

Personal Statement Builder

Purpose: Organize the facts and experiences you want to communicate in your own words before drafting a personal statement.

THE STRUCTURE COMES FROM THE TOOLKIT. THE FACTS COME FROM THE VETERAN.

Build It in Your Own Words

The prompts below provide structure, not answers. Replace them with your own facts and experiences. Delete anything that does not apply. Your finished statement should sound like you.

Condition / Health Issue:	
---------------------------	--

1. Introduce What You Are Writing About

I am writing about [condition / health issue]. I first noticed [symptoms / problem] around [date or period, if known]. At that time, [briefly describe what you personally experienced].

2. Describe How It Developed

Over time, [describe what changed, stayed the same, improved, worsened, or varied]. I received [treatment you personally experienced], and my experience with that treatment was [what happened afterward].

3. Describe Your Current Experience

Currently, I experience [symptoms in your own words]. They occur [frequency or pattern, if you can accurately describe one] and typically last [duration, if applicable]. When this happens, [describe what you actually experience rather than using rating terminology].

4. Explain Function

These symptoms affect [work / home / activities / relationships / sleep / driving / other areas that actually apply]. For example, [specific real-life example]. When symptoms occur, I may need to [stop, change, postpone, avoid, rest, ask for help, etc., if accurate]. I am still able to [activities or functions that remain possible, when relevant].

5. Add Context the Record May Not Capture

One thing that may not be clear from my medical records is [important context]. [Explain the context based on your direct experience.]

6. Clarify a Record Difference, If Necessary

My records document [verified fact]. My experience or recollection is [accurate personal account]. [Explain the difference only if you actually know why it exists. Otherwise, state only what you know.]

Before You Draft

- ☐ These are my experiences and my words.
- ☐ Dates and record facts I included have been verified when possible.
- ☐ I distinguished my experience from what a provider documented.
- ☐ I did not diagnose myself or make medical conclusions I am not qualified to make.
- ☐ I did not change my experience to match language I think VA wants to hear.

Write from your experience, not toward a rating. Describe what actually happens using your own words. Your job is to communicate accurately. The reviewer's job is to evaluate the evidence.

Remember: The structure can come from the toolkit. Every substantive fact must come from you or from a source you accurately identify.