

ENGLAND & WALES

The One Rule That Changes Your Entire PIP Form

A free starting point from PIP Navigator

- What PIP actually measures — the 12 activities
- The reliability test that changes how every answer is scored
- The 3 most common wording mistakes that cost people points
- What evidence helps — and what doesn't
- Where to get free independent advice



This guide is for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

PIP Navigator is not a law firm and does not provide regulated legal services.

What PIP Actually Measures

Personal Independence Payment is not a diagnosis-based benefit. It doesn't measure how ill you are. It measures how your condition affects your ability to carry out 12 specific everyday activities.

Each activity has a set of descriptors — specific statements that carry a point value. Your total points determine your award:

8 points	= standard rate
12 points	= enhanced rate

Most people score lower than they should — not because their condition isn't serious, but because they describe difficulties in their own words instead of connecting them to the descriptors.

Daily Living (10 activities)

1. Preparing food
2. Taking nutrition
3. Managing therapy or monitoring a health condition
4. Washing and bathing
5. Managing toilet needs or incontinence
6. Dressing and undressing
7. Communicating verbally
8. Reading and understanding signs, symbols and words
9. Engaging with other people face to face
10. Making budgeting decisions

Mobility (2 activities)

11. Planning and following journeys
12. Moving around

The One Rule That Changes Everything

When the DWP asks whether you can do something, they don't just mean "is it physically possible." They apply a four-part test to every single activity on the form:

Safely

Can you do it without causing harm to yourself or others?

To an acceptable standard

Is the result adequate — not perfect, but good enough?

Repeatedly

Can you do it as often as you need to, throughout the day?

In a reasonable time

Does it take you much longer than it should?

If you cannot do something safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly, and in a reasonable time — then for PIP purposes, you cannot do it.

This is why so many people score zero on activities where they genuinely struggle. They write "yes I can do this" when what they should write is:

*"I can attempt this, but not reliably —
not safely, not every time, and not in a reasonable time."*

3 Wording Mistakes That Cost Points

Mistake 1: Describing a good day

DON'T WRITE

"I can cook simple meals."

WRITE THIS INSTEAD

"On most days I am unable to prepare a cooked meal using a conventional cooker. I rely on microwave meals or food prepared by my partner."

The PIP form asks about what happens most of the time — not your best day. If you can manage something once a week but not the other six days, describe the six days.

Mistake 2: Being vague about the difficulty

DON'T WRITE

"I struggle with getting dressed."

WRITE THIS INSTEAD

"I need physical assistance to fasten buttons and put on items over my head. On most days, dressing takes approximately 40 minutes. Without help, I would be unable to dress my upper body to an acceptable standard."

Vague words like "struggle" tell the assessor nothing. Be specific: what can't you do, what help do you need, and how long does it take?

Mistake 3: Mixing up activities

DON'T WRITE

"I have trouble with food — I can't cook and I choke sometimes."

WRITE THIS INSTEAD

Activity 1 (preparing food) and Activity 2 (taking nutrition) are scored separately. Cooking difficulty and eating difficulty are two different descriptors. Describe each problem under the right activity — otherwise the second one gets lost.

Assessors score each activity independently. If you describe two different problems under one heading, only one gets scored.

THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND ALL THREE MISTAKES

Describe what it costs you to do something — not what you can manage on a good day. Be specific. Be honest. And put each difficulty under the right activity.

What Evidence Matters

Evidence from professionals can support what you describe on the form — but only if it explains how your condition affects you, not just what the condition is.

Strong evidence

- GP letters describing how your condition affects daily life
- Specialist reports mentioning specific limitations
- Care plans listing what help you receive and why
- A statement from someone who supports you day to day
- Prescription lists showing treatments you manage

Evidence that rarely helps

- A diagnosis letter on its own — PIP is not diagnosis-based
- General information about your condition, not how it affects you
- Evidence more than 2 years old without an update

KEY TIP

Ask your GP to write a letter that says how your condition affects your daily life — not just what the diagnosis is. The best letters describe what you cannot do, what help you need, and how often.

Where to Get Free Help

If your case is complex, if a decision has gone against you, or if you need advice tailored to your situation:

Citizens Advice

citizensadvice.org.uk

Free advice on PIP claims, mandatory reconsiderations, and appeals.

Advicenow

advicenow.org.uk

Plain-English guides. Particularly strong on tribunal preparation.

Scope

scope.org.uk

Disability charity with benefits guidance and helpline.

Your local welfare rights service

Many councils have free welfare rights teams. Search your council website.

Disability Rights UK

disabilityrightsuk.org

Free factsheets on PIP assessment criteria.

What's Happening Right Now

The government is reviewing PIP. The Timms Review Call for Evidence is open until 28 May 2026.

If you've been through PIP, your experience matters. You don't need to write a report — just describe what happened, honestly.

Email: timmsreview.callforevidence@dwp.gov.uk

Need help with the wording?

The UK PIP Answer Bank covers all 12 activities
with worked examples and descriptor-aligned guidance.
Over 40 pages. Instant download. Written for DWP assessors.

UK PIP Answer Bank — £24.99



PIP NAVIGATOR

The words that work.

Built by a parent who's been through it.
No face. No jargon.

This guide is for information purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice or welfare rights advice.
This guide is for adult PIP claimants in England and Wales only.
Scotland uses Adult Disability Payment (ADP). Northern Ireland has a separate PIP process.



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