may still be failing to explain clearly in this claim. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Do not forget flare-ups**What to do**

If flare-ups happen, explain:

- what triggers them
- how often they happen
- how long they last
- how much worse things get
- what they stop you from doing
- whether repeated use makes the condition worse
- how bad days differ from average days

Why it matters

A veteran who describes only baseline symptoms may look much less impaired than they really are.

Flare-ups can be critical.

Do not leave them vague.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Tell me whether my current statement or packet explains flare-ups clearly enough. If not, ask me the follow-up questions needed to fix that. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Do not assume a diagnosis alone is enough**What to do**

Do not stop at:

- "I have the diagnosis."

- Make sure the file also shows:
- what the diagnosis does
- how severe it is
- how often symptoms happen
- what treatment failed
- how it limits function
- how it affects work and daily life
- whether it connects to service, a primary condition, or rating severity

Why it matters

A diagnosis may establish that a condition exists.

It does not automatically prove:

- service connection
- the correct rating
- severity
- functional loss
- nexus
- aggravation
- or the best claim path

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this issue and tell me whether I am relying too heavily on just having the diagnosis without clearly showing service connection, severity, functional loss, or work impact. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Do not use the wrong form or the wrong lane

What to do

Make sure you are not:

- using the wrong statement form
- using Higher-Level Review when you actually need new evidence
- using Supplemental Claim when VA ignored evidence already in the file
- filing a weak secondary claim that should be an increase
- filing an increase when a true secondary issue may exist
- filing a statement with no clear purpose
- picking a lane before diagnosing the real problem

Why it matters

A lot of decent evidence gets wasted when it is put into the wrong procedural lane.

The right evidence in the wrong lane can still create months of delay.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review my current claim strategy and tell me whether I may be using the wrong form, the wrong lane, or the wrong theory. Explain what should change and why. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Do not use unsigned or improperly handled witness statements

What to do

- If a buddy, spouse, coworker, supervisor, roommate, fellow service member, or family member gives a witness statement, make sure:
 - the statement is based on what the witness personally knows, saw, heard, or observed
 - the witness reviews the final wording
 - the witness personally signs it
 - the veteran does not sign for the witness
 - the witness personally reviews the final version before signing

- the signed output is saved in the Starter Kit
- the signed version is the one used in the filing packet

If using BuddySign, save the signed output here:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

- and if issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Why it matters

A good buddy statement can lose value if the signature workflow is sloppy.

The witness must personally review and sign only what is true.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this buddy or witness statement before I send it for signature. Tell me whether it stays within firsthand observation, whether anything sounds unsupported, and whether it is ready to send through BuddySign for the witness to personally review and sign. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Do not miss deadlines or lose your paper trail

What to do

Save:

- decision letters
- filing confirmations
- upload receipts
- important dates
- appeal windows
- updated packet versions
- signed BuddySign outputs

- final submitted packets
- Claim Session Summaries

Use a running timeline and submission log.

Save submitted proof here:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

- and issue-specific proof here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

Why it matters

A good argument filed too late is still a problem. Verify current deadlines, forms, and review-lane rules using official VA sources or an accredited representative when timing matters. AI can help organize the issue, but it should not be your only deadline authority.

A strong packet that you cannot prove you submitted creates avoidable risk.

Do not rely on memory.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me build a simple deadline and paper-trail checklist for this claim so I do not lose track of submission dates, decision dates, deadlines, final packet versions, BuddySign outputs, and receipts.

Step 10 - Do not ignore favorable findings

What to do

Look for anything VA already conceded:

- diagnosis
- service event
- exposure
- primary condition
- part of the timeline

- severity points
- favorable finding language
- any helpful statement in the decision

Reuse those facts going forward.

Why it matters

Veterans often focus only on the "no" and forget the useful "yes" buried in the same letter.

Favorable findings can help shape the next strategy.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me what favorable findings I already have in this decision or claim history and how I should keep using them in later statements, packets, or appeals. Do not invent facts.

Step 11 - Do not rely only on memory when records already exist

What to do

If records already exist, use them.

That includes:

- treatment notes
- imaging
- secure messages
- triage notes
- VA Health Chat records
- service records
- private records
- decision letters
- C&P exam materials
- DBQs

- lay and buddy statements
- BuddySign outputs

Why it matters

The veteran's memory matters.

But memory is stronger when backed by actual documents.

The AI can help match memory to records, but it should not invent facts where records are missing.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my records and rough notes, tell me where I am relying too heavily on memory when stronger support may already exist in the documents. Do not invent facts.

Step 12 - Do not let shame, pride, or fatigue cause underreporting

What to do

Be honest about whether you are leaving things out because:

- you do not want to sound weak
- you are used to minimizing
- you are tired and just want the process over with
- you are embarrassed by symptoms
- you assume "everybody deals with that"
- you do not want to complain

Why it matters

A lot of veterans do not exaggerate.

They underreport.

That can quietly cripple a claim.

The goal is not to dramatize.

The goal is to stop leaving out real impairment.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on my records and rough notes, tell me what symptoms, flare-ups, functional problems, or work impacts I may be underreporting because of pride, fatigue, or military conditioning. Do not invent facts, but tell me what I may be failing to explain clearly.

Step 13 - Save a Claim Mistake Scan in the Starter Kit**What to do**

Before filing or responding to a decision, ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to create a Claim Mistake Scan.

Save it here:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/
```

- Save a session copy here:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Why it matters

A mistake scan is a final sanity check.

It keeps the veteran from repeating avoidable errors and creates a saved fix plan.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Create a Claim Mistake Scan for my Starter Kit. Include the issue, current claim lane, strongest evidence, weakest evidence, top mistakes or risks, what to fix before filing, what can wait, and the top 3 next moves. Do not invent facts.

Warning

Do not miss a deadline while trying to perfect the claim. Fix obvious weaknesses, but protect appeal windows, filing windows, and proof of submission. A claim usually does not get weakened by one dramatic mistake. It gets weakened by a pile of smaller mistakes that were never corrected.

Caution

Do not let AI confidence become false certainty. If a deadline, effective date, complex appeal issue, or legal question could materially affect the outcome, verify against VA.gov, the decision letter, or qualified accredited help. Do not assume that "I submitted a lot of evidence" means "I submitted a strong claim." Volume is not the same thing as clarity.

Note

A lot of these mistakes are fixable before filing if the veteran asks the AI to look for weak points on purpose.

Use ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy as a mistake scanner before you submit.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Upload the statement, packet, or claim plan.
- Paste this prompt:
- Based on my records, statements, and claim plan, tell me the top 3 mistakes I am making right now that could hurt my claim. Then tell me how to fix each one in the simplest way possible. Do not invent facts.
- Fix one mistake at a time.
- Save the mistake scan in the Starter Kit.
- Do not try to repair everything in one sitting.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- filing before understanding the evidence gap
- sending bloated or disorganized records
- using vague statements

- leaving out work impact
- leaving out daily-life impact
- forgetting flare-ups
- relying only on diagnosis
- choosing the wrong form
- choosing the wrong lane
- using unsigned witness statements
- not saving BuddySign outputs
- missing deadlines
- losing the paper trail
- ignoring favorable findings
- underreporting because of pride or fatigue
- failing to save a Claim Session Summary or mistake scan

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know the evidence gap
- My packet is clean and organized
- My statements are specific
- My work impact is clear
- My daily-life impact is clear
- My flare-ups are explained
- I am not relying only on the diagnosis
- I am using the right form

- I am using the right lane
- My witness statements are properly signed
- I saved BuddySign outputs if used
- I preserved favorable findings
- I am not underreporting out of habit
- I saved the mistake scan in the Starter Kit

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about killing avoidable mistakes before they weaken the claim.

A lot of claims do not fail because the veteran is wrong.

They fail because:

- the evidence is weakly presented
- the function is underexplained
- the lane is wrong
- the witness statement is unsigned or poorly handled
- the packet is bloated
- or the claim was rushed without fixing obvious gaps
- The fix is simple:

slow down, scan for mistakes, fix the top problems, and save the plan.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 18 and put the whole system together into one practical A-to-Z workflow that shows the veteran exactly how all the moving parts fit together from record gathering to post-decision follow-up.

Chapter 18 — My Recommended Workflow From A to Z

Mission

Give the veteran one practical, repeatable, start-to-finish workflow that ties the entire handbook together so they can stop wondering what order to do things in.

Why This Matters

By this point, the veteran has seen all the moving parts:

- records
- statements
- buddy letters
- BuddySign
- forms
- medical evidence
- C&P prep
- decision analysis
- review lanes
- AI prompts
- filing packets
- Starter Kit folders
- Claim Session Summaries

That is useful, but it can also feel like a lot.

This chapter solves that problem by putting the whole system into one practical workflow.

Not every veteran will use every step in exactly the same way.

But this is the order I would want a tired veteran to follow if the goal is to:

- get organized
- stop guessing

- use AI intelligently
- let AI do as much of the heavy lifting as possible
- preserve the work in the Starter Kit
- and move one issue at a time

AI can help organize the workflow, but the veteran still has to review outputs for truth, protect deadlines, and verify current VA forms and filing paths through official VA sources or accredited help when timing matters.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should understand:

- the full A-to-Z flow of the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder
- what happens first
- what happens next
- how records become timelines
- how timelines become statements
- how statements become packets
- how BuddySign fits when witness statements are needed
- how packets become claims
- how decisions become follow-up actions
- how Claim Session Summaries preserve the work between sessions

Execution

Phase 1 - Build the Record

Step 1 - Request the C-file if needed

What to do

If the case involves:

- prior denials

- old decisions
- prior C&P exams
- long claim history
- confusing history
- repeated VA errors
- rating-code questions
- Board or HLR strategy
- possible overlooked evidence

then request the C-file if you do not already have it.

Why it matters

The C-file can show:

- prior claims
- prior decisions
- favorable findings
- bad exams
- old reasoning
- what VA already reviewed
- what VA ignored
- prior evidence lists
- rating history
- effective-date clues

Not every simple claim needs the C-file before moving. But complicated histories often do.

Save it here

02 MASTER RECORDS/C-FILE/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me whether this claim history is the kind of case where getting my C-file matters right now. Explain what the C-file may help me find and whether it is likely worth the effort for my situation. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Download Blue Button / VA medical records

Privacy reminder: before uploading records into any AI tool, understand what you are sharing. Redact or crop full SSNs, bank information, full claim numbers, and other unnecessary sensitive information when practical.

What to do

Pull VA medical records early.

These often give the best current trail for:

- symptoms
- diagnosis
- worsening
- treatment
- medication history
- provider notes
- mental health notes
- secure messages
- nurse triage notes
- functional complaints

Why it matters

VA records are often the first major evidence bucket ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy can mine for roadmap-building.

Save it here

02 MASTER RECORDS/BLUE BUTTON/

- If issue-specific, also save a copy here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:

- **Prompt Card B-002 — VA Health Tools / My HealtheVet Access**

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I downloaded my VA medical records. Review them and tell me what conditions, symptoms, worsening patterns, treatment history, and functional impacts stand out for claim purposes. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Gather private records

What to do

If you have outside treatment, gather it.

Examples:

- civilian primary care
- specialist records
- imaging
- urgent care
- surgery
- physical therapy
- counseling
- orthopedics
- sleep studies
- outside DBQs or opinions

Why it matters

A lot of strong evidence lives outside the VA system.

Private records may show diagnosis, severity, functional loss, imaging, specialist impressions, treatment failures, or continuity VA records do not fully capture.

Save it here

02 MASTER RECORDS/PRIVATE MEDICAL/

- If issue-specific, also save a copy here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I have private medical records for some of my issues. Help me figure out which ones matter most, which issue each one supports, and what I should upload first. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Gather service records and witness sources**What to do**

If available, gather:

- service treatment records
- service personnel records
- deployment records
- duty records
- performance reports
- MOS / AFSC / rating evidence
- witness names
- former supervisors
- fellow service members
- spouses, friends, coworkers, roommates, or caregivers who observed key symptoms or events

Why it matters

Service records and witness sources often help build the bridge between then and now.

This is especially important when service treatment records are missing, thin, or incomplete.

Save service records here

02 MASTER RECORDS/SERVICE TREATMENT RECORDS/
02 MASTER RECORDS/SERVICE PERSONNEL RECORDS/

- Save witness planning materials here:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/Witness_Contact_Worksheets/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this issue, tell me what kind of service records and what kind of witnesses would most help strengthen the claim. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Build issue folders

What to do

Set up issue folders so the evidence is not one giant swamp.

Examples:

- BACK
- NECK
- PTSD
- HEADACHES
- OSA
- GERD
- FEET
- SHOULDERS
- SINUS / RHINITIS

- TDIU

Why it matters

The AI works better when records are organized by issue.

The veteran works better when the folder tells them where each file goes.

Save issue work here

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/
```

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder](#)
- [Prompt Card B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Help me organize my records by issue so each major claim has its own evidence folder, statement folder, BuddySign output location if needed, Claim Session Summary folder, and filing packet folder.

Phase 2 - Build the Evidence Story

Step 6 - Extract relevant records by issue

What to do

Do not work forever from one giant mixed file.

Break the evidence down by:

- issue
- source
- date range
- purpose

Then feed it to ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy in chunks.

Why it matters

The AI can then identify:

- favorable evidence
- timeline points
- continuity
- nexus clues
- severity
- functional loss
- evidence gaps
- what belongs in the final packet

Prompt Card Reference

- For chunking large PDFs, see:
- [Prompt Card B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog](#)
- [Prompt Card B-111 — Page Range Selected](#)
- [Prompt Card B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk](#)
- [Prompt Card B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files](#)

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am uploading issue-specific records in chunks. For each chunk, tell me what evidence supports diagnosis, continuity, nexus clues, severity, functional loss, work impact, and what gaps still remain. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Build an issue timeline**What to do**

For each issue, build a rough timeline covering:

- when it started

- what happened in service
- when treatment began
- how it worsened
- current symptoms
- flare-ups
- current limitations
- key records that support the timeline

Why it matters

A clean timeline becomes the backbone of:

- lay statements
- buddy statements
- provider summaries
- C&P prep
- denial-response strategy
- review-lane decisions

Save it here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Build a clean timeline for this issue. Include onset, in-service events if any, treatment history, worsening over time, current symptoms, flare-ups, functional impact, and key records that support the timeline. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Draft the lay statement

What to do

Let the AI interview the veteran first.

Then build the lay statement from:

- onset
- symptoms
- progression
- flare-ups
- treatment
- work impact
- daily-life impact
- current severity

Why it matters

The lay statement turns scattered facts into a clean human story.

The veteran does not need to start with a polished draft.

The veteran needs to tell the truth and let the AI organize it.

Save it here

- Drafts and final lay statements:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/04 LAY STATEMENTS/

- Filing-ready copy:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/09 FILING PACKET/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Do not draft my statement yet. First interview me in simple questions to pull out the full story. Then turn my answers into the strongest truthful lay statement you can. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Draft buddy letters and route them through BuddySign

What to do

For each useful witness:

Collect rough notes.

Let AI organize the facts.

Draft the statement based only on what the witness personally saw, heard, knew, or observed.

Review the draft for truth.

Copy the final draft into BuddySign.

Enter the witness name, phone, email, and relationship.

Send the signing invite to the buddy.

The witness personally reviews and signs.

After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.

Save it in the Starter Kit.

Why it matters

Buddy evidence can support:

- service events
- continuity
- symptom patterns
- home observations
- workplace limitations
- behavior changes
- functional loss
- BuddySign solves the last-mile signing problem.

BuddySign is a workflow tool, not a VA-approved service, not legal representation, and not a guarantee that VA will accept or weigh the statement a certain way.

The veteran may organize the statement, but the witness must personally review and sign only if true.

Save drafts here

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/Drafts/

Save signed BuddySign outputs here

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

- If issue-specific, also save here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Prompt Card Reference

- For BuddySign workflow visuals, see:
- Prompt Card B-200 through Prompt Card B-206

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am going to give you rough notes for a witness. Turn them into a clean buddy statement draft based only on firsthand observations the witness could honestly know. Then give me a final BuddySign-ready version and a checklist for sending it for witness review and signature. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Obtain nexus or DBQ evidence if appropriate**What to do**

Not every issue needs this immediately.

But for some issues, a nexus letter or DBQ can be a major force multiplier.

Use the AI to help decide:

- whether it is worth pursuing
- what facts should be summarized for the provider
- what records matter most to that provider
- what question the provider needs to answer
- whether the issue is diagnosis, nexus, severity, or aggravation

Why it matters

Some claims can move without a medical opinion.

Others become much stronger with one.

Do not chase nexus letters blindly. Use them where they actually address a real gap.

[Save provider-support summaries here](#)

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/06 NEXUS DBQ OPINIONS/

[Copy/paste prompt](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me whether this issue looks like one where a nexus letter or DBQ would materially strengthen the claim. If yes, summarize the key facts, records, and medical question I should give the provider. Do not invent facts.

Step 11 - Audit for evidence gaps

What to do

Before filing, stop and ask:

- what is strong
- what is weak
- what is missing
- what claim path makes sense
- what statement still needs to be built
- whether a witness statement would help
- whether BuddySign output is needed
- whether the issue belongs in easy, medium, or difficult priority

Why it matters

Do not file blind.

A pre-filing audit can save months.

[Save the audit here](#)

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Audit this issue before filing. Tell me what is strong, what is weak, what is missing, what claim path fits best, whether any BuddySign witness output would help, and whether this belongs in easy, medium, or difficult priority. Do not invent facts.

Phase 3 - File Cleanly**Step 12 - Submit an Intent to File if needed****What to do**

If you need time to build the claim but want to protect the date, decide whether an Intent to File makes sense.

Verify current Intent to File rules, forms, and timing on VA.gov or with accredited help before relying on it for an effective-date strategy.

Why it matters

An Intent to File can help preserve a potential effective date while the evidence build continues.

Do not use it as an excuse to stall forever.

Save proof here

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on where I am in this claim, tell me whether filing an Intent to File now would be smart and why. Do not invent facts.

Step 13 - Choose the correct claim or review lane**What to do**

Decide whether the issue fits:

- direct service connection
- secondary service connection
- increased rating

- Supplemental Claim
- Higher-Level Review
- Board support

Why it matters

The best packet in the wrong lane is still a problem.

If a deadline is close or the procedural posture is confusing, verify the lane against the decision letter, VA.gov instructions, or accredited help before submitting.

Lane choice should match the actual issue, evidence gap, and procedural posture.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this issue and evidence, tell me which lane fits best and why: direct, secondary, increase, Supplemental, HLR, or Board. Do not invent facts.

Step 14 - Complete the correct form

What to do

Use the AI to help decide:

- what form fits
- what statement belongs on it
- what evidence goes with it
- whether the statement is veteran explanation, lay statement, or witness statement

Why it matters

The right form and the right statement make the filing cleaner and easier to follow.

A veteran clarification statement is not the same thing as a witness statement.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Tell me what form fits this issue and draft the supporting language in a format that matches the form. Explain whether this is a veteran statement, lay statement, witness statement, Supplemental Claim evidence statement, HLR argument, or Board support summary. Do not invent facts.

Step 15 - Upload organized evidence packets

What to do

For each issue, upload:

- clean veteran statement
- strongest supporting records
- BuddySign signed witness output if helpful
- nexus or DBQ if available
- short cover sheet if needed
- issue-specific evidence only

Do not upload chaos.

Why it matters

A clean packet is easier for VA to follow and harder to brush aside.

The packet should explain itself.

Save pre-submission packet here

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this issue packet before I file it. Tell me whether it is clean, strong, and organized enough for VA to follow. Tell me whether anything is bloated, missing, unsigned, mislabeled, or unsupported. Do not invent facts.

Step 16 - Save upload receipts and copies

What to do

Save:

- final versions
- uploaded PDFs

- confirmations
- date stamps
- BuddySign signed outputs used
- decision letters later on

Why it matters

Do not trust memory.

Save the proof.

The veteran should be able to prove exactly what was submitted and when.

Save submitted proof here

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

- If issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Give me a before-and-after filing checklist so I always save the final packet, the uploaded copy, BuddySign signed outputs if used, and the submission receipt in the right place.

Phase 4 - Defend the Claim

Step 17 - Prepare for the C&P exam

What to do

Use AI to prepare:

- issue-specific cheat sheet
- likely examiner questions
- flare-up summary
- work impact summary

- functional loss summary
- weak-point preparation

Why it matters

Do not walk into the exam cold.

The veteran should be truthful, prepared, and specific.

Save prep here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/08 C&P EXAMS/

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-140 — Example Phone-Sized C&P Cheat Sheet](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on this issue, build me a phone-sized C&P cheat sheet and the likely questions I need to be ready for. Keep it truthful and specific. Do not invent facts.

Step 18 - Monitor claim status

What to do

Watch for:

- exam scheduling
- requests for evidence
- status changes
- letters
- updates
- deadlines
- decision notices

Take screenshots if anything is confusing.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans lose momentum because they stop watching the file or do not understand what changed.

Screenshots help the veteran get unstuck quickly.

Prompt Card Reference

- For screenshot help, see:
- [Prompt Card B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool](#)
- [Prompt Card B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT](#)
- [Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example](#)

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am uploading a screenshot of my claim status. Tell me what I am looking at, what it means, and whether I need to do anything right now. Do not invent facts.

Step 19 - Read the decision letter carefully**What to do**

When the decision comes back, do not just react emotionally.

Use AI to identify:

- what was granted
- what was denied
- what was deferred or remanded, if applicable
- favorable findings
- weak reasoning
- evidence VA listed
- reasons for decision
- next-lane options
- strongest follow-up response

Why it matters

The decision letter is not just a result.

It is a roadmap.

Save decision letters here

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

If issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review this decision letter and tell me what was granted, what was denied, what favorable findings I should preserve, what VA said was missing, and what the smartest next move is. Do not invent facts.

Step 20 - Choose the next review lane if needed**What to do**

If something was denied, underrated, wrongly dated, deferred, or unresolved, decide whether the next move is:

- new evidence
- better statement language
- stronger nexus
- Higher-Level Review
- Supplemental Claim
- Board Appeal
- waiting for VA to finish a deferred issue

Why it matters

The next move should match the actual problem, not the mood.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on this decision and evidence, tell me whether my next move should be Supplemental, HLR, Board, or something else. Explain why simply and tell me what to build next. Do not invent facts.

Step 21 - Save a Claim Session Summary at every major handoff**What to do**

Ask for a Claim Session Summary after:

- roadmap building
- major record review
- lay statement drafting
- buddy statement drafting
- BuddySign signing workflow completion
- packet review
- filing
- C&P exam prep
- post-C&P exam debrief
- decision review
- review-lane planning

Why it matters

This keeps the work portable.

The veteran may return later, switch chats, use a Project, or re-upload the summary into VA Claim Battle Buddy.

The Claim Session Summary prevents starting from zero.

Save summaries here

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

If issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the issue, what we reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, files created, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit.

The AI-First Short Version

If the veteran wants the shortest version of the whole workflow, it is this:

Gather records.

Split large files into manageable chunks.

Save everything in the Starter Kit.

Upload records into the right issue thread or Project.

Let AI ask questions.

Let AI build the roadmap.

Let AI rank the targets.

Let AI draft the veteran statement.

Let AI draft buddy statements if needed.

Use BuddySign for witness review and signature.

Review everything for truth.

File the clean packet.

Prepare for the C&P exam.

Save receipts and summaries.

Use AI again when the decision comes back.

At every major step, review the AI output against the actual records before filing, signing, submitting, or relying on it.

That is the whole machine.

Warning

Do not let the A-to-Z workflow become a reason to miss a deadline. Work cleanly, but protect filing dates, appeal windows, and submission proof.

Do not treat the claim like one giant panic event.

That mindset usually leads to messy packets, rushed statements, weak lane choices, and avoidable mistakes.

Caution

Do not try to do every phase for every issue at once.

Work one issue or one cluster at a time.

Note

You do not need to master the entire VA system before you start.

You need a process.

This chapter is that process.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Gather one issue's records.
- Upload one chunk.
- Paste this prompt:
- Based on my issue, records, and current status, build me my personal A-to-Z VA claims workflow. Break it into phases: record gathering, evidence building, filing, C&P prep, and post-decision follow-up. Keep it simple and practical. Do not invent facts.
- Do only the next phase it gives you.
- Save a Claim Session Summary.

- Ignore the rest for now.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- trying to do everything at once
- skipping from records straight to filing with no audit
- not building issue timelines
- not using AI to identify gaps
- not routing witness statements through a clean signing workflow
- not saving BuddySign outputs
- not saving final packets and receipts
- not saving Claim Session Summaries
- not preparing for the C&P exam
- reacting emotionally to the decision without analysis
- choosing the next lane before identifying the actual problem

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I gathered the records
- I split large files into chunks
- I saved records in the Starter Kit
- I uploaded them into the right issue thread or Project
- I let the AI build the roadmap
- I built the issue timeline
- I built the lay statement

- I built buddy evidence if needed
- I used BuddySign if witness signature was needed
- I audited the evidence gaps
- I filed the packet cleanly
- I saved the receipt
- I prepared for the C&P exam
- I saved a Claim Session Summary
- I analyzed the decision
- I chose the next move on purpose

Chapter Recap

This chapter ties the entire system together.

The veteran does not need to solve the whole VA system in their head.

The veteran needs a repeatable workflow:

- build the record
- build the evidence story
- file cleanly
- defend the claim
- read the decision
- choose the next move
- save the work as they go

That is the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 19 and use the ready-to-use prompt library to make this whole system faster, easier, and more repeatable without forcing the veteran to invent prompts from scratch.

Chapter 19 — Ready-to-Use AI Prompt Library

Mission

Give the veteran a ready-to-use AI prompt system so they do not have to figure out how to "talk to AI" from scratch every time they need help with a claim.

Why This Matters

Most veterans do not know how to get the most out of ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.

They:

- ask vague questions
- paste random notes with no task
- upload records without saying what they want done
- forget to tell the AI the issue, lane, or goal
- forget to include anti-invention instructions
- expect the AI to guess the exact job
- or create one giant chat with no structure

That creates weak output.

This chapter fixes that by handing the veteran the words.

The point of the prompt library is simple:

Do not make the veteran invent prompts from scratch.

AI output still has to be checked against the records before it is filed, signed, sent, or relied on.

Give them the prompt, let them paste it, and make the AI do the work.

For the full copy/paste prompt library, see Appendix C - Prompt Farm.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should know how to:

- choose the right prompt for the job
- use anti-invention guardrails
- feed large amounts of claim data into AI
- use Project Chat / Claim Session Summary prompts for continuity

- get better lay statements and buddy statements faster
- route finished buddy/witness statements into BuddySign
- analyze denials more intelligently
- build roadmaps, evidence plans, and top-3 next moves
- use AI with less typing and less confusion

Execution

Step 1 - Start with the anti-invention instruction

What to do

For most claim-work prompts, start with a truth guardrail like this:

Do not invent facts, dates, symptoms, diagnoses, witnesses, treatment, or events. Use only what I provide or what is directly stated in the records. If anything is missing, ask me what is missing or mark it as a gap.

Why it matters

That one instruction prevents a lot of accidental garbage from getting into statements, summaries, or claim strategies.

AI is useful.

AI is also dangerous if the veteran lets it fill blanks with guesses.

AI is not a VA representative, accredited claim agent, attorney, medical provider, or guarantee of any claim outcome.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Do not invent facts, dates, symptoms, diagnoses, witnesses, treatment, or events. Use only what I provide or what is directly stated in the records. If anything is missing, ask me what is missing or mark it as a gap.

Step 2 - Use the master prompts first

What to do

When in doubt, start with one of the master prompts instead of trying to get fancy.

Use master prompts when:

- you are starting the whole system
- you are starting one issue
- you are overwhelmed
- you need the AI to coach you through intake
- you do not know what to ask next

For the complete versions, see Appendix C - Prompt Farm.

Master prompt categories

- Use these first:
- Prompt C-1 - Master Orientation Prompt
- Prompt C-2 - Master Issue-Analysis Prompt
- Prompt C-3 - Master Low-Energy Prompt
- Prompt C-4 - Master Coaching Prompt

Why it matters

Most veterans do not need a highly customized prompt to get started.

They need a good default tool.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want to use the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder in the most automated way possible. Assume I am a tired disabled veteran and do not want long reading assignments or complicated task lists. I want simple steps, exact prompts, and the minimum amount of manual work. For every stage of this process, tell me what to upload, what you need from me, what form or statement I may need, and give me copy/paste language whenever possible. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Use Project Chat and Claim Session Summary prompts for continuity

What to do

Use Project Chat prompts when working a major claim area over time.

Use Claim Session Summary prompts after any serious work session.

This includes sessions involving:

- record review
- issue roadmap
- lay statement drafting
- buddy statement drafting
- BuddySign workflow
- filing packet review
- C&P prep
- post-C&P exam debrief
- decision analysis
- review-lane planning

Why it matters

Long claim work can become scattered.

The veteran may change chats, use a ChatGPT Project, upload more records later, or return after several days.

A Claim Session Summary keeps the work portable.

Save summaries here

```
00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

If issue-specific, also save here:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/
```

Prompt categories

- Use:
- Prompt C-5 - Evidence Builder Project Setup Prompt
- Prompt C-6 - Claim Session Summary Prompt
- Prompt C-7 - Continue From Claim Session Summary Prompt

- Prompt C-8 - Project Chat Prompt Builder

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Step 4 - Use intake prompts when the file is big or messy

Privacy reminder: before uploading records into any AI tool, understand what you are sharing. Redact or crop full SSNs, bank information, full claim numbers, and other unnecessary sensitive information when practical.

What to do

If the veteran has lots of rough notes, transcripts, uploads, or mixed documents, start with an intake prompt that tells the AI how to handle the pile.

Use intake prompts when:

- records are mixed together
- the veteran is pasting rough notes
- the veteran is using voice transcription
- the veteran does not know what matters yet
- the file needs sorting before strategy

Why it matters

A lot of veterans do not have the energy to do neat, polished intake work.

These prompts let them start messy and still get useful output.

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:
- Prompt C-9 - Records-to-Roadmap Prompt
- Prompt C-10 - Records Chunk Analysis Prompt

- Prompt C-11 - Blue Button Miner Prompt
- Prompt C-12 - Claims File Analyzer Prompt
- Prompt C-13 - Handwritten Record Prompt
- Prompt C-14 - Re-Analysis Prompt for Long Threads

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading one chunk of records for [condition]. This chunk is part of a larger claim file. It contains [type of records] from about [time period]. Analyze it for diagnosis evidence, timeline points, continuity, nexus clues, severity, functional loss, and work impact. Then tell me what this chunk proves, what it does not prove yet, and what upload I should give you next. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Use roadmap prompts to make the AI think like a strategist

What to do

Once records are uploaded, use prompts that force the AI to stop summarizing and start planning.

Ask for:

- claim lane
- evidence strengths
- evidence gaps
- easy / medium / difficult priority
- best next document
- top 3 next moves

Why it matters

The veteran needs more than summaries.

The veteran needs direction.

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:

- Prompt C-15 - Claim Lane Classifier Prompt
- Prompt C-16 - Claim Readiness Prompt
- Prompt C-17 - Pre-Filing Audit Prompt
- Prompt C-18 - Evidence Gap Prompt
- Prompt C-19 - Target Priority Hit List Prompt
- Prompt C-20 - Top-3 Next Moves Prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on everything I have uploaded so far, build me a first-pass VA claims roadmap. For each issue you identify, tell me the likely claim path, the evidence that already helps, the missing evidence, the next statement or document I need, and whether the issue belongs in easy, medium, or difficult priority. Keep it simple and practical. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Use the right prompt for the right document-building task

What to do

Use prompts that match the exact document you are trying to build.

Do not use one generic prompt for everything.

A lay statement prompt should not do the same job as a buddy statement prompt.

A buddy statement prompt should not do the same job as a denial-analysis prompt.

Why it matters

Different outputs need different prompting.

The more specific the task, the better the output.

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:
- Prompt C-21 - Lay Statement Interview Prompt
- Prompt C-22 - Lay Statement Generator Prompt
- Prompt C-23 - Buddy Statement Interview Prompt
- Prompt C-24 - Buddy Letter Generator Prompt

- Prompt C-25 - Buddy Statement Quality Check Prompt
- Prompt C-26 - BuddySign Next-Step Prompt

BuddySign reminder

- When the final buddy/witness statement is ready:

Remember that BuddySign is a workflow tool, not a VA-approved service, not legal representation, and not a guarantee that VA will accept or weigh a statement a certain way.

- review it for truth
- remove unsupported content
- paste the final version into BuddySign
- send the signing link
- have the witness personally review and sign
- download the signed BuddySign output
- save it in the Starter Kit

Save BuddySign outputs here:

```
07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/
```

- If issue-specific, also save here:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
```

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I have a buddy statement draft ready. Review it for truth, clarity, and firsthand observation only. Then give me a final clean version I can copy into BuddySign.com so my witness can personally review and sign it. Also give me a short checklist for using BuddySign and saving the signed output in my Starter Kit.

Step 7 - Use medical appointment and C&P prompts when the case is moving

What to do

Once the issue is under active development, use prompts for:

- appointment prep
- secure messages
- nurse triage / VA Health Chat
- C&P exam prep
- post-C&P exam debrief
- medical chart documentation

Why it matters

The prompt library should not stop at filing.

It should help through the whole claim cycle.

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:
- Prompt C-27 - Medical Appointment Prep Prompt
- Prompt C-28 - Secure Message Drafting Prompt
- Prompt C-29 - Follow-Up Message After Appointment Prompt
- Prompt C-30 - Nurse Triage / VA Health Chat Prep Prompt
- Prompt C-31 - C&P Prep Sheet Prompt
- Prompt C-32 - Likely Examiner Questions Prompt
- Prompt C-33 - C&P Weak-Point Prep Prompt
- Prompt C-34 - Post-C&P Exam Debrief Prompt

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on my records, create a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for [condition]. Include onset, symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional loss, work impact, daily-life impact, treatment tried, and the main facts I should clearly communicate. Keep it concise and truthful. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Use decision and review-lane prompts after VA acts

Always check appeal windows, filing deadlines, and current VA form instructions through official VA sources or accredited help when timing matters.

What to do

When a decision arrives, use prompts for:

- decision analysis
- favorable findings
- denial reasons
- Supplemental Claim planning
- HLR conference prep
- Board issue summary
- review-lane comparison

Why it matters

The decision letter is not just a result.

It is the roadmap for the next move.

The prompt should force the AI to identify the real problem before choosing the next lane.

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:
- Prompt C-35 - Decision-Letter Analysis Prompt
- Prompt C-36 - Review-Lane Choice Prompt
- Prompt C-37 - Supplemental Claim Evidence List Prompt

- Prompt C-38 - HLR Conference Prep Prompt
- Prompt C-39 - Board Appeal Issue Summary Prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Review this VA decision letter and tell me: (1) what was granted or denied, (2) what favorable findings I should preserve, (3) what evidence VA relied on, (4) what reasons VA gave, (5) what errors or weaknesses are visible, and (6) which next step makes the most sense: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Use screenshot, folder, and packet prompts for workflow problems

What to do

Use these prompts when the veteran is stuck on:

- a VA.gov screen
- a confusing upload page
- a claim status page
- a folder organization problem
- a filing packet review
- a final evidence plan
- a cover sheet

Why it matters

A lot of claim work stalls because the veteran gets blocked by a screen, a folder mess, or a packet organization problem.

These prompts are the recovery tools.

Prompt Card Reference

- For screenshot workflow visuals, see:

- **Prompt Card B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool**
- **Prompt Card B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT**
- **Prompt Card B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example**

Related Appendix C prompts

- Use:
- Prompt C-40 - Screenshot Help Prompt
- Prompt C-41 - Starter Kit Folder Structure Prompt
- Prompt C-42 - Cover Sheet Builder Prompt
- Prompt C-43 - Filing Packet Review Prompt
- Prompt C-44 - Final Evidence Builder Plan Prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am stuck on this screen. I am uploading a screenshot. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should click or do next. If there are risks, deadlines, missing information, or better options, explain them clearly.

Step 10 - Use low-energy prompts when the veteran is smoked

What to do

When energy is low, do not try to build a perfect prompt.

Use low-energy prompts.

The goal is to get one useful next step, not a giant list.

Why it matters

The prompt library is supposed to reduce friction, not create more of it.

The veteran should not need to be at full strength to keep the claim moving.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am overloaded. Do not give me a giant list. Based on my file, tell me only what matters most right now and what my top 3 next moves are. Do not invent facts.

The Prompt Selection Rule

- Use this simple rule:
- Starting the whole system? Use Master Orientation.
- Starting one issue? Use Master Issue Analysis.
- Overwhelmed? Use Low-Energy or Top-3 Next Moves.
- Uploading records? Use Records Chunk Analysis.
- Building a statement? Use Lay or Buddy Statement prompts.
- Sending witness statement for signature? Use BuddySign Next-Step.
- Preparing for appointment or C&P? Use appointment/C&P prompts.
- Decision came back? Use Decision-Letter Analysis.
- Choosing next lane? Use Review-Lane Choice.
- Stuck on a screen? Use Screenshot Help.
- Saving work? Use Claim Session Summary.
- That is enough.

Warning

Prompt output is a draft, not evidence by itself. Review every statement, summary, lane recommendation, and form instruction against the actual records before using it.

Do not let the AI invent facts, dates, diagnoses, symptoms, witnesses, treatment history, or events just because the prompt was weak or vague.

If the AI adds something that is not true, remove it.

Caution

Do not upload unnecessary sensitive information into AI tools. Use issue-specific excerpts, redaction, and screenshots when they are enough for the task.

Do not overcomplicate prompt-writing.

Most veterans do not need a perfect prompt.

They need a good-enough prompt that clearly states:

- what issue they are working
- what material they uploaded
- what job they want done
- what output they want
- that AI must not invent facts

Note

A good prompt is not about sounding clever.

It is about telling the AI what job to do, what materials it has, and what output you want.

For the full copy/paste library, use Appendix C - Prompt Farm.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Upload the record, statement, screenshot, or denial letter.
- Paste this prompt:
- I want you to do the heavy lifting for this VA claim issue. Review what I uploaded, tell me what it proves, tell me what is missing, and tell me the top 3 next moves only. Do not invent facts.
- Do only the next step it gives you.
- Save a Claim Session Summary.

- Ignore the rest for now.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- asking vague questions
- not telling the AI what the task is
- not telling the AI what issue is being worked
- forgetting the anti-invention instruction
- using the wrong prompt for the job
- not asking for top 3 next moves only
- not saving Claim Session Summaries
- not routing finished buddy statements through BuddySign when witness signature is needed
- not reminding the AI to use earlier uploads
- trying to invent complex prompts instead of using the library

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I used a prompt that matches the task
- I included anti-invention guardrails when needed
- I told the AI what issue I am working
- I told the AI what material I uploaded
- I told the AI what output I want
- I asked for top 3 next moves if I feel overloaded
- I reminded the AI to use earlier uploads if needed
- I used BuddySign Next-Step when a witness statement was ready

- I saved useful outputs in the Starter Kit
- I saved a Claim Session Summary after meaningful work
- I reviewed the output for truth and usefulness

Chapter Recap

This chapter is about taking the burden of prompt-writing off the veteran.

The veteran should not have to invent AI workflows from scratch.

The handbook gives them:

- the tool
- the wording
- the workflow
- the guardrails
- the next step

The veteran's job is to pick the prompt that matches the task, paste it, review the answer for truth, and save the useful output.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 20 and use the one-page checklist to simplify the whole system into something the veteran can scan quickly when tired, overloaded, or trying to make sure they did not miss something obvious.

Chapter 20 — One-Page Checklist for Veterans

Mission

Give the veteran one stripped-down, fast-scan checklist they can use when tired, overloaded, distracted, or trying to make sure they are not missing something basic.

Why This Matters

By this point, the veteran has seen the whole system:

- records
- statements
- buddy letters
- BuddySign
- claim lanes
- C&P prep
- decision analysis
- follow-up strategy
- AI prompts
- packet building
- Starter Kit folders
- Claim Session Summaries

That is useful.

It is also a lot.

Most veterans do not need more information when they are smoked.

They need:

- a short checklist
- the right boxes to check
- and a fast way to confirm they are not about to do something avoidable

This chapter is that page.

It is a practical self-check, not official VA instructions, legal advice, medical advice, or a substitute for tracking deadlines and current VA form instructions.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should have:

- one practical before-filing checklist
- one practical before-C&P checklist
- one practical after-decision checklist
- one ultra-short emergency version
- one AI prompt that turns the generic checklist into a personalized readiness review

Execution

Step 1 - Use the before-filing checklist

What to do

Before you hit submit on any issue, check these boxes:

- I know exactly what issue I am filing.
- I know whether this is direct, secondary, increase, Supplemental Claim, HLR, or Board-related.
- I know the theory of the claim.
- I have issue-specific folders set up in the Starter Kit.
- I uploaded or reviewed records in manageable chunks.
- I asked ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to identify evidence gaps.
- I built or reviewed the veteran statement.
- I reviewed the final statement for truth and accuracy.
- I know what evidence goes with this issue.
- I know what form or lane I am using.
- I included buddy/witness evidence only if it helps.

- I used BuddySign if a witness statement needs remote review and signature.
- I saved any signed BuddySign output.
- I created a cover sheet if the packet is large.
- I saved a copy of everything I plan to submit.
- I know where the final packet and receipt will be saved.
- I checked current VA form instructions, submission requirements, and any deadline or appeal window that applies.

Why it matters

A lot of filing mistakes are not dramatic.

They are basic.

This checklist catches the basic stuff before it causes trouble.

Save final packet here

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

After filing, save proof here:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

If issue-specific, also save here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Take this one-page checklist and customize it for my actual claim issues. Mark what I already completed, what I still need to do, and what the top 3 boxes are that matter most right now. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Use the before-C&P checklist

What to do

Before the exam, check these boxes:

- I reviewed my timeline.
- I reviewed my symptom pattern.
- I reviewed my flare-ups.
- I reviewed repeated-use problems if they apply.
- I reviewed functional loss.
- I have a phone-sized C&P cheat sheet.
- I know the main facts I need to communicate.
- I know how the condition affects work.
- I know how the condition affects daily life.
- I reviewed treatment history.
- I am ready to explain onset, worsening, and current severity.
- I will not minimize symptoms out of pride.
- I will not exaggerate symptoms beyond reality.
- I know where to save post-exam notes.

Why it matters

The C&P exam is one of the easiest places to lose ground through poor preparation.

This checklist keeps the veteran from walking in cold.

Save C&P prep and debrief notes here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/08 C&P EXAMS/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Use this checklist and my records to tell me whether I look ready for my C&P exam or whether I am still missing key prep points. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Use the after-decision checklist

What to do

When the decision letter comes back, check these boxes:

- I read the reasons for decision carefully.
- I identified what was granted.
- I identified what was denied.
- I identified the rating percentage.
- I identified the effective date.
- I identified favorable findings.
- I identified what evidence VA listed.
- I identified what element VA said was missing.
- I asked ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy which review lane fits best.
- I know whether the problem is missing evidence, bad reasoning, bad exam, wrong rating, or wrong effective date.
- I know whether the better move is Supplemental Claim, HLR, Board Appeal, or something else.
- I know what evidence, statement, or argument to build next.
- I saved the decision letter in the Starter Kit.
- I saved a decision-analysis summary.
- I am reacting on purpose, not just out of anger.
- I checked the deadline or appeal window before choosing the next lane.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans lose time after a decision because they react before they analyze.

This checklist forces a pause.

Save decision letters here

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

If issue-specific, also save here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Use this checklist and my decision letter to tell me whether I correctly identified the real problem and what my smartest next move is. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Use the ultra-short emergency version when you are smoked**What to do**

If you are too overwhelmed to read much, use this version.

Before filing

- Do I know what I am claiming?
- Do I know the lane?
- Do I have supporting records?
- Do I have a strong statement?
- Do I have signed BuddySign output if using a witness statement?
- Did ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy tell me what is missing?
- Did I save copies of everything?
- Did I check any deadline that applies?

Before C&P

- Do I know my onset?
- Do I know my main symptoms?
- Do I know my flare-ups?

- Do I know my functional loss?
- Do I know work impact?
- Do I have a short cheat sheet?

After decision

- What did VA say yes to?
- What did VA say no to?
- What did VA say was missing?
- What did VA concede?
- What is my best next lane?
- What is my top next move?

What deadline do I need to protect?

Why it matters

Sometimes the veteran does not need the full system.

Sometimes the veteran needs the shortest useful version possible.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Rewrite this checklist for me in very plain English based on my issues, records, and claim status. Keep it short enough that I can look at it on my phone without getting overwhelmed. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Use the AI to tell you what box you skipped

What to do

If the claim feels off or you are unsure why the issue still feels weak, ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy what checklist box you skipped or handled weakly.

Why it matters

This is one of the fastest ways to diagnose hidden weakness without rereading the whole handbook.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Based on my records and current claim plan, tell me which checklist boxes I skipped or handled weakly and which one is most likely to hurt me if I do not fix it. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Turn the checklist into a personal readiness review**What to do**

Have ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy tell you whether you look:

- ready to file
- ready for C&P
- ready for decision response
- ready for review-lane planning
- or not ready yet

based on the checklist and your actual file.

Why it matters

A checklist is more powerful when it becomes specific to the veteran's actual case.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Use this checklist and my uploaded records to tell me whether I look ready to file, ready for C&P, ready for decision response, or ready for appeal follow-up. Keep it short and practical. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Save a Claim Session Summary when the checklist creates a plan**What to do**

If the checklist review creates useful next steps, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

If issue-specific, also save here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

The checklist may reveal important gaps, missing records, weak statements, or lane problems.

Do not leave that plan buried in a chat.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Create a Claim Session Summary for this checklist review. Include the issue, current status, checklist boxes completed, checklist boxes still missing, biggest risk, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Do not invent facts.

Warning

Do not use a checklist as an excuse to miss a filing or review deadline. If a deadline is close, protect the deadline first, then keep building the packet as appropriate.

Do not trust memory when you are tired, hurting, angry, or overloaded.

That is exactly when the checklist matters most.

Caution

A checklist can flag risk, but it cannot guarantee a VA outcome or replace official VA instructions or accredited help when a case is time-sensitive or complex.

Do not treat the checklist like paperwork for its own sake.

It is there to stop avoidable mistakes before they cost time, evidence, momentum, or rating percentage.

Note

A checklist is not glamorous.

That is exactly why it works.

It gives the veteran a usable system when the brain is smoked.

For the full prompt library, see Appendix C - Prompt Farm.

For folder locations, see Appendix F - Starter Kit Folder Map and Naming Rules.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Copy the ultra-short emergency checklist.
- Paste this prompt:
- Based on my records and current claim position, tell me which checklist boxes matter most right now and give me only the top 3 next moves. Do not invent facts.
- Do one move at a time.
- Save a Claim Session Summary if the answer gives you a real plan.
- Ignore the rest for now.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- trying to remember everything without a checklist
- filing before checking the basics
- using unsigned or poorly handled witness statements
- failing to save BuddySign outputs
- walking into a C&P exam without reviewing the core facts
- reacting to a decision before identifying the real problem
- not saving copies
- not saving receipts
- not saving Claim Session Summaries
- not knowing what the next move is
- letting overload replace structure

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I used the before-filing checklist if I am filing
- I used the before-C&P checklist if I have an exam coming up
- I used the after-decision checklist if a decision came back
- I used the emergency version if I was too overwhelmed
- I asked AI what box I skipped
- I saved BuddySign output if witness evidence was used
- I saved receipts and final versions
- I checked any deadline or appeal window that applies
- I saved a Claim Session Summary if the checklist created a plan
- I know my top 3 next moves

Chapter Recap

This chapter turns the whole handbook into a one-page control tool.

The veteran does not need to remember every chapter by heart.

The veteran needs a short system that catches the obvious mistakes and points to the next move.

When tired, use the checklist.

When stuck, ask AI what box is missing.

When the plan is useful, save the Claim Session Summary.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 21 and see the whole system applied in a real-world example using a musculoskeletal claim from start to finish.

Chapter 21 — Real-World Example: Musculoskeletal Claim From Start to Finish

Mission

Show the veteran how the whole system works in practice by walking through a real-world musculoskeletal claim from confusion and pain to a clean claim strategy.

Why This Matters

Some veterans do not really understand the system until they see it applied to a real issue.

Rules are useful.

Checklists are useful.

Prompts are useful.

But a full example often makes the whole thing click.

This chapter is not meant to cover every body part or every rating rule.

It is an educational workflow example, not legal advice, medical advice, a guarantee of outcome, or a substitute for current VA form instructions, rating criteria, deadlines, or accredited help when needed.

It is meant to show the veteran how to work the process from start to finish using:

- records
- ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy
- lay statements
- buddy evidence
- BuddySign if witness evidence is used
- C&P prep
- filing packet review
- decision analysis
- and post-decision follow-up

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should understand how one musculoskeletal issue can move from:

- pain and confusion
- to:
- organized evidence
- a lay statement
- a claim theory
- a clean issue packet
- a C&P prep plan
- and a denial-response strategy if needed

Execution

Step 1 - Identify the issue clearly

What to do

Do not start with:

- "my whole body hurts"
- "everything is messed up"
- "I have a lot going on"

Start narrower.

Examples:

- lower back pain with flare-ups
- neck pain with limited motion
- left knee instability and pain
- right shoulder pain with overhead use
- bilateral foot pain after service injury
- radiculopathy related to lumbar spine problems

Why it matters

The AI cannot build a clean claim strategy from a giant blur.

It needs a defined issue.

Save the issue summary here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am dealing with pain and limitation in [body part]. Help me define this issue clearly for VA claim purposes. Tell me whether this sounds like a direct service connection issue, an increase issue, a secondary issue, or something that still needs more evidence before I can tell. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Gather the basic evidence pile

What to do

For a musculoskeletal issue, the first evidence pile usually includes:

- VA treatment notes
- private treatment notes
- physical therapy records
- imaging
- pain complaints
- mobility complaints
- range-of-motion issues
- flare-up descriptions
- medication history
- work limitation evidence
- lay statements
- buddy statements if helpful

- service treatment records if available
- service personnel or duty records if they help explain physical stressors

Do not wait for perfection before starting analysis.

Before uploading records into any AI tool, redact or avoid unnecessary sensitive information such as full SSNs, bank information, full claim numbers, or unrelated private details when practical.

- Upload what you have.

Why it matters

A musculoskeletal claim often turns on repeated patterns in the record, not one magic page.

The record may show pain, worsening, treatment, imaging, gait changes, work limits, flare-ups, or functional loss across multiple entries.

Save records here

Raw records:

02 MASTER RECORDS/

Issue-specific working copies:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/03 SERVICE EVIDENCE/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am claiming a musculoskeletal issue involving [body part]. Review these records and organize them into: diagnosis, symptom history, flare-ups, functional loss, work impact, imaging, treatment history, and service connection evidence. Then tell me what is strong and what is missing. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Build a timeline

What to do

For a musculoskeletal issue, the timeline should cover:

- when the issue started
- whether it started in service

- what physical duty, injury, lifting, marching, accident, fall, vehicle work, load carriage, or overuse may be tied to it
- whether symptoms continued after service
- when treatment started
- how it worsened
- what current limitations exist
- what records support each part of the timeline

Why it matters

A clean timeline helps tie together:

- onset
- continuity
- treatment
- worsening
- current severity
- claim theory

Save the timeline here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Build a clean timeline for my [body part] claim. Include onset, in-service events if any, treatment history, imaging, worsening over time, current symptoms, flare-ups, functional impact, and key supporting records. Do not invent facts.

Step 4 - Draft the lay statement

What to do

For a musculoskeletal issue, the lay statement should explain:

- where it hurts
- when it started
- what happened in service if relevant
- what symptoms existed then
- how it changed over time
- what movements make it worse
- what flare-ups look like
- what repeated use does
- what the veteran cannot do now
- how it affects work and daily life
- Do not just say:
 - "my back hurts"
 - "my knee is bad"
 - "my shoulder gives me trouble"

That is too weak.

Why it matters

Musculoskeletal claims often get underrated when the statement never clearly explains function.

Pain matters.

What pain does to the veteran matters even more.

Save lay statement drafts and finals here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/04 LAY STATEMENTS/

Save filing-ready copies here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/09 FILING PACKET/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Draft a VA lay statement for my [body part] condition. Include when it started, how it started, symptom progression, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, treatment history, and specific functional impact on lifting, bending, standing, walking, sitting, reaching, stairs, work tasks, and household tasks where relevant. Keep it truthful and specific. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Decide whether the issue is direct, increase, or secondary**What to do**

For musculoskeletal issues, make sure the lane fits the problem.

Direct service connection

- Use when:
- the injury or overuse began in service

symptoms began in service

there is evidence of an in-service event, duty pattern, exposure, or injury

Increased rating

- Use when:
- the body part is already service connected
- the condition has worsened
- the file now shows more severity, more functional loss, or more work impact

Secondary service connection

- Use when:
- another service-connected musculoskeletal issue caused or aggravated a new condition

Examples:

- one bad knee affecting gait and stressing the other leg
- foot or ankle problems changing walking mechanics and worsening the knee, hip, or back
- spine issues leading to radiculopathy

- one shoulder or upper-extremity issue causing compensation injuries elsewhere

Why it matters

A decent musculoskeletal claim can get weakened by using the wrong lane.

Do not assume every body-part problem is direct service connection just because it hurts now.

Match the lane to the evidence.

Also check any filing deadline, appeal window, or effective-date issue before delaying or changing lanes.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I already have a VA rating for [primary condition]. I am wondering whether my [new body part condition] is a realistic secondary claim. Ask me targeted questions and review my records. Then tell me whether this looks stronger as a secondary claim, an increase on the primary issue, or not ready yet. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Build the issue packet

What to do

A clean musculoskeletal issue packet may include:

- lay statement
- service records if available
- treatment notes
- imaging
- physical therapy records
- work-impact evidence
- buddy statements if useful
- signed BuddySign output if using witness evidence
- nexus opinion or DBQ if needed
- short cover sheet if the packet is large

Why it matters

Do not make VA hunt through a random stack to understand a body-part claim.

The packet should make it easy to see:

- what body part is claimed
- what theory applies
- what records support it
- what the condition does functionally
- what the veteran wants VA to understand

Save packet here**Pre-submission packet:**

04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/

Issue-specific packet:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/09 FILING PACKET/

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Review my musculoskeletal claim packet and tell me whether it is organized well enough for VA to follow. Tell me what evidence is strongest, what is weak, what should be included, what should be removed, and whether any witness statement needs a signed BuddySign output. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Use BuddySign if witness evidence helps

Do not sign for the witness. The witness must personally review and sign only what is true and based on firsthand observation.

What to do

- If a buddy, spouse, coworker, roommate, caregiver, supervisor, or fellow service member can honestly describe what they personally saw, use witness evidence.

Good MSK witness observations may include:

- limping

- guarding the body part
- trouble with stairs
- trouble bending or lifting
- needing help with chores
- avoiding physical activity
- missing work or leaving early
- using braces, canes, ice, heat, or medication
- worsening over time
- visible pain behavior during flare-ups
- Workflow:

Draft the witness statement from firsthand observations only.

- Review it for truth and accuracy.
- Copy the final statement into BuddySign.
- Enter the witness name, phone, email, and relationship.
- Send the signing invite to the buddy.

The witness personally reviews and signs.

- After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page and generate the local print/PDF output if needed.
- Save it in the Starter Kit.

Why it matters

A witness cannot diagnose the veteran.

But a witness can describe what they personally saw.

That can be useful for continuity, severity, functional loss, and daily-life impact.

Save signed BuddySign output here

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

If issue-specific, also save here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Prompt Card Reference

- For BuddySign workflow visuals, see:
- Prompt Card B-200 through Prompt Card B-206

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I have a possible witness for my [body part] claim. Help me draft a buddy statement based only on what the witness personally saw, heard, knew, or observed. Keep it focused on functional limitations, flare-ups, visible pain behavior, work impact, and daily-life impact. Then give me a BuddySign-ready version for the witness to review and sign. Do not invent facts.

Step 8 - Prepare for the C&P exam**What to do**

For a musculoskeletal C&P exam, be ready to discuss:

- where the pain is
- how often it happens
- how severe it gets
- how long it lasts
- what movements make it worse
- what repeated use does
- what flare-ups are like
- what bad days look like
- what standing, walking, bending, lifting, sitting, reaching, stairs, driving, kneeling, or squatting do depending on the body part
- whether weakness, stiffness, numbness, instability, or fatigue are part of the issue

- how work is affected
- how daily life is affected

Why it matters

These exams often turn on details veterans forget to explain.

Do not walk in cold.

Save C&P prep here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/08 C&P EXAMS/

Prompt Card Reference

- For related visual examples or current-instruction prompts, see:
- [Prompt Card B-140 — Example Phone-Sized C&P Cheat Sheet](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for my [body part] claim. Include onset, current symptoms, flare-ups, movement limits, repeated-use problems, work impact, daily-life impact, treatment history, and the main facts I need to say clearly. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Read the decision and respond on purpose

What to do

- If the decision comes back, do not just react emotionally.

For a musculoskeletal issue, VA may:

- deny service connection
- grant service connection but underrate the severity
- ignore flare-ups
- ignore repeated-use problems
- ignore functional loss
- rely too heavily on a weak C&P exam

- fail to describe the true work impact
- miss a secondary link
- concede the condition but assign a low percentage
- assign the wrong effective date

Read the reasons carefully.

Why it matters

A musculoskeletal claim can be partly right and still badly underrated.

The decision letter tells the veteran what to fix next.

Save decision letter here

02 MASTER RECORDS/VA DECISION LETTERS/

- If issue-specific, also here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/07 DECISION LETTERS/

Prompt Card Reference

- For decision-review visuals, see:
- [Prompt Card B-150 — Favorable Findings Section of a Decision Letter](#)
- [Prompt Card B-151 — Reasons for Decision Section of a Decision Letter](#)

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am uploading a VA decision on my [body part] claim. Tell me exactly why VA denied or underrated it, what evidence I already have that responds to that reasoning, what evidence is still missing, and whether my best next move is Supplemental, HLR, Board, or another approach. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Use the denial language as a repair guide

What to do

- If VA says:

- no chronic condition
- no nexus
- no in-service event
- not enough severity
- not enough evidence for the next higher rating
- flare-ups not shown
- functional loss not shown
- secondary link not established

then:

- identify the exact reason
- find records and statements that answer that exact point
- build the next packet around that weakness
- avoid just resending the same evidence in a mess

Why it matters

The denial language tells you what part of the bridge broke.

- Use it as a repair guide.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Read this musculoskeletal denial and turn it into a repair plan. Tell me what exact weakness VA identified, what evidence I already have that helps, what evidence I still need, what statement should be built, and what lane choice makes the most sense next. Do not invent facts.

Step 11 - Turn the issue into a final evidence plan

What to do

After all that, the AI should be able to produce:

- issue summary

- claim theory
- strongest evidence
- weakest point
- evidence gap
- next best document to build
- best next lane if denied
- top 3 next moves only

Why it matters

By the end of the process, the veteran should not be guessing anymore.

Save final evidence plan here

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/01 ISSUE SUMMARY/

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on everything I uploaded for this musculoskeletal issue, build me a final evidence plan. Tell me the claim theory, strongest evidence, weakest point, best next document to build, best next lane if denied, and top 3 next moves only. Do not invent facts.

Step 12 - Save a Claim Session Summary

What to do

After building the MSK issue strategy, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

- and issue-specific here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

This chapter shows a full workflow.

A full workflow needs a portable summary so the veteran can come back later without starting over.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this musculoskeletal claim workflow. Include the body part, claim theory, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, lay statement status, BuddySign witness evidence status if any, C&P prep status, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Do not invent facts.

Warning

Do not turn a musculoskeletal example into a diagnosis, nexus opinion, or rating promise. Use records, truthful statements, and qualified medical evidence where medical questions matter.

Do not treat a musculoskeletal claim like a one-line pain complaint.

These claims are often won, lost, or underrated on the details of function, flare-ups, repeated use, and work impact.

Caution

Do not delay a filing or review response long enough to risk a deadline or effective date just because you are trying to make the packet perfect. Protect deadlines first.

Do not assume a body-part claim is automatically direct service connection just because it hurts now.

The lane still has to match the evidence.

Note

Musculoskeletal claims often look simple on the surface, but they are frequently more about function than diagnosis alone.

Pain matters.

What that pain does matters even more.

AI Battle Drill

- If you are overwhelmed, do this:
- Pick one body part only.
- Upload one chunk of records.
- Paste this prompt:
- I am building a musculoskeletal claim for [body part]. Review this chunk for diagnosis, symptom history, flare-ups, repeated-use problems, functional loss, work impact, treatment history, and service connection clues. Then tell me what this proves, what it does not prove yet, and what I should build next. Do not invent facts.
- Do only the next thing it tells you.
- Save a Claim Session Summary.
- Ignore the rest for now.
- That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- claiming the body part too vaguely
- not building a clear timeline
- not tying symptoms to function
- not explaining flare-ups
- not explaining repeated-use problems
- not explaining work limitations
- filing in the wrong lane
- submitting a bloated issue packet
- using unsigned witness evidence
- failing to save BuddySign output

- failing to prepare for the C&P exam
- reacting emotionally to the decision without diagnosing the real problem
- failing to save a Claim Session Summary

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I clearly defined the body-part issue
- I gathered the core records
- I built a timeline
- I built a lay statement
- I matched the theory to the evidence
- I built a clean issue packet
- I used BuddySign if witness evidence was needed
- I prepared for the C&P exam
- I reviewed the decision carefully if one came back
- I know the exact weakness if the issue was denied or underrated
- I know my top 3 next moves
- I saved the Claim Session Summary

Chapter Recap

This chapter shows the whole system working on a real musculoskeletal issue.

The basic pattern is simple, but the veteran still has to review every AI-generated statement, summary, and strategy for truth before using it:

- define the issue
- gather the records
- build the timeline

- draft the statement
- match the lane
- add witness evidence if useful
- use BuddySign if a witness signature is needed
- file cleanly
- prepare for the exam
- use the decision letter to guide the next move if needed
- save the Claim Session Summary

That is the system in action.

Next Move

Go to Chapter 22 and lock in the final rule of the whole handbook: tell the truth, document it clearly, organize the proof, use AI to carry as much of the load as possible, and keep moving.

Chapter 22 — Final Rule

Mission

Lock in the final rule of the whole handbook so the veteran does not lose the plot after all the forms, records, prompts, lanes, tools, and strategies.

Why This Matters

By this point, the veteran has seen the whole system:

- how to gather records
- how to organize them
- how to use ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to build a roadmap
- how to draft lay statements
- how to use BuddySign for witness signatures
- how to prepare for C&P exams
- how to analyze decisions
- how to choose the next lane on purpose
- how to save the work in the Starter Kit

That is a lot.

So this last chapter is simple.

It is the part the veteran should remember when everything starts to feel complicated again.

This final rule is educational and organizational. It is not legal advice, medical advice, a guarantee of outcome, or a substitute for current VA instructions, deadlines, rating criteria, or accredited help when needed.

End State

By the end of this chapter, the veteran should understand:

- what actually wins
- what the veteran's real job is
- what the AI's real job is
- what BuddySign is for

- what the Starter Kit is for
- what this handbook is really trying to do
- what rule to fall back on when the process gets messy

Execution

Step 1 - Understand that rage alone does not win

What to do

Accept this early:

A lot of veterans are rightly angry.

They are angry because:

- the process is slow
- the denials are vague
- the paperwork is exhausting
- the records are incomplete
- the C&P process can feel unfair
- the system often feels like it was built to wear them down

That anger is understandable.

But anger by itself is not a strategy.

Why it matters

The veteran does not beat VA by:

- ranting
- guessing
- filing blind
- dumping giant records
- sending vague statements
- choosing review lanes emotionally

- or hoping VA will connect the dots for them

The veteran builds a stronger claim by creating a record that is truthful, organized, specific, and difficult to misunderstand.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I am frustrated and overloaded. Ignore my emotion for a minute and tell me what the actual problem is in my case, what is strongest, what is weakest, and what my smartest next move is. Do not invent facts.

Step 2 - Know what actually wins

What to do

Remember what a strong claim record actually looks like.

A strong claim record is:

- truthful
- specific
- organized
- consistent
- tied to the right claim lane
- supported by medical evidence where needed
- supported by lay or buddy evidence where useful
- clear about functional loss and work impact
- easy for a stranger to follow
- difficult to dismiss without exposing a weak point in VA's reasoning

Why it matters

That is the whole game.

Not clever wording.

Not volume for the sake of volume.

Not rage.

Not hope.

A strong, organized, truthful record beats a messy emotional one.

The veteran should still verify current VA forms, filing routes, deadlines, and review options through official VA sources or an accredited representative when the stakes are high.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on everything I have uploaded, tell me whether my claim record looks truthful, specific, organized, consistent, and well-supported. Then tell me what part still needs the most work. Do not invent facts.

Step 3 - Remember what this handbook is really trying to do

What to do

- Do not let the whole book blur into noise.

This handbook is not trying to turn veterans into lawyers.

It is not trying to turn them into full-time records clerks.

It is not trying to make them read themselves to death.

It is trying to give a tired veteran a system that says:

- here is where to go
- here is where to save it
- here is what to upload
- here is what to ask the AI
- here is when to use BuddySign
- here is what matters most
- here is what to do next

Why it matters

If the handbook becomes another pile of bureaucracy, then it failed.

The whole point is to reduce friction.

The veteran should not have to carry every part of the process manually.

Step 4 - Know what the veteran's real job is

What to do

- Keep the veteran's role simple.

The veteran's real job is to:

- gather the records
- save them in the Starter Kit
- upload them in manageable chunks
- answer simple follow-up questions
- review drafts for truth
- use BuddySign when a witness statement needs remote review and signature
- file the final product
- save receipts and final copies
- come back for the next step

That is it.

Why it matters

The veteran should not have to do every job manually anymore.

The system works when the veteran provides the facts, reviews the truth, and lets the tools carry the structure, drafting, sorting, and next-step planning.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on my current file, tell me what my job is right now in the simplest possible terms. Keep it to only what I need to do myself and leave the rest for the AI. Do not invent facts.

Step 5 - Know what the AI's real job is

What to do

- Keep the AI's role just as clear.

ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy should:

- review records
- find favorable evidence
- identify evidence gaps
- build the timeline
- coach the veteran in plain English
- ask simple questions
- build the roadmap
- rank targets as easy, medium, and difficult
- draft lay statements
- draft buddy statements
- prepare BuddySign-ready witness statements
- prepare C&P cheat sheets
- analyze denials
- help pick the next lane
- create Claim Session Summaries
- keep telling the veteran the clearest next move

Why it matters

That is the point of this whole system.

The veteran should not be expected to do all of that alone.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

I want you to act as the AI workhorse for my file. Tell me what you should be doing for me right now, what I still need to provide, and what the clearest next move is. Do not invent facts.

Step 6 - Know what BuddySign's job is

What to do

Use BuddySign when a buddy, spouse, family member, coworker, roommate, supervisor, caregiver, or fellow service member needs to review and sign a witness statement remotely.

BuddySign's job is to help the veteran:

- enter witness contact information
- paste the final witness statement
- lock the statement for review
- send the signing link
- let the witness personally review and sign
- download the signed output
- save the signed output in the Starter Kit

Why it matters

Buddy statements often fail at the last mile.

The draft exists, but the witness never signs it, cannot handle the PDF, forgets to return it, or gets lost in the process.

BuddySign is there to reduce that friction.

The veteran must not sign for the witness.

The witness must personally review and sign only if true.

BuddySign is a signing-workflow tool, not a VA representative, legal service, medical service, or guarantee that VA will accept or weigh a statement a certain way.

Save BuddySign outputs here

```
07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/
```

If issue-specific, also save here:

```
03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
```

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I have a buddy statement draft ready. Review it for truth, clarity, and firsthand observation only. Then give me a final clean version I can copy into BuddySign.com so my witness can personally review and sign it. Also give me a short checklist for using BuddySign and saving the signed output in my Starter Kit. Do not invent facts.

Step 7 - Use AI to carry the legitimate heavy lifting**What to do**

This handbook is built around a better option than the old bad choices.

Too many veterans have been stuck with:

- do it all alone
- pay someone
- get lost in bureaucracy
- or give up

This system is built around a better answer:

- Use AI to automate the legitimate heavy lifting.

Not to lie.

Not to fake anything.

Not to game the system.

But to stop making the veteran carry every part of the load manually.

Why it matters

That is what makes this system different.

The veteran still owns the truth.

Every AI-generated statement, summary, or strategy must be reviewed for accuracy before it is used.

The AI helps organize, analyze, draft, simplify, and plan.

Step 8 - Keep asking for the next move in plain English**What to do**

When things get confusing again, do not spiral.

Go back to plain English.

Ask:

- what is my clearest next move?
- what should I stop wasting time on?
- what is strongest?
- what is weakest?
- what should I build next?
- what should I save?
- what should I upload?

Why it matters

The veteran does not need a giant legal theory every time.

The veteran needs a clear next step.

Copy/paste prompt

Copy/paste prompt

Based on everything I have uploaded and everything we have worked through, tell me my clearest next move in plain English. Keep it simple. Tell me what to do, what to upload, what statement or form I need, what I should save, and what I should stop wasting time on. Do not invent facts.

Step 9 - Build the evidence plan from where you are now

What to do

At any point in the process, the veteran should be able to ask ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy for:

- what is strongest
- what is weakest
- what is missing
- what should be hit first
- what should be left alone for now
- what the top 3 next actions are

Why it matters

The claim process feels less chaotic when the veteran has a current evidence plan instead of a giant mental pile of loose problems.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I want you to build my evidence action plan from this point forward. Based on my records, statements, decisions, and current claim position, tell me: (1) what is strongest, (2) what is weakest, (3) what is missing, (4) what I should hit first, (5) what I should leave alone for now, and (6) the top 3 next actions I should take. Do not invent facts.

Step 10 - Save the Claim Session Summary**What to do**

After any meaningful work session, ask for a Claim Session Summary.

Use it after:

- record review
- issue roadmap
- statement drafting
- BuddySign workflow
- filing packet review
- C&P prep
- post-C&P debrief
- decision review
- review-lane planning

Save it here:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

If issue-specific, also save it here:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Why it matters

This keeps the work portable.

The veteran can come back later, re-upload the summary, and continue without starting from zero.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the issue, what we reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, files created, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit. Do not invent facts.

Step 11 - Use the one-thing-next rule when overloaded**What to do**

If the whole process starts feeling too big again, shrink it.

Ask for:

- one thing next

Not ten things next.

Why it matters

A lot of veterans do not need more information.

They need less chaos.

Copy/paste prompt**Copy/paste prompt**

I am overloaded. Do not give me a giant list. Based on my file, tell me only what matters most right now and what one thing I should do next. Do not invent facts.

Warning

Do not let the process turn back into chaos just because the file got bigger.

The bigger the case gets, the more you need the system.

Caution

If a filing deadline, review deadline, appeal window, or potential effective-date issue is in play, protect the deadline first and verify the current rule before waiting for a perfect packet.

Do not confuse movement with progress.

A lot of frantic activity is just wasted motion if it is not aimed at the real weakness in the claim.

Note

You do not need to understand every regulation to use this handbook well.

You need to tell the truth, stay organized, use the tools correctly, save the work, and keep moving.

AI Battle Drill

If you are overwhelmed, do this:

- Upload the current record, denial letter, screenshot, or statement.

Paste this prompt:

I am overloaded. Tell me only what matters most right now, what the real problem is, and what one thing I should do next. Do not give me a giant list. Do not invent facts.

- Do that one thing.
- Ask for a Claim Session Summary if the session created useful work.

Come back for the next one after that.

That is enough.

Common Failure Points

- drifting back into chaos after getting organized
- trying to do too much at once
- forgetting the actual evidence gap
- expecting VA to connect the dots for you
- not using AI enough

- using AI sloppily without truth guardrails
- drafting witness statements but not getting them properly signed
- not saving BuddySign outputs
- not saving Claim Session Summaries
- focusing on emotion instead of strategy
- stopping completely because the process feels too big

Quick Reaction Checklist

- I know what actually wins
- I know my real job
- I know the AI's real job
- I know BuddySign's job
- I know where to save the work
- I am using AI to carry legitimate heavy lifting
- I know what is strongest
- I know what is weakest
- I know what is missing
- I know my top next move
- I am not letting chaos take back over

Chapter Recap

This chapter is the final lock-in.

The veteran does not beat the system with rage alone.

The veteran builds a stronger case by telling the truth, documenting it clearly, organizing the proof, using AI to carry as much of the legitimate load as possible, using BuddySign when witness signatures are needed, saving the work in the Starter Kit, and moving one deliberate step at a time.

Final Rule

- Tell the truth.
- Document it clearly.
- Organize the proof.
- Use AI to carry as much of the legitimate load as possible.
- Do not upload unnecessary sensitive information into AI tools when a redacted or narrower record will do.
- Use BuddySign when witness signatures are needed.
- Save the work.
- And keep moving.
- That is how you stop getting buried.
- That is how you fight smarter.
- That is how you build the claim the right way.

Appendices

Forms, Visual Prompts, Prompt Farm, Worksheets, Packet Builders, Starter Kit Map, and Low-Energy Tools

The main chapters teach the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder system.

The appendices give the veteran the working tools.

Use these appendices when you need:

- an official VA form link
- a visual example or current workflow prompt
- a copy/paste AI prompt
- a quick-fill worksheet
- a filing packet checklist
- a folder and naming rule
- a low-energy fallback tool
- a BuddySign workflow reminder

The goal is simple:

Do not make the veteran hunt.

Do not make the veteran guess.

Do not make the veteran start from zero.

When a chapter says “See Prompt Card B-___” or “Use Prompt C-___,” come here and grab the exact tool.

Appendix List

Appendix A — Official VA Forms and Form Links

Appendix B — Visual Examples and Current Workflow Instruction Prompts

Appendix C — Prompt Farm

Appendix D — Quick-Fill Worksheets

Appendix E — Filing Packet Builders and Cover Sheets

Appendix F — Starter Kit Folder Map and Naming Rules

Appendix G — Low-Energy Emergency Tools

Appendix H — BuddySign Operator Guide

Appendix A — Official VA Forms and Form Links

This appendix lists official VA forms referenced in the handbook.

Always verify that you are using the current version of a VA form before filing. VA forms can be updated.

Do not just open a blank form and guess. Read the related chapter first, then use the form that fits the job.

Exhibit A-1 — VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim

Use for veteran support statements, clarification statements, denial-response statements, issue summaries, and general explanation statements.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-21-4138-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/21-4138/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: July 2024.

Exhibit A-2 — VA Form 21-10210, Lay/Witness Statement

Use for lay and witness statements based on firsthand knowledge, observation, or lived experience.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-10210-ARE.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/21-10210/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: June 2021.

Exhibit A-3 — VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits

Use for filing an initial or new disability compensation claim.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-21-526ez-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/21-526ez/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: January 2026.

Exhibit A-4 — VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim

Use when submitting new and relevant evidence after a prior VA decision.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-20-0995-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/20-0995/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: May 2024.

Exhibit A-5 — VA Form 20-0996, Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review

Use when asking VA to review a prior decision based on the evidence already in the file.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-20-0996-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/20-0996/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: March 2024.

Exhibit A-6 — VA Form 10182, Decision Review Request: Board Appeal

Use when appealing to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA10182.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/10182/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: February 2025.

Exhibit A-7 — VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim

Use when preserving a potential effective date while preparing a claim.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-21-0966-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/21-0966/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: February 2023.

Exhibit A-8 — VA Form 20-10206, FOIA or Privacy Act Request

Use when requesting compensation, pension, benefit, or military records, including situations where the veteran needs to request a copy of a final C&P exam report or other claim records.

Official VA form link:

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-20-10206-are.pdf>

VA.gov form page: <https://www.va.gov/forms/20-10206/>

VA.gov revision date checked May 8, 2026: August 2023.

How to use Appendix A

1. **Identify what job the document needs to do.**
2. **Read the related chapter.**
3. **Pick the correct form.**
4. **Use AI to draft the statement or support language.**
5. **Review for truth and accuracy.**
6. **Save the final version in the Starter Kit.**

Appendix B — Visual Examples and Current Workflow Instruction Prompts

This appendix intentionally replaces nearly all screenshot walkthroughs with current-workflow prompt cards. The goal is not to freeze old screens in a book. The goal is to teach the veteran how to ask AI for current step-by-step instructions based on the screen, device, browser, and task in front of them.

Screens change. VA.gov changes. Adobe changes. BuddySign changes. ChatGPT changes. A printed screenshot can become outdated quickly.

Use visual examples for stable concepts. For workflows that change often, use the Current Workflow Instruction Prompts below. The veteran can paste the prompt into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy, describe the device and screen, or upload a current redacted screenshot, and ask for step-by-step help.

Do not upload full SSNs, banking information, or unnecessary sensitive data into AI tools. Redact private information when a screenshot can be explained without it.

These same prompt cards are saved as individual files in your Starter Kit under 00 START HERE / CURRENT_WORKFLOW_PROMPT_CARDS / so you can open them on your computer while working.

Current Workflow Instruction Prompts

Use these prompts when a website, app, or screen has changed. Tell AI the device, browser/app, and goal. If safe, upload a redacted screenshot of the current screen.

Current Instructions Prompt - Secure Messaging

I am a veteran trying to use VA.gov or My HealthVet Secure Messaging. My device is: [iPhone / Android / Windows laptop / Mac]. My browser or app is: [Chrome / Safari / VA app / not sure]. My goal is: send a message to my VA provider and save proof of what I sent. Give me current, step-by-step instructions in plain English. Tell me what words or buttons to look for. If there are multiple paths, give me the most likely path first. Tell me how to save a copy or screenshot for my claim file. Remind me not to exaggerate symptoms or write anything untrue.

Current Instructions Prompt - VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat

I am a veteran trying to use VA Health Chat or Nurse Chat. My device is: [phone/computer]. My goal is: explain active symptoms, get appropriate guidance, and save the chat record for my claim file. Give me current step-by-step instructions. Tell me what to look for, what information to have ready, how to describe symptoms honestly, and how to save the chat summary or screenshots.

Current Instructions Prompt - Blue Button Report

I need to download my VA Blue Button report for my claim file. My device is: [phone/computer]. My goal is to save a PDF or downloadable report that includes: [appointments / problems list / medications / notes / labs / secure messages / all available records]. Give me current step-by-step

instructions for finding and downloading the Blue Button report. Also tell me what date range to choose, what record categories to include, how to name the file, where to save it in my VA Claim AI Evidence Builder Starter Kit, and what sensitive information I should avoid uploading into random AI tools.

Current Instructions Prompt - C-File / FOIA Request

I need current instructions for requesting my VA claim file, C-file, C&P exam report, or claim records using VA Form 20-10206 or the current VA process. My device is: [phone/computer]. Give me current step-by-step instructions, official-source reminders, what form or online process to look for, what records to request, how to save the submitted request and receipt, and where to store it in my Starter Kit.

Current Instructions Prompt - Adobe Reader Backup Signing

I need current instructions for using Adobe Acrobat Reader as a backup way to open, fill, sign, save, or print a PDF. My device is: [Windows / Mac / iPhone / Android]. Give me step-by-step instructions. Explain how to avoid overwriting the original file, how to save a final copy, and when BuddySign may be easier for a remote witness statement.

Current Instructions Prompt - Windows Print to PDF

I need to save or split records using Windows Print to PDF. My goal is: [save a web page / split a large PDF / save selected pages]. Give me current, step-by-step instructions for Windows. Tell me how to choose page ranges, name the file, check the output, and save it in the Starter Kit.

Current Instructions Prompt - VA.gov Evidence Upload / Claim Letters / Claim Status

I need current instructions for using VA.gov to [upload evidence / download claim letters / check claim status]. My device is: [phone/computer]. Give me plain-English steps. Tell me what buttons or words to look for, how to save receipts or confirmation pages, how to name the file, and where to save it in my Starter Kit.

Current Screen Help Prompt

I am stuck on this screen. I will describe it or upload a redacted screenshot. Tell me what I am looking at, what the safest next step is, what not to click if it could submit something by accident, and what screenshot or receipt I should save for my claim file.

Prompt Card and Visual Example Map

VA.gov and Setup Prompt Cards

Figure B-001 — VA.gov Sign-In or Access Screen

Prompt card for: where the veteran begins the sign-in process.

Current-path prompt: I need to sign in to VA.gov. My device is [phone/computer] and my sign-in method is [Login.gov / ID.me / DS Logon / not sure]. Give me current step-by-step instructions, what buttons or words to look for, and how to avoid submitting or changing anything by accident.

Figure B-002 — VA Health Tools / My HealtheVet Access

Prompt card for: where the veteran reaches health tools through VA.gov.

Current-path prompt: I need to find VA health tools or My HealtheVet through VA.gov. My device is [phone/computer]. Give me current steps to find records, appointments, secure messages, and Blue Button material. Tell me what to save in my claim folder.

Figure B-003 — Secure Messaging Access Point

Prompt card for: where secure messaging can be accessed from the VA health tools area.

Current-path prompt: I need to find Secure Messaging on VA.gov or My HealtheVet. My device is [phone/computer]. Give me current steps, what recipient/care team choices mean, and how to save proof of what I sent.

Acrobat and PDF Tool Prompt Cards

Figure B-020 — Adobe Acrobat Reader Download / Install

Prompt card for: where to get Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Current-path prompt: I need to download or open Adobe Acrobat Reader using the free version only. My device is [Windows / Mac / iPhone / Android]. Give me current safe steps and warn me away from paid-trial traps if I only need basic PDF viewing/filling/signing.

Figure B-021 — Acrobat Reader on Phone

Prompt card for: Acrobat Reader on a mobile device. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to use Acrobat Reader on my phone to open, fill, sign, save, or share a PDF. My device is [iPhone / Android]. Give me current step-by-step instructions using the free app when possible.

Figure B-022 — Acrobat Fill & Sign Area

Prompt card for: where the Fill & Sign tools are located.

Current-path prompt: I am trying to find Fill & Sign or equivalent tools in Acrobat Reader. My device is [phone/computer]. Tell me current menu names to look for and what to do if the toolbar looks different.

Figure B-023 — PDF Ready to Save

Prompt card for: a completed PDF ready to be saved.

Current-path prompt: I filled out a PDF and need to save the completed version without losing my work. My device is [phone/computer]. Give me current steps and a good VA claim file name.

Figure B-024 — Acrobat Reader Signing Tool

Prompt card for: the signing tool used for backup manual PDF signing.

Current-path prompt: My witness or I need to place our own signature on a PDF using free Acrobat Reader as a backup workflow. Give current steps. Remind me that the witness must personally review and sign their own statement.

Figure B-025 — Add Signature Panel

Prompt card for: where a signature can be added in Acrobat Reader.

Current-path prompt: I am looking for the Add Signature or Add Initials panel in Acrobat Reader. My screen looks different. Give me current places to check and what not to click if it starts a paid workflow.

Figure B-026 — Signed PDF Ready to Save

Prompt card for: a PDF after signature placement.

Current-path prompt: I have a signed PDF and need to save, rename, and store it in my Starter Kit. Tell me current save/share steps and where the signed copy belongs.

Screenshot Workflow Prompt Cards

Figure B-030 — Windows Snipping Tool

Prompt card for: how to capture part of the screen.

Current-path prompt: I need to take a screenshot or snip part of my screen. My device is [Windows / Mac / iPhone / Android]. Give me current steps and remind me to crop or redact sensitive information before uploading it to AI.

Figure B-031 — Screenshot Uploaded into ChatGPT

Prompt card for: a screenshot attached to a chat message. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I want to upload a screenshot into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy and ask what the screen means. Tell me how to describe my goal, what details to redact, and what prompt to paste.

Figure B-032 — VA.gov Confusing Screen Example

Prompt card for: an example of a screen the veteran can ask AI to explain. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I am stuck on a confusing VA.gov screen. I will describe it or upload a redacted screenshot. Tell me what I am looking at, what the safest next step is, and what not to click if it could submit, cancel, or change something important.

Starter Kit / Folder Prompt Cards

Figure B-040 — Master VA Disability Claims Folder

Prompt card for: the root folder and major subfolders. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me create the root VA DISABILITY CLAIMS folder and the main subfolders on my device. Give me exact folder names and tell me what goes in each folder.

Figure B-041 — START HERE Folder

Prompt card for: the command-center folder for master tracking tools. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me build the START HERE folder with a master claim index, condition list, current ratings, timeline, to-do checklist, project chat prompts, and claim session summaries.

Figure B-042 — Claims by Issue Folder

Prompt card for: issue folders organized by condition or claim area. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me create issue-specific folders for [condition list]. Tell me which folders I need for medical evidence, service evidence, lay statements, buddy statements, C&P exams, filing packet, receipts, and session summaries.

Figure B-043 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank

Prompt card for: where buddy statements, drafts, and BuddySign outputs are stored. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me set up the Buddy and Lay Statement Bank. Tell me where to store drafts, BuddySign outputs, witness contact worksheets, and legacy Acrobat-signed PDFs.

Figure B-044 — Claim Session Summaries Folder

Prompt card for: where AI continuity summaries are stored. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me save Claim Session Summaries so future AI sessions can pick up where the last one ended. Tell me where to save master summaries and issue-specific summaries.

Reusable Form Template Prompt Cards

Figure B-050 — 21-4138 Master Template

Prompt card for: the reusable 21-4138 master template concept. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to download the current VA Form 21-4138 and make a reusable template. Give me current official-source steps, what to prefill, what not to prefill, and how to save the blank master copy.

Figure B-051 — 21-10210 Master Template

Prompt card for: the reusable 21-10210 master template concept. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to download the current VA Form 21-10210 and make a reusable lay/witness template. Give me current official-source steps, what to prefill, what to leave blank, and how to save the master copy.

Secure Messaging Prompt Cards

Figure B-060 — Secure Messaging Entry Point

Prompt card for: where the veteran begins the secure messaging workflow.

Current-path prompt: I need to find the Secure Messaging entry point. My device is [phone/computer]. Give current navigation steps and what words/buttons to look for.

Figure B-061 — Secure Messaging Inbox

Prompt card for: the secure message inbox.

Current-path prompt: I am in Secure Messaging and need to understand the inbox/sent folders. Give me current steps to find old messages, sent messages, and message threads.

Figure B-062 — Start New Secure Message

Prompt card for: where to begin a new message.

Current-path prompt: I need to start a new secure message. Give current steps, warnings, and what information I should have ready before writing.

Figure B-063 — Select Care Team or Recipient

Prompt card for: how to choose the appropriate provider or care team.

Current-path prompt: I need to select the right care team or recipient for a secure message. Explain current options and how to avoid sending a message to the wrong team.

Figure B-064 — Secure Message Subject Line

Prompt card for: the subject line field.

Current-path prompt: I need to write a useful secure-message subject line for [symptom/condition/request]. Give me a clear subject line and tell me how to keep it factual.

Figure B-065 — Secure Message Body

Prompt card for: where to write the secure message.

Current-path prompt: I need to write the body of a secure message about [symptoms/request]. Help me keep it concise, truthful, medically useful, and not exaggerated.

Figure B-066 — Review Before Sending

Prompt card for: the review step before sending. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I am ready to send a secure message. Give me a pre-send checklist: accuracy, symptoms, dates, medication, attachments, privacy, and whether I should save a copy first.

Figure B-067 — Sent Secure Message Confirmation

Prompt card for: confirmation that the message was sent. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I sent a secure message and need to save proof. Tell me current ways to save or screenshot the sent confirmation and where to store it in my Starter Kit.

Figure B-068 — Follow-Up Secure Message Example

Prompt card for: a follow-up message after an appointment. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to write a follow-up secure message after an appointment or symptom change. Help me draft a short factual follow-up and save it properly.

Figure B-069 — Sent Message Record

Prompt card for: the sent message record. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to find and save the sent-message record. Give current steps to locate the sent message and preserve it for my claim file.

Figure B-070 — Save Message Screenshot or PDF

Prompt card for: saving the message record. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to save a secure message as a screenshot, PDF, or copied text. Give current steps for my device and tell me how to name the file.

Figure B-071 — Store Secure Message Record in Starter Kit

Prompt card for: where to save the message record in the folder system. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I saved a secure-message record. Tell me where it belongs in my Starter Kit and whether it supports treatment history, symptom reporting, continuity, or functional impact.

VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat Prompt Cards

Figure B-080 — VA Health Chat / Nurse Chat Entry Point

Prompt card for: where to enter the chat workflow.

Current-path prompt: I need to find VA Health Chat or Nurse Chat. My device is [phone/computer]. Give current navigation steps and tell me what to do if the chat option is unavailable.

Figure B-081 — Starting a Health Chat

Prompt card for: the beginning of the chat session.

Current-path prompt: I am starting a VA Health Chat. Give me current steps and what information to have ready before I describe my symptoms.

Figure B-082 — Choosing the Reason for Chat

Prompt card for: selecting the reason for the chat.

Current-path prompt: I need to choose the reason for the health chat. Explain likely options and how to pick the one that best fits [symptoms/problem].

Figure B-083 — Describing Active Symptoms

Prompt card for: how symptoms are entered or described.

Current-path prompt: I need to describe active symptoms in a health chat. Help me explain onset, severity, duration, red flags, medications, and what I need without exaggerating.

Figure B-084 — Nurse Chat Response

Prompt card for: a response or guidance from the chat.

Current-path prompt: I received a nurse/health chat response. Help me understand what it means, what I should do next, and what to save for my claim file.

Figure B-085 — Chat Summary or Next Steps

Prompt card for: the summary or instruction from the chat.

Current-path prompt: I need to preserve the chat summary or next steps. Give current save/screenshot/PDF options and a clean file name.

Figure B-086 — Saving the Chat Record or Screenshot

Prompt card for: how to preserve the record for the Starter Kit. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to save the VA Health Chat record in my Starter Kit. Tell me where it belongs and what claim issue it may support.

AI / Project Chat Prompt Cards**Figure B-100 — ChatGPT Issue-Thread Setup**

Prompt card for: a clean issue-specific thread. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me create one clean ChatGPT issue thread or Project for [condition]. Tell me what records to upload first, what prompt to paste, and how to save a session summary.

Figure B-101 — VA Claim Battle Buddy Prompt Example

Prompt card for: a Battle Buddy-style prompt. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Give me a VA Claim Battle Buddy-style prompt for [condition] that asks simple questions one at a time, uses only my facts/records, and does not invent facts.

Figure B-102 — Project Chat Setup Prompt

Prompt card for: the setup prompt for a condition-specific Project. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me set up a condition-specific Project for [condition]. Give me copy/paste project instructions, upload rules, privacy warnings, and a session-summary habit.

Figure B-103 — Claim Session Summary Example

Prompt card for: a portable AI session summary. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts, evidence found, gaps, drafts created, top 3 next moves, and questions for next time.

Windows Print to PDF / Records Prompt Cards**Figure B-110 — Windows Print to PDF Print Dialog**

Prompt card for: the print dialog. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to use Windows Print to PDF to save or split pages. My goal is [save web page / split large PDF / save selected pages]. Give current steps and a good file name.

Figure B-111 — Page Range Selected

Prompt card for: how to select smaller page ranges. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I need to select a page range from a large PDF. Tell me how to pick ranges, avoid overwriting the original, and name each chunk clearly.

Figure B-112 — Save Split PDF Chunk

Prompt card for: the save step after splitting. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I am saving a split PDF chunk. Tell me where to save it, how to name it, and how to track which chunks have already been uploaded to AI.

Figure B-113 — Example Chunked PDF Files

Prompt card for: chunked PDF files with usable names. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me name chunked PDF files for [condition/source/date range] so the AI and I can tell what each chunk contains.

Writing / Filing / Exam / Decision Prompt Cards

Figure B-120 — Weak Wording vs Strong Wording Example

Prompt card for: how vague language can be rewritten into clearer claim-useful language. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Review this weak wording and rewrite it into clearer claim-useful language. Keep it truthful. Tie symptoms to frequency, severity, duration, flare-ups, functional loss, and work impact. Do not invent facts.

Figure B-130 — Example Filing Packet Ready to Submit

Prompt card for: a clean issue packet ready to submit. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me build a clean filing packet for [condition]. Tell me what belongs in the packet, what is redundant, whether I need a cover sheet, and where to save the final version.

Figure B-140 — Example Phone-Sized C&P Cheat Sheet

Prompt card for: a compact C&P exam prep note. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me make a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for [condition]. Include onset, current symptoms, flare-ups, repeated-use limits, work impact, daily-life impact, and what not to minimize.

Figure B-150 — Favorable Findings Section of a Decision Letter

Prompt card for: where favorable findings may appear in a VA decision. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I am looking at a VA decision letter. Help me identify favorable findings, what VA conceded, and how to reuse those findings in my next step.

Figure B-151 — Reasons for Decision Section of a Decision Letter

Prompt card for: where VA explains the reasons for the decision. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: I am looking at the Reasons for Decision section. Help me identify exactly why VA denied or rated the issue, what evidence was missing, and what lane/evidence may fix it.

Figure B-160 — Symptom Prep Note Before Appointment

Prompt card for: a short prep note for medical visits. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Help me prepare a short symptom note before a medical appointment for [condition]. Keep it factual, medically useful, and tied to symptoms, functional limits, flare-ups, and treatment questions.

Figure B-170 — Review Lane Comparison Chart

Prompt card for: a simple comparison of Supplemental Claim, HLR, and Board review. (Sanitized illustrative example.)

Current-path prompt: Compare Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, and Board Appeal for my situation. Explain which lane fits, what evidence can/cannot be added, deadlines to verify, and what to ask an accredited rep if unsure.

BuddySign Prompt Cards

Figure B-200 — BuddySign New Buddy Statement Screen

Prompt card for: where the veteran starts a new BuddySign buddy statement after logging in.

Current-path prompt: Walk me through starting a new BuddySign document for a buddy/witness statement. Explain what the veteran enters, what the witness will see, and what to check before locking.

Figure B-201 — BuddySign Veteran and Buddy Information Fields

Prompt card for: the veteran-controlled fields for veteran name, condition, buddy name, buddy email, optional buddy phone, and relationship.

Current-path prompt: Explain the BuddySign veteran-controlled fields: veteran name, condition, buddy name, buddy email, optional buddy phone, and relationship. Tell me what not to put in the statement.

Figure B-202 — BuddySign Starter Template and Statement Text Box

Prompt card for: the starter template, statement text box, and bracket-removal reminder before locking.

Current-path prompt: Help me use the BuddySign starter template and clean the statement text box. Check for bracket prompts, unsupported facts, exaggeration, and facts outside the witness's personal knowledge.

Figure B-203 — BuddySign Signing Invite Email

Prompt card for: the BuddySign signing invite email workflow.

Current-path prompt: Explain what the BuddySign signing invite email does, what the witness should expect, and what to do if the email is not received.

Figure B-204 — BuddySign Witness Review and Certification Page

Prompt card for: the witness review and certification page.

Current-path prompt: Explain the BuddySign witness review and certification page. Remind me that the witness must personally review, type their name, check the certification box, and sign only if true.

Figure B-205 — BuddySign Local PDF Output / Print Preview

Prompt card for: the local browser print/PDF output workflow for the signed lay or witness statement packet.

Current-path prompt: Walk me through the BuddySign local print/PDF output step. Explain that veteran PII used for the print output should not be stored or transmitted by the app workflow, and tell me where to save the PDF.

Figure B-206 — BuddySign Dashboard Signed Status

Prompt card for: the veteran dashboard after the buddy statement has been signed.

Current-path prompt: Explain what the Signed status means on the BuddySign dashboard and what I should download, save, and upload with the claim evidence when appropriate.

Appendix C — Prompt Farm

This appendix contains the full working prompt library for the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder.

The veteran should not have to invent prompts from scratch.

Use this method:

1. Pick the prompt that matches the job.
2. Paste it into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.
3. Upload the record, screenshot, statement, or notes if needed.
4. Answer simple follow-up questions.
5. Save the useful output in the Starter Kit.

Rules for every prompt:

- Do not invent facts.
- Use only what I say and what appears in uploaded records.
- If something is missing, say exactly what is missing.
- Keep the next step practical.
- When overwhelmed, give me only the top 3 next moves.

Master System Prompts

Prompt C-1 — Master Orientation Prompt

I want to use the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder in the most automated way possible. Assume I am a tired disabled veteran and do not want long reading assignments or complicated task lists. I want simple steps, exact prompts, and the minimum amount of manual work. For every stage of this process, tell me what to upload, what you need from me, what form or statement I may need, and give me copy/paste language whenever possible. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-2 — Master Issue-Analysis Prompt

I want you to act as the AI workhorse for this VA claim issue. I will upload records, decision letters, forms, and rough notes. Your job is to review the evidence, build my timeline, identify favorable facts, identify evidence gaps, tell me what type of claim or review lane makes the most sense, and draft the strongest truthful statement language you can for me to review. Keep your instructions simple and step-by-step. Do not give me a giant reading assignment. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-3 — Master Low-Energy Prompt

Assume I am low on energy, in pain, and mentally overloaded. Break this process down into the smallest possible next step. Tell me only what I need to do right now, what I need to upload right now, and what prompt I should paste right now.

Prompt C-4 — Master Coaching Prompt

I want you to coach me through this VA claim like a smart, practical claims strategist. Ask me simple questions one at a time in plain English. Start with what hurts, when it started, whether I went to a military doctor, whether I went to a VA or civilian doctor, whether I have those records, whether the issue got worse, and how it affects my daily life and work. After you ask enough questions, build me a claims roadmap, an evidence action plan, and a target priority hit list divided into easy, medium, and difficult. Then tell me exactly what statement or evidence I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Project Chat / Continuity Prompts

Prompt C-5 — Evidence Builder Project Setup Prompt

I want to create a VA Claim Evidence Builder project for this issue. Use VA Claim Battle Buddy style. Do not invent facts. Use only what I say and what my uploaded records show. Ask simple questions one at a time. Keep track of confirmed facts, possible facts, missing evidence, and next questions. Build my service timeline, symptom history, evidence map, statements, C&P prep, and top 3 next moves. At the end of each meaningful session, create a Claim Session Summary I can save in my Starter Kit and re-upload later if needed.

Prompt C-6 — Claim Session Summary Prompt

Create a Claim Session Summary for this session. Include the claim issue, records reviewed, confirmed facts, possible facts needing confirmation, useful evidence found, evidence gaps, statements drafted, top 3 next moves, and questions for next session. Keep it organized so I can save it in my Starter Kit and re-upload it later if needed.

Prompt C-7 — Continue From Claim Session Summary Prompt

I am uploading a prior Claim Session Summary. Use it to continue the work from the last session. Do not assume facts beyond what the summary and uploaded records show. First tell me what issue we were working on, what was already confirmed, what was still missing, and the top 3 next moves. Then ask me the next simple question.

Prompt C-8 — Project Chat Prompt Builder

Help me create a copy/paste setup prompt for a new ChatGPT Project for this claim area: [mental health / musculoskeletal / ENT-hearing-sinus / headaches / sleep apnea / GI / skin / secondary claim / appeal]. The project should use VA Claim Battle Buddy style: no invented facts, one question at a time, confirmed facts separated from possible facts, evidence gaps clearly marked, and a Claim Session Summary at the end of each meaningful session.

Records and Evidence Prompts

Prompt C-9 — Records-to-Roadmap Prompt

I am uploading records for multiple issues. After reviewing them, build me a claims roadmap. For each possible issue, tell me whether it looks strongest as direct service connection, secondary service connection, increased rating, Supplemental Claim, HLR argument, or Board support. Then rank the issues as easy, medium, and difficult and explain why in simple language. Finish by telling me the top 3 actions I should take next. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-10 — Records Chunk Analysis Prompt

I am uploading one chunk of records for [condition]. This chunk is part of a larger claim file. It contains [type of records] from about [time period]. Analyze it for diagnosis evidence, timeline points, continuity, nexus clues, severity, functional loss, and work impact. Then tell me what this chunk proves, what it does not prove yet, and what upload I should give you next.

Prompt C-11 — Blue Button Miner Prompt

Review my Blue Button report and extract entries that support diagnosis, persistence, worsening, medication history, specialist care, objective findings, functional impairment, work impact, and continuity for [condition]. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-12 — Claims File Analyzer Prompt

Review my C-file materials and tell me what prior decisions, favorable findings, C&P exams, negative findings, formal findings, evidence lists, and overlooked evidence matter most for my current strategy.

Prompt C-13 — Handwritten Record Prompt

Some of my records are handwritten, messy, or hard to read. Do your best to read and analyze them. If any part is too unclear to read confidently, tell me exactly what is unclear instead of guessing.

Prompt C-14 — Re-Analysis Prompt for Long Threads

You already have my earlier uploaded records in this thread. Please look back at them and analyze them again for this issue. Use the records I already uploaded, not just the latest message. Tell me what earlier records matter most for the task at hand.

Claim Theory and Readiness Prompts

Prompt C-15 — Claim Lane Classifier Prompt

Based on my records, decision letters, and current situation, tell me whether this issue looks strongest as direct service connection, increased rating, secondary service connection, Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Explain why in plain English, identify the biggest evidence gap, and tell me what document or evidence I should build next. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-16 — Claim Readiness Prompt

Review this claim in its current state. Do not guarantee the outcome. Tell me whether the evidence looks weak, fair, good, or strong right now. Explain why. Identify the weakest part of the claim and the top three things that would most improve it before filing.

Prompt C-17 — Pre-Filing Audit Prompt

Act like a tough VA rater reviewing my proposed claim for [condition]. Based on these records and statements, tell me whether I have enough for: (1) current disability, (2) in-service event or primary-condition foundation, (3) nexus or continuity, and (4) current severity. Then tell me the biggest holes and what documents or statements would help most. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-18 — Evidence Gap Prompt

Review this issue and tell me what is strongest, what is weakest, what is missing, and what one or two pieces of evidence would strengthen it most before filing. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-19 — Target Priority Hit List Prompt

Build me a target priority hit list from my uploaded records and answers. Divide the possible claim actions into easy, medium, and difficult. For each one, tell me why it landed there and what specific action would move it closer to success.

Prompt C-20 — Top-3 Next Moves Prompt

Do not give me 20 tasks. Based on everything so far, give me only the top 3 next actions I should take right now to improve my VA claims position.

Lay and Buddy Statement Prompts

Prompt C-21 — Lay Statement Interview Prompt

I need help building a VA lay statement for [condition]. Do not draft it yet. First interview me like a smart claims assistant. Ask me targeted questions one at a time about onset, in-service events, symptoms, progression,

flare-ups, treatment, daily limitations, work impact, and anything else needed to make the statement strong and complete. After I answer, turn my answers into a clean, truthful VA lay statement without inventing facts.

Prompt C-22 — Lay Statement Generator Prompt

Using my notes and records, draft a VA lay statement that is honest, detailed, and strongly focused on timeline, symptom progression, flare-ups, treatment history, functional impact, daily-life impact, and work impact. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-23 — Buddy Statement Interview Prompt

I need help building a VA buddy statement for a witness. Do not draft it yet. First interview me like a claims assistant and ask targeted questions about who the witness is, how they know me, what they personally saw, what time period they knew me, what changed over time, and what facts they can honestly say from personal observation. After I answer, turn it into a clean draft from the witness perspective for them to review and approve.

Prompt C-24 — Buddy Letter Generator Prompt

Using these notes, draft a VA buddy statement from the witness perspective. Keep it factual, personal, and observation-based. Focus only on what the witness directly saw, heard, knew, or observed. Do not add medical conclusions the witness is not qualified to make. Do not invent facts.

Prompt C-25 — Buddy Statement Quality Check Prompt

I drafted this buddy statement from rough notes. Review it for anything that sounds exaggerated, speculative, legally sloppy, robotic, or like the witness could not personally know it. Rewrite it so the witness can comfortably review, approve, and sign it as true.

Prompt C-26 — BuddySign Next-Step Prompt

I have a buddy statement draft ready. Review it for truth, clarity, and firsthand observation only. Then give me a final clean version I can copy into BuddySign.com so my witness can personally review and sign it. Also give me a short checklist for using BuddySign and saving the signed output in my Starter Kit.

Medical Appointment / Secure Messaging Prompts

Prompt C-27 — Medical Appointment Prep Prompt

Help me prepare for my next medical appointment for [condition]. Give me a short note covering symptoms, frequency, severity, flare-ups, functional loss, work impact, treatment problems, and what I want documented in the chart.

Prompt C-28 — Secure Message Drafting Prompt

Draft a concise secure message to my VA provider about [condition]. Include current symptoms, flare-ups, worsening, functional limitations, treatment issues, and a polite request that these problems be documented in my chart. Keep it factual, respectful, and non-urgent.

Prompt C-29 — Follow-Up Message After Appointment Prompt

I just had a medical appointment. Help me write a short follow-up message confirming the symptoms, limitations, worsening, and treatment concerns I reported so there is a clean record in the chart. Keep it factual and respectful.

Prompt C-30 — Nurse Triage / VA Health Chat Prep Prompt

Turn these current symptoms into a short organized script I can use if I call nurse triage, VA Health Connect, or VA Health Chat today. Focus on symptom onset, severity, what makes it worse, functional impact, and what help I need.

C&P Exam Prompts

Prompt C-31 — C&P Prep Sheet Prompt

Based on my records, create a phone-sized C&P exam cheat sheet for [condition]. Include onset, symptoms, flare-ups, functional loss, work impact, treatment tried, and the main facts I should clearly communicate. Keep it concise and truthful.

Prompt C-32 — Likely Examiner Questions Prompt

Give me the most likely C&P exam questions for [condition] and help me answer them in a truthful, specific, veteran-friendly way using my records and symptoms.

Prompt C-33 — C&P Weak-Point Prep Prompt

Based on my records and claim history, tell me what parts of my case a C&P examiner may question, minimize, or misunderstand. Then help me prepare truthful, specific answers that address those weak points.

Prompt C-34 — Post-C&P Exam Debrief Prompt

I just finished a C&P exam for [condition]. Ask me what happened while it is fresh. Help me document what the examiner asked, what I answered, what measurements or tests happened, what seemed missing or wrong, and whether I should write a post-exam note for my records. Do not invent facts.

Decision and Review Lane Prompts

Prompt C-35 — Decision-Letter Analysis Prompt

Review this VA decision letter and tell me: (1) what was granted or denied, (2) what favorable findings I should preserve, (3) what evidence the VA relied on, (4) what reasons they gave, (5) what errors or weaknesses are visible, and (6) which next step makes the most sense: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal.

Prompt C-36 — Review-Lane Choice Prompt

I am providing my decision letter and evidence summary. Tell me whether the best next step is Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or Board Appeal. Explain the real problem in the case, why that lane fits best, and what I should do next.

Prompt C-37 — Supplemental Claim Evidence List Prompt

Based on this denial, tell me the top 5 pieces of new and relevant evidence that would most strengthen a Supplemental Claim. Explain which denial reason each piece of evidence would answer.

Prompt C-38 — HLR Conference Prep Prompt

Based on this decision and evidence, create a concise Higher-Level Review conference script. Focus on errors in the decision and evidence already in the file. Do not add new facts.

Prompt C-39 — Board Appeal Issue Summary Prompt

Based on this claim history, decision letter, and evidence summary, create a clear Board Appeal issue summary. Identify the issue, procedural history, favorable findings, disputed facts, strongest evidence, and what the Board should understand. Do not invent facts.

Screenshot / Folder / Packet Prompts

Prompt C-40 — Screenshot Help Prompt

I am stuck on this screen. I am uploading a screenshot. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should click or do next. If there are risks, deadlines, missing information, or better options, explain them clearly.

Prompt C-41 — Starter Kit Folder Structure Prompt

I want a clean file structure for my VA disability claims. Based on my claimed conditions, tell me exactly which folders I should create and how I should name them so I do not lose track of evidence, statements, BuddySign outputs, Claim Session Summaries, and filing packets.

Prompt C-42 — Cover Sheet Builder Prompt

Create a one-page evidence cover sheet for my VA claim. List each claimed condition and the evidence I am submitting for it, so a VA reviewer can quickly see what is included.

Prompt C-43 — Filing Packet Review Prompt

Review this filing packet before I submit it. Tell me whether the issue is clearly identified, whether the statement matches the evidence, whether anything important is missing, whether the packet is bloated, and whether it is organized enough for VA to follow easily.

Prompt C-44 — Final Evidence Builder Plan Prompt

Build my evidence plan from this point forward. Based on my records, statements, decisions, and current claim position, tell me: (1) what is strongest, (2) what is weakest, (3) what is missing, (4) what I should hit first, (5) what I should leave alone for now, and (6) the top 3 next actions I should take.

Appendix D — Quick-Fill Worksheets

This appendix exists to reduce workload.

These worksheets are meant to be copied, filled fast, and pasted into ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.

The veteran should not have to reinvent structure every time.

Exhibit D-1 — Claim Issue Summary Worksheet

Condition / issue:

Claim type I think this is:

Direct / Secondary / Increase / Supplemental / HLR / Board / Not Sure

What hurts or what is wrong:

When it started:

Did it start in service:

What service event / duty / injury / exposure is involved:

Current symptoms:

How it affects work:

How it affects daily life:

Best records I already have:

Biggest thing I think is missing:

What I want ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy to help me build next:

Exhibit D-2 — Lay Statement Build Worksheet

Condition claimed:

When it started:

In-service event / injury / illness / exposure:

Symptoms during service:

Symptoms after service:

Current symptoms:

Flare-ups:

Functional impact at work:

Functional impact at home:

Sleep impact:

Treatment history:

Medications / side effects:

Important dates:

Best supporting records:

What the denial said was missing, if any:

Exhibit D-3 — Buddy Statement Build Worksheet

Witness full name:

Witness phone:

Witness email:

Relationship to veteran:

Time period known:

How often they saw the veteran:

Event personally witnessed:

Symptoms personally observed:

Changes over time personally observed:

Work or daily-life problems personally observed:

Anything the witness should avoid claiming because they did not personally know it:

Exhibit D-4 — Records Intake Worksheet

Issue:

Record source:

VA / Private / Service / C-file / Decision Letter / Buddy / DBQ / Other

Date range:

What this packet contains:

What this packet may help prove:

Diagnosis / Service Event / Continuity / Nexus / Severity / Work Impact / Functional Loss

What I want the AI to extract from it:

Exhibit D-5 — Evidence Gap Worksheet

Issue:

What is strong:

What is weak:

What is missing:

Do I have diagnosis evidence:

Do I have service event evidence:

Do I have continuity evidence:

Do I have nexus evidence:

Do I have current severity evidence:

Best next document to build:

Best next record to upload:

Exhibit D-6 — Decision Letter Breakdown Worksheet

Issue decided:

Granted / Denied / Underrated

Percentage assigned, if granted:

Effective date, if applicable:

Favorable findings:

VA's stated reason for denial or low rating:

What evidence VA listed:

What VA seems to have ignored or misunderstood:

What I think the real problem is:

Missing evidence / Bad reasoning / Underrated severity / Weak exam / Other

Best next lane:

Exhibit D-7 — Secondary Claim Reality-Test Worksheet

Primary service-connected condition:

Possible secondary condition:

What is the theory:

Caused by / Aggravated by / Altered gait / Medication side effects / Overuse / Sleep issues / Chronic pain fallout / Other

What records already hint at this link:

What records are missing:

Do I likely need nexus help:

Does this sound like a true separate condition or just an increase issue on the primary condition:

Exhibit D-8 — C&P Cheat Sheet Worksheet

Condition:

When it started:

Main symptoms:

How often they happen:

Flare-ups:

What makes it worse:

Functional loss:

Work impact:

Treatment history:

Three facts I must clearly say during the exam:

Exhibit D-9 — Medical Appointment Prep Worksheet

Condition:

Top symptoms:

Frequency:

Severity:

Flare-ups:

What makes it worse:

Functional limits:

Work limits:

Treatment problems:

What I want documented in the chart:

Exhibit D-10 — Top-3 Next Moves Worksheet

Issue:

What is strongest right now:

What is weakest right now:

Best next statement to build:

Best next record to upload:

Best next lane / form decision:

Top 3 next moves only:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Exhibit D-11 — BuddySign Witness Contact Worksheet

Veteran name:

Claim issue:

Witness full name:

Witness phone:

Witness email:

Relationship to veteran:

Time period known:

What the witness personally saw / heard / observed:

What the witness should not claim:

Statement draft file name:

BuddySign output file name:

Saved in issue folder:

Saved in Buddy/Lay Statement Bank:

Exhibit D-12 — Claim Session Summary Worksheet

Date:

Claim issue:

AI thread / Project name:

Records reviewed:

Confirmed facts:

Possible facts needing confirmation:

Useful evidence found:

Evidence gaps:

Statements drafted:

Files created:

Top 3 next moves:

Questions for next session:

Saved location in Starter Kit:

Exhibit D-13 — Project Chat Setup Worksheet

Claim area:

Project name:

Records to upload first:

Decision letters to upload:

Medical chunks to upload:

Lay statements needed:

Buddy statements needed:

C&P prep needed:

Top goal for this Project:

Claim Session Summary saved after session: yes / no

Exhibit D-14 — Claim Evidence Scorecard Worksheet

Condition / issue:

Current diagnosis or current symptoms: Green / Yellow / Red

In-service event, injury, exposure, duty condition, or primary service-connected condition: Green / Yellow / Red

Nexus, continuity, aggravation, or presumptive bridge: Green / Yellow / Red

Current severity and rating evidence: Green / Yellow / Red

Lay or buddy support: Green / Yellow / Red

Correct claim or review lane: Green / Yellow / Red

Effective-date or deadline risk: Low / Medium / High

Top 3 evidence gaps:

Top 3 next moves:

Exhibit D-15 — Denial Risk Scan Worksheet

Condition / issue:

Does VA clearly see a current disability? Yes / No / Unsure

Does VA clearly see the in-service event, exposure, duty condition, or primary service-connected condition? Yes / No / Unsure

Does VA clearly see the nexus, continuity, aggravation, or presumptive bridge? Yes / No / Unsure

Does VA clearly see current severity and functional impact? Yes / No / Unsure

Are all forms, deadlines, C&P exams, VA requests, and receipts under control? Yes / No / Unsure

Most likely denial risk:

What can be fixed before filing:

Exhibit D-16 — C&P Exam After-Action Worksheet

Exam date / time:

Location / contractor:

Examiner name if known:

Conditions examined:

Approximate time with examiner:

Questions examiner asked:

What I told the examiner:

Tests or measurements performed:

Goniometer used if range of motion was measured: Yes / No / Unsure / Not applicable

Flare-ups discussed: Yes / No

Repeated use discussed: Yes / No

Functional loss discussed: Yes / No

Work impact discussed: Yes / No

Daily-life impact discussed: Yes / No

Anything important examiner skipped:

Anything I forgot to say:

Save location in Starter Kit:

Exhibit D-17 — Rating Code Sheet Decoder Worksheet

Date of code sheet:

Service-connected conditions listed:

Diagnostic codes:

Current ratings:

Effective dates:

Past ratings / staged ratings:

Prior denials shown:

Bilateral factor clues:

SMC clues:

Questions for VA Claim Battle Buddy:

Exhibit D-18 — Effective Date Tracker Worksheet

Decision date:

One-year review deadline if applicable:

Issue / condition:

Lane chosen or being considered:

Receipts / proof saved:

Potential effective-date risk:

Next action before deadline:

Exhibit D-19 — Headache / Migraine Development Worksheet

Onset / first symptoms:

Direct or secondary theory:

Frequency:

Duration:

Severity:

Does it force stopping activity, lying down, dark/quiet room, or cancelled obligations?

Associated symptoms: nausea / vomiting / light sensitivity / sound sensitivity / aura / dizziness / cognitive fog / other

Work or economic impact:

Household / social impact:

Triggers:

Medication and treatment history:

Evidence already available:

Evidence still needed:

Exhibit D-20 — MSK Service Mechanism Worksheet

Body part / condition:

Service mechanism: acute event / cumulative overuse / both / unsure

Acute event, if any:

Cumulative service duties: running / marching / load carriage / lifting / vehicles / stairs / kneeling / awkward movement / PT / deployment work / other

When symptoms began:

Treatment in service, if any:

Reason treatment may be missing:

Post-service continuity:

Current diagnosis or symptoms:

Functional loss and flare-ups:

Witnesses who saw symptoms:

Evidence still needed:

Appendix E — Filing Packet Builders and Cover Sheets

This appendix exists to help the veteran build cleaner packets faster.

A filing packet should make the claim easier to understand, not harder.

The goal is not to dump evidence.

The goal is to submit the right evidence for the right issue in a way a stranger can follow.

Exhibit E-1 — Generic Evidence Cover Sheet Template

Veteran Name:

File Number / Last Four:

Date:

Claim / Issue:

This packet includes the following evidence in support of the claim:

- **Veteran statement**
- **Lay / witness statement(s)**
- **BuddySign signed output, if used**
- **VA treatment records**
- **Private treatment records**
- **Service records**
- **Nexus / DBQ evidence**
- **Other supporting documents**

Purpose of this packet:

This evidence is being submitted to support:

Direct service connection / Secondary service connection / Increased rating / Supplemental Claim / HLR argument / Board support

Exhibit E-2 — Direct Service Connection Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: Direct service connection

Include:

- **veteran statement**
 - **service evidence**
 - **current medical evidence**
 - **continuity evidence**
 - **buddy/witness statement if helpful**
 - **nexus evidence if available**
 - **cover sheet**
-

Exhibit E-3 — Secondary Claim Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: Secondary to [primary service-connected condition]

Include:

- **veteran statement explaining secondary theory**
 - **records showing the primary service-connected condition**
 - **records showing the new condition**
 - **records or opinion linking the two**
 - **aggravation evidence if relevant**
 - **buddy/witness statement if helpful**
 - **cover sheet**
-

Exhibit E-4 — Increased Rating Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: Increased rating for already service-connected condition

Include:

- **veteran severity statement**
 - **updated VA treatment records**
 - **updated private treatment records**
 - **flare-up and functional loss evidence**
 - **work impact evidence**
 - **buddy/spouse/coworker statement if helpful**
 - **cover sheet**
-

Exhibit E-5 — Supplemental Claim Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: Supplemental Claim with new and relevant evidence

Include:

- **short cover sheet**
 - **denial-response statement if useful**
 - **clearly identified new evidence**
 - **stronger lay/witness evidence**
 - **updated records or opinion evidence**
 - **BuddySign signed output if using a witness statement**
-

Exhibit E-6 — Higher-Level Review Argument Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: VA made an error on the existing record

Include:

- **short argument statement**
- **explanation of favorable evidence already in file**
- **explanation of error**
- **clear identification of what VA overlooked or misapplied**

- no new evidence if using Higher-Level Review
-

Exhibit E-7 — Board Appeal Support Packet Template

Issue:

Theory: Board-level review support

Include:

- issue summary
 - procedural history
 - strongest evidence summary
 - favorable findings preserved
 - key statement(s)
 - key records packet
 - witness statements if useful
 - clear explanation of what the Board should understand
-

Exhibit E-8 — Upload Checklist Cover Sheet

Before upload:

- Right form
- Right issue named
- Right claim or review lane selected
- Right statement attached
- Strongest evidence attached
- Buddy/witness signatures complete if applicable
- BuddySign signed output saved if used
- Claim Session Summary saved if AI work was important
- Copies saved in issue folder
- Copies saved in active filing packet folder
- File names cleaned up
- PDF opens correctly
- Submission receipt storage location ready

Appendix F — Starter Kit Folder Map and Naming Rules

This appendix is the control map for the corrected VA Claim AI Evidence Builder Starter Kit. The corrected kit root folder is named VA DISABILITY CLAIMS. Use this appendix when checking whether a file, prompt, signed BuddySign output, Claim Session Summary, or receipt is saved in the right place.

The Starter Kit may include optional helper folders and README files. Those are allowed. The key rule is that the core folder names below should stay consistent with the book, the prompts, and the BuddySign workflow.

Exhibit F-1 — Core Root Folder

VA DISABILITY CLAIMS/
 00 START HERE/
 01 BLANK VA FORMS/
 02 MASTER RECORDS/
 03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/
 04 ACTIVE FILING PACKETS/
 05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/
 06 ARCHIVE OLD OR DUPLICATE FILES/
 07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/

Exhibit F-2 — START HERE Control Center

00 START HERE/
 MASTER_CLAIM_INDEX
 MASTER_CONDITIONS_LIST
 MASTER_CURRENT_RATINGS
 MASTER_TIMELINE
 MASTER_TO_DO_CHECKLIST
 PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS/
 CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

PROJECT_CHAT_PROMPTS is where the reusable Evidence Builder Project setup prompts and condition add-ons belong. CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES is where portable AI session summaries belong.

Exhibit F-3 — Blank VA Forms Folder

01 BLANK VA FORMS/

VA 21-526EZ/

VA 20-0995/

VA 20-0996/

VA 21-4138/

VA 21-10210/

VA 21-0966/

VA 10182/

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL VA FORMS/

Optional additional forms may include VA 20-10206 for FOIA or Privacy Act requests, VA 21-0781 for PTSD stressor statements, VA 21-4142 / 21-4142a for medical-record authorization, VA 21-8940 for TDIU, and VA 21-4192 for employer information. Keep those extras separated so the core form map stays clean.

Exhibit F-4 — Master Records Folder

02 MASTER RECORDS/

C-FILE/

BLUE BUTTON/

SERVICE TREATMENT RECORDS/

SERVICE PERSONNEL RECORDS/

PRIVATE MEDICAL/

VA DECISION LETTERS/

C&P EXAMS/

DBQS/

Optional supporting record folders may include DD214, labs and imaging, and medication history. Keep raw originals here and work from copies in the issue folders.

Exhibit F-5 — Claims by Issue Folder

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/

_ISSUE_TEMPLATE_TO_COPY/

MENTAL HEALTH/

MUSCULOSKELETAL/

HEADACHES/

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA/

GERD/

IBS/
 ALLERGIC RHINITIS/
 CHRONIC SINUSITIS/
 HYPERTENSION/
 ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION/
 CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME/
 TOENAIL FUNGUS/
 GULF WAR SYNDROME/
 TDIU/
 VR&E/

The corrected kit includes practical starter issue folders. Veterans should copy the issue template or use the closest matching issue folder rather than creating a cluttered new structure from scratch.

Exhibit F-6 — Issue Folder Template

ISSUE FOLDER/
 01 ISSUE SUMMARY/
 02 MEDICAL EVIDENCE/
 03 SERVICE EVIDENCE/
 04 LAY STATEMENTS/
 05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/
 06 NEXUS DBQ OPINIONS/
 07 DECISION LETTERS/
 08 C&P EXAMS/
 09 FILING PACKET/
 10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/
 CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Issue-level CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES should sit directly inside the issue folder, not buried inside 01 ISSUE SUMMARY. That keeps portable AI handoffs easy to find.

Exhibit F-7 — Buddy and Lay Statement Bank

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/
 BuddySign_Outputs/
 Drafts/
 Witness_Contact_Worksheets/
 Legacy_Acrobat_Signed_PDFs/

Use BuddySign_Outputs for signed BuddySign downloads. Use Drafts for unsigned working drafts. Use Witness_Contact_Worksheets for witness name, phone, email, relationship, and observation notes. Use Legacy_Acrobat_Signed_PDFs only for older or backup PDF-signature workflows.

Exhibit F-8 — Where to Save BuddySign Outputs

Primary copy:

07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

Issue copy:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Use both locations if the signed statement supports a specific issue. Do not sign for the witness. The witness must personally review and personally sign only if the statement is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Exhibit F-9 — Where to Save Claim Session Summaries

Master copy:

00 START HERE/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Issue copy:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/CLAIM_SESSION_SUMMARIES/

Use both locations if the session summary is issue-specific. This keeps AI claim work portable across chats, Projects, and future sessions.

Exhibit F-10 — Date-First File Naming Rules

Use:

YYYY-MM-DD_Issue_DocumentType

Examples:

2026-04-20_Back_Lay_Statement.pdf

2026-04-20_PTSD_BuddySign_Output_John_Smith_SIGNED.pdf

2026-04-20_Back_Claim_Session_Summary.md

2026-04-20_Rating_Decision.pdf

2026-04-20_Back_Filing_Packet.pdf

Exhibit F-11 — Chunk Naming Rules

Use:

YYYY-MM-DD_Issue_Source_Part_PageRange

Examples:

2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_1_pages_1-150.pdf

2026-04-20_Back_BlueButton_Part_2_pages_151-300.pdf

2026-04-20_PTSD_CFile_Part_1_pages_1-200.pdf

Exhibit F-12 — Submission Receipt Storage Rules

Always save the final uploaded PDF, the submission confirmation, the date submitted, any receipt screenshot if available, the decision letter later, any follow-up request letters, and the final packet copy.

Save in:

05 SUBMITTED CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS/

and, if issue-specific:

03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/10 SUBMISSION RECEIPTS/

Appendix G — Low-Energy Emergency Tools

This appendix exists for the days when the veteran is smoked, hurting, overloaded, or just done.

When you cannot handle the whole system, use the smallest tool that gets you moving again.

Exhibit G-1 — One-Page Emergency Filing Checklist

What exactly am I filing?

What evidence do I already have?

What is still missing?

What statement do I need?

What is the best next move?

Did I save copies?

Did I save the receipt location?

Exhibit G-2 — One-Page C&P Emergency Checklist

When did it start?

What are my main symptoms?

What are my flare-ups?

What does it stop me from doing?

How does it affect work?

How does it affect daily life?

What treatment have I tried?

What three facts must I not forget to say?

Exhibit G-3 — One-Page Post-Decision Emergency Checklist

What did VA grant?

What did VA deny?

What percentage did VA assign?

What effective date did VA assign?

What favorable findings can I reuse?

What did VA say was missing?

What lane fits best now?

What is my top next move?

Exhibit G-4 — Low-Energy ChatGPT Use Guide

Use this exact workflow:

1. Upload the record, denial letter, screenshot, or statement.
2. Paste one prompt only.
3. Ask for top 3 next moves only.

4. Save the output.
5. Build one thing at a time.

Use this prompt:

I am low on energy. Do not give me a giant list. Based on what I uploaded, tell me only what matters most right now and my top 3 next moves.

Exhibit G-5 — “I’m Stuck” Screenshot Workflow

Take a screenshot.

Upload it to ChatGPT or VA Claim Battle Buddy.

Paste this:

I am stuck on this screen. Tell me in plain English what I am looking at, what it means, and what I should do next.

Follow only the next step.

Repeat if needed.

Exhibit G-6 — Top-3-Only Decision Tool

Paste this when overloaded:

I am overloaded. Do not give me a giant list. Based on my file, tell me only what matters most right now and what my top 3 next moves are.

Exhibit G-7 — Low-Energy Claim Session Summary Tool

Paste this:

I am too tired to organize this. Create a Claim Session Summary from what we worked on today. Include only the issue, confirmed facts, evidence found, gaps, and top 3 next moves. Keep it clean enough for me to save in my Starter Kit.

Exhibit G-8 — Low-Energy BuddySign Tool

Paste this:

I have a buddy statement draft and I am low on energy. Give me only the next few steps to get it signed using BuddySign. Remind me what to review for truth and where to save the signed output afterward.

Appendix H — BuddySign Operator Guide

BuddySign is the last-mile witness statement workflow in the VA Claim AI Evidence Builder ecosystem. Use it after a buddy, spouse, family, coworker, service buddy, roommate, caregiver, or other witness statement has been drafted and reviewed for truth.

BuddySign helps the veteran organize a statement, send it for remote witness review and signature, and save the signed output or local print/PDF packet in the Starter Kit. It is not VA, not legal representation, not medical advice, not a claim-preparation service, and not a guarantee that VA will accept or grant anything.

Exhibit H-1 — When to Use BuddySign

Use BuddySign when a witness needs to personally review and sign a buddy or lay witness statement remotely.

Good witnesses can include a spouse, family member, roommate, coworker, supervisor, service buddy, caregiver, or other person who personally saw, heard, or observed relevant facts.

Do not use BuddySign to create fake witness statements, pressure a witness, make a witness say something they do not know, or sign for someone else.

Exhibit H-2 — Veteran-Side Workflow

Log in to BuddySign.com using the 8-digit email OTP code.

Create a new buddy statement document.

Enter veteran name, condition, buddy name, buddy email, optional 10-digit buddy phone, and relationship.

Click Use starter template if helpful. BuddySign replaces [Veteran Name] with the actual veteran name.

Draft or paste the statement content. Remove bracket prompts before locking.

Save the draft.

Lock the document when ready. Locking creates an immutable statement snapshot and SHA-256 hash.

If unfilled bracket prompts remain, review the amber warning. Go back and edit, or continue locking anyway. BuddySign should not automatically alter the statement.

Send the signing invite through BuddySign.

Wait for the buddy to personally review and sign.

After the dashboard shows Signed, open the summary page.

If needed, click the local lay/witness statement output button and review the warning modal.

Enter veteran PII locally for print output only. This may include SSN, date of birth, address, and phone.

Print or save the local output as a PDF.

Save the final output in the Starter Kit.

Exhibit H-3 — Witness-Side Workflow

Open the BuddySign signing link from the email invite.

Read the full statement.

Do not sign if the statement contains facts the witness does not personally know, did not personally observe, or does not believe are true.

Type the signer name.

Check the certification box only if the statement is true and based on personal knowledge or observation.

Submit the signature.

The witness does not enter relationship, address, or phone during signing. The veteran controls those contact fields.

Exhibit H-4 — Local PII / Print Output Boundary

BuddySign v2 uses a local browser print/PDF workflow for veteran identifying information during output generation. The veteran enters PII such as SSN, date of birth, address, and phone locally for the print output. The witness does not see or enter that information during signing.

Use careful language: the workflow is designed so veteran PII used for local PDF generation stays in the browser during that print workflow. Do not claim HIPAA, FedRAMP, ESIGN, legal compliance, VA approval, or official VA form status unless separately verified and approved.

Exhibit H-5 — Save Locations

Primary copy: 07 BUDDY AND LAY STATEMENT BANK/BuddySign_Outputs/

Issue copy: 03 CLAIMS BY ISSUE/[ISSUE]/05 BUDDY STATEMENTS/

Example file name: 2026-05-09_BuddyStatement_MikeSmith_LeftShoulder_BuddySignSigned.pdf

Exhibit H-6 — Quality-Control Checklist Before Sending

Did the witness personally know, see, hear, or observe the facts in the statement?

Did you remove bracket prompts and placeholders?

Are dates honest and not guessed as exact if you are not sure?

Are symptoms and limitations stated as observations instead of medical conclusions?

Did you remove exaggeration, speculation, and unsupported claims?

Did you avoid telling the witness what to say?

Did you avoid unnecessary private information?

Did you avoid signing for the witness?

Exhibit H-7 — Troubleshooting

If the buddy does not receive the email, verify the buddy email address, check spam/junk, and resend if appropriate.

If the statement was locked with bracket prompts, decide whether the final wording is still accurate. If not, create a corrected version rather than trying to hide the problem.

If the witness refuses to sign, do not pressure them. Ask what part is inaccurate or unsupported and revise only if the revised statement remains true.

If the PDF output looks wrong, save a screenshot, describe the issue, and ask VA Claim Battle Buddy or ChatGPT for current troubleshooting steps based on the device and browser.

Exhibit H-8 — BuddySign Statement Helper Prompt

I have a buddy statement draft and want to prepare it for BuddySign. Check it for unsupported facts, exaggeration, medical conclusions the witness cannot make, missing firsthand-observation language, bracket prompts, placeholders, and privacy issues before sending to the witness. Then give me a clean BuddySign-ready version.

Exhibit H-9 — After Signature Prompt

I just received a signed BuddySign output. Tell me where to save it in my VA Claim AI Evidence Builder Starter Kit, how to name the file, whether I should include it in my filing packet, and what cover sheet or issue summary should reference it.

Exhibit H-10 — Final Warning

Do not sign for your witness. Do not rely on verbal permission to sign for someone. The witness must personally review and sign only if the statement is true and based on what they personally know, saw, heard, or observed.

Do not say BuddySign is VA-approved, VA-certified, guaranteed accepted, legal representation, medical advice, HIPAA compliant, FedRAMP compliant, ESIGN compliant, legally binding, or an official VA form system unless those claims are separately verified and approved.

End of Appendices.