

READ THE DECISION BEFORE CHOOSING A LANE

Turn the decision notice into a precise issue list before selecting HLR, Supplemental Claim, or Board review.



SOURCE DOCUMENT

The complete decision notice

OUTPUT

One issue-by-issue review map

DO NOT SKIP

Favorable findings and deadlines

REVIEW FIRST

The rating percentage is only one part of the decision. The notice explains what the VA decided, the evidence it considered, the findings it accepted, why it did not grant more, and how to seek review.

DECISION NOTICE | FIVE PARTS

BUILD THE ISSUE MAP FROM THE NOTICE

01

Decision and percentage

Record whether each issue was granted, denied, deferred, or partially granted. For grants, record the assigned percentage.

02

Effective date

Record the date assigned to each grant or increase. The effective-date dispute can be separate from the percentage dispute.

03

Reasons for Decision

Identify the exact factual or legal basis for each result. This is the starting point for the next review lane.

04

Favorable findings

List the elements the VA accepted. Do not rebuild an accepted element while leaving the actual missing element unanswered.

05

Evidence and review rights

Compare the evidence list with what was actually submitted, then record the available forms and filing deadlines.

ISSUE WORKSHEET | ONE ROW PER DISPUTE

WRITE ONE REVIEW QUESTION FOR EACH ISSUE

A

What did the VA decide?

Example: service connection denied, 10 percent assigned, or effective date set later than claimed.

B

What did the VA accept?

Example: current diagnosis established, qualifying service conceded, or limitation of motion documented.

C

What remains disputed?

Example: nexus not established, severity understated, evidence omitted, or law applied incorrectly.

D

What can answer it?

Existing-record error, new and relevant evidence, or review by a Veterans Law Judge.

CHOOSE FROM THE RECORD

THE DECISION CONTROLS THE NEXT QUESTION

Q1

Is the needed proof already in the record?

If yes, identify the exact document, page, date, and error in how the VA handled it.

CONSIDER HLR

Q2

Does the file need new proof?

If yes, identify evidence that is both new to the VA and relevant to the disputed element.

CONSIDER SUPPLEMENTAL

Q3

Is review by a Veterans Law Judge the goal?

Select the Board docket that matches whether new evidence and a hearing are needed.

CONSIDER BOARD

DEADLINE

Use the date printed on the notice and the instructions for that benefit. Do not rely on the date a paper copy was opened or the date an online status changed.

ONE NOTICE, SEVERAL ISSUES

A single decision can contain different outcomes and different disputes. Map each issue separately before placing all of them on one review form or in one docket.