

# PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

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

