

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

Tell the claim story with dates, observable facts, and a clear connection to the evidence.



EVIDENCE

VOICE	STRUCTURE	BEST TEST
The veteran's own observations	Timeline plus functional impact	Specific, consistent, and readable

READ FIRST

A personal statement can explain facts that clinical records do not capture well. It should distinguish what the veteran personally experienced from medical conclusions that require a qualified professional.

PARAGRAPH 01

IDENTIFY THE CLAIM AND THE THEORY

01

State the condition and request. Identify whether the statement supports direct service connection, a secondary link, aggravation, an increase, or another defined issue.

PARAGRAPH 02

BUILD A CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT



Before the event or onset

Describe the relevant baseline without adding unrelated life history.



In service or triggering period

Give approximate dates, location, unit, event, duty, exposure, or first symptoms.



After onset

Explain persistence, treatment, self-management, gaps in care, and changes over time.



Current status

Describe present symptoms, frequency, duration, flare-ups, and treatment effects.

PARAGRAPH 03

DESCRIBE FUNCTION IN CONCRETE TERMS

WORK

Employment

Attendance, reduced duties, errors, accommodations, pace, reliability, and time lost.

HOME

Daily activities

Sleep, driving, stairs, lifting, concentration, hygiene, cooking, and household tasks.

SOC

Social impact

Isolation, conflict, avoided activities, need for help, and changes witnessed by others.

FINAL REVIEW

USE THE CREDIBILITY CHECK

DO

Use observable detail

Dates, examples, frequency, distance, duration, missed work, witnessed behavior, and what changed.

NO

Do not diagnose or exaggerate

A lay author can report symptoms and events. Medical causation and diagnosis usually require appropriate expertise.

Attach or cite support: connect important statements to service records, treatment notes, logs, photographs, witness statements, or other evidence in the file.

CONSISTENCY MATTERS

Review dates, locations, onset descriptions, and symptom history against the rest of the record. Explain genuine gaps or uncertainty instead of forcing false precision.



RateMyVSO.net

Research-backed VA claim education

WRITE FROM FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE

RateMyVSO.net/dc/claim-file-guide

Use the current VA lay-statement form or another accepted written-statement method.

VISUAL GUIDE 10
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