

WHAT TO DO AFTER A FINAL RATING REDUCTION

Confirm what changed, preserve the record, and choose the review path that matches the defect.



READ Reasons, evidence, and effective date	COMPARE Proposal response to final findings	CHOOSE Review path based on error or evidence
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RULE FILE

A final reduction is not the end of the file. The next step depends on whether VA misapplied the law, overlooked evidence already in the record, or needs new evidence that directly answers the final decision.

ACTION 01 | FIRST REVIEW

AUDIT THE FINAL DECISION

ISSUES

List every changed issue

Record the old and new evaluation, effective date, combined rating, and monthly payment effect.

REASONS

Read the final rationale

Identify how VA answered the hearing testimony and evidence submitted during the proposal period.

RULES

Check every protection

Review section 3.105 procedure, section 3.344 stabilization, total-rating rules, and any ten-year or twenty-year protection.

ACTION 02 | MATCH THE REVIEW PATH

ERROR, EVIDENCE, OR BOARD REVIEW

HLR

Same-record error

Consider Higher-Level Review when the argument relies on evidence already in the record and a factual or legal error in the final decision.

SUPP

New and relevant evidence

Consider a Supplemental Claim when new evidence can address the improvement finding or another stated basis.

BOARD

Veterans Law Judge

Consider a Board Appeal when Board review fits the dispute and chosen docket.

ACTION 03 | PRESERVE MONEY EVIDENCE

TRACK PAYMENT AND RESTORATION

Final-action notice date

Use it to verify the regulatory reduction effective-date sequence.

NOTICE DATE

First lower payment

Save bank records and VA payment history showing when the amount changed.

PAYMENT DATE

Amount withheld

Track the monthly difference for later restoration or retroactive-payment review.

MONTHLY DIFFERENCE

If a reduction is reversed and the prior evaluation restored, the effective-date and payment record determine the amount VA must correct.

STAY ISSUE-SPECIFIC

The final decision can contain several issues. One may require a same-record legal argument while another needs new evidence. Map each issue separately.

