



# The 5-Step Sequential Evaluation Process

**SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS**

Name	Age	Date	Location
Occupation	Address	Zip	
Note your Idea		Order	

# The definition of disabled

According to Social Security law, you are disabled if your physical or mental impairments are so severe that you are unable to do (1) your previous work and (2) any other substantial gainful work that exists in the national economy, considering your age, education, and work experience.

The Social Security Administration determines whether you satisfy this definition by taking your claim through a “five-step sequential evaluation process.”

# Step 1

## Are you engaged in substantial gainful activity?

“Substantial gainful activity” is work that involves significant physical or mental activities and is usually done for pay or profit. If you have a job that pays more than a minimal amount, you are probably engaged in substantial gainful activity.

If the answer to this question is YES, you are NOT disabled and your claim will be DENIED. If the answer is NO, your claim moves on to Step 2.

## Step 2

# Do you have a severe medically determinable impairment?

A “severe” impairment is one that limits your ability to perform basic work functions. “Medically determinable” means your impairment can be established through medically acceptable diagnostic techniques (i.e., medical exams and tests).

In addition, your impairment must have lasted or be expected to last at least 12 months or end in death.

If the answer to this question is NO, you are NOT disabled and your claim will be DENIED. If the answer is YES, your claim moves on to Step 3.

## Step 3

# Does your impairment meet or equal a listed impairment?

The Listing of Impairments is a list of physical and mental impairments along with specific medical findings that the Social Security Administration considers to be disabling. At this Step, Social Security doctors compare your medical records to the requirements in the Listing.

If the answer to this question is YES, your claim will be APPROVED for disability benefits and it will not need to go through the last two Steps. If the answer to this question is NO, your claim progresses to Step 4.

## Step 4

# Are you able to do past relevant work?

“Past relevant work” is any job you held in the past 15 years for long enough to learn to do it.

If the answer to this question is YES, you are NOT disabled and your claim will be DENIED. If the answer to this question is NO, your claim progresses to the last step, Step 5.



## Step 5

# Can you adapt to other work that exists in significant numbers in the national economy?

This is the most complicated step in the disability evaluation process. At this Step, the Social Security Administration considers your age, education, and work experience. Social Security rules make it easier to pass this step as you get closer to retirement age.

If the answer to this question is YES, you are NOT disabled and your claim will be DENIED. If the answer is NO, you are disabled and you will be APPROVED for benefits.

