

COMMON FILING MISTAKES

The preventable errors that make a claim harder to identify, develop, and decide.



FORM ERRORS	EVIDENCE ERRORS	PROCESS ERRORS
Wrong lane, missing signature	Unclear, incomplete, disorganized	Missed requests and poor records

READ FIRST Most filing mistakes do not prove that the underlying claim lacks merit. They create ambiguity, delay, missing evidence, or an avoidable procedural problem.

APPLICATION ERRORS

PROBLEMS AT THE FRONT DOOR

- 01**
Using the wrong review lane
A previously denied condition is not filed as a new initial claim. Read the prior decision and use the correct post-decision route.
- 02**
Leaving the claim unsigned or incomplete
Review required fields, certifications, claimant signatures, and dates before transmission.
- 03**
Naming the condition too vaguely
Use the known diagnosis or clearly describe the body part, symptoms, and claimed relationship.
- 04**
Choosing FDC with evidence still outstanding
Use the Standard path when relevant non-federal development remains incomplete.

EVIDENCE ERRORS

PROBLEMS INSIDE THE PACKET

- GAP**
Missing a required element
A diagnosis alone does not establish a service relationship, and treatment alone is not automatically a nexus.
- DUMP**
Uploading a document dump
Unsorted duplicates and irrelevant records can hide the evidence that answers the claim questions.
- MIX**
Blurring claim theories
Direct, secondary causation, aggravation, presumptive, and increase claims require different evidence.
- OLD**
Using stale severity evidence
Old records may establish history but may not show the current level of disability.

CREDIBILITY ERRORS

PROBLEMS WITH STATEMENTS

- NO**
Unsupported certainty
Invented dates, exaggerated symptoms, copied statements, and lay medical conclusions can conflict with the record.
- DO**
Specific firsthand detail
Use truthful approximate dates, concrete observations, functional examples, and explanations for genuine gaps.

AFTER FILING

PROCESS MISTAKES THAT CONTINUE AFTER SUBMISSION

- ✓** **Ignoring development letters**
Read every request and respond by the stated deadline.
- ✓** **Missing an examination**
Confirm the appointment, attend, or promptly address a legitimate scheduling problem.
- ✓** **Failing to update contact information**
Keep the VA and any representative informed of address, phone, and email changes.
- ✓** **Losing proof of filing**
Retain the exact packet, submission date, and receipt.
- ✓** **Starting a duplicate claim**
Check whether the issue is already pending before submitting another application for the same condition.

FIX THE PROCESS, NOT THE FACTS Do not change truthful facts to make the file look cleaner. Correct the form, clarify uncertainty, organize the evidence, and explain discrepancies honestly.