



Turn firsthand observations into useful lay evidence without asking the witness to act like a doctor.

BEST WITNESS

Someone with firsthand knowledge

BEST CONTENT

Specific observed facts

WEAK CONTENT

Conclusions without examples

READ FIRST

A useful witness explains who they are, how they know the veteran, when they observed the event or symptoms, and exactly what they saw or heard.

WITNESS BLOCK

ESTABLISH WHO, HOW, AND WHEN

WHO

Identity and relationship

Name, contact information, relationship to the veteran, and how long the witness has known them.

HOW

Basis of knowledge

Shared unit, household, workplace, friendship, family relationship, or direct presence at an event.

WHEN

Observation period

Dates or approximate time range, frequency of contact, and whether the observations continue today.

OBSERVATION BLOCK

DESCRIBE WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Event

What the witness personally saw, heard, or experienced during the event.

Symptoms

Observable pain behavior, sleep disruption, panic, headaches, mobility limits, or other visible effects.

Change

How the veteran differed before and after service, injury, exposure, assault, or onset.

Function

Concrete effects on work, relationships, activities, reliability, safety, or need for assistance.

DETAIL BLOCK

SPECIFIC BEATS GENERAL

WEAK

General conclusion

"His back is terrible and he deserves 100 percent."  
This gives no timeframe, observation, or functional example.

USEFUL

Observed fact

"Since 2024, I have seen him stop after one flight of stairs and sit for several minutes before continuing."  
This identifies the period, action, and visible limitation.

SUBMISSION BLOCK

FINISH THE STATEMENT CORRECTLY



Use the witness's own words

A copied template can erase the details that make the statement useful.



Separate observation from belief

State what happened, not a medical diagnosis or unsupported nexus conclusion.



Review dates and facts

Resolve avoidable contradictions with known records and other statements.



Sign and date the statement

Include a certification that the information is true and correct to the best of the author's knowledge.



Keep a copy

Retain the signed statement and proof showing when it was submitted.

CHOOSE WITNESSES BY KNOWLEDGE

Rank, title, friendship, or family status does not make a statement persuasive by itself. The value comes from competent firsthand observations and useful detail.

