

A QUESTION IS NOT A CONCLUSION.

Decision date:		Date received:	
Condition(s) / issue(s) addressed:		Decision letter saved at:	
Response or review deadline stated?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure	If yes, what does the document say?	
Source / page:			

[illegible]

3. Reasons Given - One Section Per Condition / Issue

Condition / Issue:

In your own notes, summarize the reasons VA gave for the decision. Keep the decision letter open while completing this section.

Reason / Finding	My Plain-Language Notes	Page / Section

Remember: Your notes are a summary. If your notes and the decision letter differ, use the decision letter.

4. Favorable Findings Stated in the Decision

Record favorable findings that the decision explicitly identifies or states. Do not use this section to decide for yourself what should count as a favorable finding.

Favorable Finding Stated in Decision	Page / Section

5. Evidence VA Says It Considered

Record the evidence listed in the decision. Compare it with your own organized records without assuming what an omission means.

Evidence Listed in Decision	Do I Recognize It?	Where Is My Copy?	Notes
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		
	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure		

6. Separate Observation From Interpretation

Write down what you can actually see in the decision separately from what you think it might mean. Do not turn the right column into fact simply because you wrote it down.

What I Can See in the Decision	What I Think It Might Mean / Question It Creates

7. Questions the Decision Creates

Turn uncertainty into a question rather than a conclusion. Record where the question came from so you can discuss it efficiently with the right resource or professional.

Question I Have	Why I'm Asking	Source / Page	Who / What May Help Answer It

8. Do Not Choose the Next Step Here

Tool 18 does not choose a review or appeal path. Different options can have different requirements, deadlines, evidentiary rules, and consequences. Use current official VA information and, when appropriate, an accredited representative to understand your options before deciding what to do next.

9. Close the Loop

- ☐ Decision received -> add it to Tool 16, VA Correspondence & Activity Log.
- ☐ New factual information -> update Tools 7-11 as appropriate.
- ☐ Questions for professional assistance -> carry them into Tool 19.
- ☐ Any later submission -> create a new Tool 15 Submission Inventory.

The goal of this tool is not to tell you what the decision means legally. It is to help you understand what the document actually says, preserve where it says it, and arrive at the next conversation with organized questions.