

DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE VA LV VFQ-48

The VA LV VFQ-48 is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure the difficulty a person has performing daily activities. The VA LV VFQ-48 can stand alone or be used with other data gathering tools. Administration of the questionnaire will take approximately 12 minutes.

Explaining the purpose of the call:

1. In conjunction with a visit to a rehabilitation center or a low vision appointment:

“I know you are coming to _____ in the near future. I would like to ask you some questions so we can determine the activities you may have difficulty performing. This will allow us to identify areas where we can better help you.”

2. Follow-up call:

“I’m calling to follow-up on your visit to _____. I would like to ask you some questions to determine any difficulty you have performing the activities we previously discussed.”

“I will be asking about activities that you may perform daily or on a regular basis. I am interested in how well you are able to do these activities using ordinary glasses or contact lenses, adaptive techniques and low-vision devices (if you have them). Please consider any special methods or devices you use when you select a response to a question.”

Examples of low vision devices and adaptive techniques:

Interviewers must confirm that the patient understands the terms low vision devices and adaptive techniques. Without this awareness, data gathered may not be reliable. The following examples are provided for clarification.

Low vision devices:

1. Optical aids to make things appear larger
 - Magnifiers
 - Telescopes
2. Nonoptical aids to make some tasks less difficult
 - High intensity lamps
 - Large print
3. Electronic systems that capture printed material and provide feedback
 - CCTV (large print feedback)

Adaptive techniques and devices:

1. Methods using nonvisual senses (touch, hearing, smell) to increase independence in performing work, school or other activities.
2. Folding money for easier identification.
3. Using a white cane and listening to traffic when crossing the street.
4. Scanner (synthesized speech feedback).

Directions reminding the patient to consider low vision device/technique use when responding to the questions are repeated four different times because the patient often forgets the directions and answers as though we are asking about unaided vision.

Explaining the VA LV VFQ-48 responses:

"I want you to tell me how difficult it may be for you to do the following activities. The task may be NOT difficult, MODERATELY difficult, EXTREMELY difficult, or IMPOSSIBLE. You may have trouble performing the task for a reason unrelated to vision loss. Limitations that keep a person from doing an activity for nonvisual reasons are important. Some examples include heart conditions, arthritis, using a wheelchair, or that you are not interested in performing the task."

Directions for scoring the VA LV VFQ-48:

Measuring visual ability:

The activities (items) included in the VA LV VFQ-48 range from easy (keep clothes clean) to hard (read small print on package labels). Patients also differ in their visual ability and will find activities (items) to vary in difficulty from NOT difficult to IMPOSSIBLE. There are three steps to computing the composite score: (1) assigning a score for each item, (2) calculating the average item score, and (3) using the formula to compute the composite score. Scoring the questionnaire will take approximately 3 minutes.

Assigning a score for each item:

When the respondent answers a question, CIRCLE the box that corresponds to the difficulty reported for that activity. For example, a response of moderately difficult (2) is given to the question "How difficult is it to identify medicine?" CIRCLE box (2) that has an item score of 0.51. The 0.51 is then written in the item score box.

A response that falls into the U category indicates the person has nonvisual reasons for not doing the task or is not interested in doing the activity. These responses have NO value and are not used for computing average or item scores. If the U box is circled, leave the corresponding item score box empty.

Calculating the average item score:

Total the individual item scores and divide by the number of items scored. Assuming every question is answered, total items scored will be 48 minus the total number of U responses. If a person had 3 responses that were entered in the U column, the average item score for that questionnaire would be the total item score divided by 45.

Average item score = total item scores / (48 – U)

Using the formula to compute the VA LV VFQ-48 composite score:

A scientific calculator or use of a computer spreadsheet program is required to perform the logarithmic calculation. The formula for calculating the score is:

$$0.9 * \text{LN}((2.34 - \text{average item score}) / (\text{average item score} + 2.22)) + 0.05$$

LN is the spreadsheet notation for computing the natural logarithm of a number. This equation is based upon the sample of 367 patients used to develop the questionnaire.

Calculating reading domain score:

To calculate the reading domain score total the individual item scores from the following items:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Read newspaper headlines | 12. Read street signs and store names |
| 2. Read newspaper/magazine articles | 13. Read signs |
| 3. Read mail | 15. Read print on TV |
| 4. Read menus | 23. Handle finances |
| 5. Read small print on package labels | 24. Make out a check |
| 6. Keep your place while reading | 25. Sign your name |
| 10. Identify money | 26. Take a message |

Average item score = total item score of reading items / (14 – U)

Formula to compute the composite score remains the same.

Error messages for average item scores outside the acceptable range:

The acceptable range for average item score is ≤ 2.34 and ≥ -2.22 . Average item scores outside this acceptable range will result in an error message. The acceptable range will be exceeded when the patient responds:

- 3 NOT DIFFICULT to every item
- 4 IMPOSSIBLE to every item
- 5 EXTREMELY DIFFICULT or IMPOSSIBLE to a large number of easy items
- 6 NOT DIFFICULT to a large number of hard items

When the average item score falls outside the acceptable range the responses are not working together to estimate the patient's ability. This result usually means something other than visual impairment is governing the patient's responses preventing a valid measure of the patient's visual ability.

VA LOW VISION VISUAL FUNCTIONING QUESTIONNAIRE (VA LV VFQ-48)

These questions relate to reading/near vision activities. Remember if you use a low vision device or adaptive technique to assist with the activity, please respond as though you were using the device or technique

Is it difficult to _____ ?

- 1. NOT difficult
- 2. MODERATELY difficult
- 3. EXTREMELY difficult
- 4. IMPOSSIBLE
- U. Difficult / don't do for
NON-VISUAL reasons
- U = Unscored

	1	2	3	4	U	ITEM SCORE
1. Read newspaper headlines	2.67	0.94	-0.35	-1.89	0	
2. Read newspaper or magazine articles	3.88	2.15	0.86	-0.68	0	
3. Read mail	3.53	1.80	0.51	-1.03	0	
4. Read menus	3.73	2.00	0.71	-0.83	0	
5. Read small print on package labels	4.06	2.33	1.04	-0.50	0	
6. Keep your place while reading	3.29	1.56	0.27	-1.27	0	
7. See photographs	2.84	1.11	-0.18	-1.72	0	
8. Find something on a crowded shelf	2.63	0.90	-0.39	-1.93	0	
9. Identify medicine	2.24	0.51	-0.78	-2.32	0	
10. Identify money	1.96	0.23	-1.06	-2.60	0	
11. Tell time	1.63	-0.10	-1.39	-2.93	0	

These questions relate to distance visual activities. Remember if you use a low vision device or adaptive technique to assist with the activity, please respond as though you were using the device or technique

Is it difficult to _____ ?

- 1. NOT difficult
- 2. MODERATELY difficult
- 3. EXTREMELY difficult
- 4. IMPOSSIBLE
- U. Difficult / don't do for
NON-VISUAL reasons
- U = Unscored

	1	2	3	4	U	ITEM SCORE
12. Read street signs and store names	3.30	1.57	0.28	-1.26	0	
13. Read signs (example: grocery store aisle)	3.45	1.72	0.43	-1.11	0	
14. Watch TV	2.29	0.56	-0.73	-2.27	0	
15. Read print on TV	3.41	1.68	0.39	-1.15	0	
16. Play table and card games	3.11	1.38	0.09	-1.45	0	
17. Work on your favorite hobby	3.13	1.40	0.11	-1.43	0	
18. Recognize people up close	2.14	0.41	-0.88	-2.42	0	
19. Recognize people from across the room	3.44	1.71	0.42	-1.12	0	
20. Go to the movies	2.53	0.80	-0.49	-2.03	0	
21. Go to spectator events	3.13	1.40	0.11	-1.43	0	
22. Do yard work	2.48	0.75	-0.54	-2.08	0	

These questions are about other daily living activities. Remember if you use a low vision device or adaptive technique to assist with the activity, please respond as though you were using the device or technique

Is it difficult to _____ ?

1. NOT difficult
 2. MODERATELY difficult
 3. EXTREMELY difficult
 4. IMPOSSIBLE
 - U. Difficult / don't do for
NON-VISUAL reasons
- U = Unscored

	1	2	3	4	U	ITEM SCORE
23. Handle finances	2.65	0.92	-0.37	-1.91	0	
24. Make out a check	2.91	1.18	-0.11	-1.65	0	
25. Sign your name	2.43	0.70	-0.59	-2.13	0	
26. Take a message	3.07	1.34	0.05	-1.49	0	
27. Match clothes	1.63	-0.10	-1.39	-2.93	0	
28. Physically get dressed	0.26	-1.47	-2.76	-4.30	0	
29. Keep your clothes clean	0.73	-1.00	-2.29	-3.83	0	
30. Identify food on a plate	1.65	-0.08	-1.37	-2.91	0	
31. Fix a snack	0.65	-1.08	-2.37	-3.91	0	
32. Prepare meals	2.06	0.33	-0.96	-2.50	0	
33. Use appliance dials	2.23	0.50	-0.79	-2.33	0	
34. Groom yourself	1.19	-0.54	-1.83	-3.37	0	
35. Eat and drink neatly	0.87	-0.86	-2.15	-3.69	0	
36. Clean the house	1.75	0.02	-1.27	-2.81	0	

The last set of questions deal with issues of mobility. Remember if you use a low vision device or adaptive technique to assist with the activity, please respond as though you were using the device or technique

Is it difficult to _____ ?

1. NOT difficult
 2. MODERATELY difficult
 3. EXTREMELY difficult
 4. IMPOSSIBLE
 - U. Difficult / don't do for
NON-VISUAL reasons
- U = Unscored

	1	2	3	4	U	ITEM SCORE
37. Get around indoors in places you know	0.28	-1.45	-2.74	-4.28	0	
38. Get around outdoors in places you know	1.22	-0.51	-1.80	-3.34	0	
39. Get around in unfamiliar places	2.68	0.95	-0.34	-1.88	0	
40. Go down steps in dim light	2.33	0.60	-0.69	-2.23	0	
41. Go out at night	3.00	1.27	-0.02	-1.56	0	
42. Get around in a crowd	2.32	0.59	-0.70	-2.24	0	
43. Avoid bumping into things	1.86	0.13	-1.16	-2.70	0	
44. Cross street at a traffic light	2.56	0.83	-0.46	-2.00	0	
45. Use public transportation	3.19	1.46	0.17	-1.37	0	
46. Find public restrooms	1.66	-0.07	-1.36	-2.90	0	
47. Play sports	3.80	2.07	0.78	-0.76	0	
48. Adjust to bright light	2.48	0.75	-0.54	-2.08	0	

VA LOW VISION VISUAL FUNCTIONING QUESTIONNAIRE (VA LV VFQ-48) TIP SHEET

The time required to administer the VA LV VFQ-48 may vary from person to person. If the respondent simply answers the questions without comments, the survey can be completed in about 12 to 15 minutes. If the person goes into detailed explanations, the actual time spent can be anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour. The challenge will be to keep the person on task. The interviewer must also be aware some people may not have a lot of social contact and will enjoy just talking. Each situation must be evaluated to decide how much time you wish to allow.

You will know quickly if the person is prone to giving detailed explanations. Be prepared with a strategy to get the person back on task. One strategy is to immediately ask the next question.

ALWAYS BE READY TO ASK THE NEXT QUESTION!

If a person starts detailing an explanation, look for an opportunity to politely get them back to the questionnaire:

"What you're describing now is a question I will ask you later so we can talk about that in a few minutes. The next question is..."

"I hear what you're saying. Since I told you this survey would only take a few minutes and I don't want to keep you on the phone any longer than I have to, why don't we talk about that when we're finished? The next question is ..."

ALWAYS BE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO POLITELY GET THE PERSON BACK ON TASK!

Clarification of Respondents' Answers

The results of the questionnaire are only as accurate as the recording of the person's response to the questions. Since you are the one marking the responses, it is important to understand exactly what the person is telling you. It would be very easy to mark the answers if the person used the correct phrase with each question. Unfortunately, this is very rare and you will need to make clear in your mind what the person is saying.

1. Clarifying the moderately difficult and extremely difficult response:

In a few cases, the person will respond with "moderately difficult" or "extremely difficult" to questions. More likely the answers will be:

A: I have difficulty with that.

A: I've always had trouble with that.

A: That's hard for me to do.

A: Yes.

Continually prompt them with:

Q: Would you say it's moderately difficult or extremely difficult?

Reinforce proper terminology with the person by reminding them of the responses.

DON'T ASSUME YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE TRYING TO SAY..CLARIFY.

2. Clarifying the impossible response:

The person will usually tell you emphatically that something is impossible for them to do. Clarification will be needed when you get responses such as "that's really hard for me to do" or "I just can't do that anymore". Clarify the response by giving them two choices, "would you say it's extremely difficult or impossible?"

The wording of a question to clarify a response is constructed to do three important functions. First, it is a closed-ended question. Secondly, it uses the word "you" reminding them it is their choice. Finally, it allows them to pick from two possible choices that are valid responses to the question.

Q: Would you say it's extremely difficult or impossible?

Emphasize the word *you*. Let them choose a response and go on to the next question.

3. Clarifying nonvisual responses:

Determining that the difficulty is because of non-visual reasons will require clarification in some instances. You can make this determination easier by reminding the person (at built in breaks) to tell you if they don't perform a task or that something is difficult for reasons other than their vision. When in doubt ask; "Is this difficult because of your vision?" or "Do you not do this anymore because of your vision?"

Q: Is it difficult to clean the house?

A: I don't do that any more.

Q: Is that because of your vision?

A: No, I live in a retirement complex and someone comes in once a week to clean.

OR

Q: Is it difficult to go to the movies?

A: I don't go to the movies.

Q: Is that because of your vision?

A: No! I never went to movies. They're a waste of money!

Obtain the information with a simple question requiring a "yes" or "no" reply and go on to the next question.

Q: Is it difficult to go out at night?

A: I don't leave my house after dark.

Q: Is that because of your vision?

A: No, I live in a bad neighborhood.

OR

Q: Is it difficult to go to the movies?

A: I quit going to the movies years ago.

Q: Is that because of your vision?

A: Yes, I just can't follow them any more.

Q: Would you say it was extremely difficult to go to the movies or impossible?

A: I'd say it was impossible.

CLARIFY THE RESPONSE, BUT LET THEM ANSWER THE QUESTIONS!!

Clarification of the responses will be the biggest challenge, but a challenge that is manageable. Keep in mind that you are trying to obtain very basic information. Is the task difficult or not? If it is difficult, is the problem visual or nonvisual?

What To Do If the Person Asks for Clarification

There may be instances when the person does not fully understand the question and asks for clarification from you. Most questions are fairly self-explanatory, but some might require examples to point the person in the right direction. The following are certain questions we've found that may require clarification along with some examples to help explain the question:

Q: Is it difficult to read small print on package labels? Examples include cans or boxes of food, medicine containers, directions or warnings on various packages, etc.

Q: Is it difficult to find something on a crowded shelf? Examples include bookshelf, kitchen cabinet, grocery store shelf, etc.

Q: Is it difficult to handle finances? This question refers to the person's ability to read their bills, pay their bills and maintain a budget.

Q: Is it difficult to match clothes? Does the person have problems getting shirt and pants to coordinate so the colors and patterns are socially acceptable? Do they have trouble matching socks?

Q: Is it difficult to keep your clothes clean? This is not a laundry question. Does the person get something on their clothing (food stains, dirt, grease) and not realize their clothes are soiled?

Q: Is it difficult to use appliance dials? Examples include oven/stove, microwave, thermostat, etc.

Q: Is it difficult to groom yourself? Examples for men include shaving and combing hair. Examples for women are applying makeup and brushing their hair.

Q: Is it difficult to adjust to bright light? A few people respond about the opposite condition of going from a bright area to a darkness. The questions refers to the difficulty they have going outside in bright sunlight, adjusting to bright light coming in their windows or lighting from lamps.

The person may ask for clarification of a question by giving you the choices.

Q: Is it difficult for you to go out at night?

A: Do you mean if I'm riding in a car or walking?

Q: Is it difficult for you to take a message?

A: Do you mean write it down or remember the message?

The only way to respond to a situation like this is to ask the person what way they usually perform the tasks. They are the only ones who can answer this question.

Q: Is it difficult for you to go out at night?

A: Do you mean if I'm riding in a car or walking?

Q: How do you usually go out at night?

A: I mostly go out with other people who drive.

Q: Is it difficult for you to go out at night?

A: Yes, I can't go out by myself.

Q: Would you say it was extremely difficult or impossible?

A: It's impossible for me to go out at night without help.

Listen and Learn

Listen to the person's entire response before marking it down. Often the person will reply one way and then change their response in the next sentence. For example:

Q: Is it difficult to identify money?

A: I don't have any trouble with that. (pause) But, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a nickel and a dime...and some of the old bills are hard to read.

Q: Is it difficult to read your mail?

A: It's impossible! (pause) But, when I use my CCTV it's no problem at all.

Spouse or Family Member Assistance

How do you score responses like this?

Q: Is it difficult handle finances?

A: No, my son comes in twice a month to pay my bills.

Q: Is it difficult to prepare meals?

A: No, my wife does all the cooking.

What we are suggesting is to treat the response as NOT difficult and go on to the next question. You need to look at this response as either an adaptive technique, the way a person usually performs the task or simply something they don't do anymore.

There are so many different discussions you can get into about how to score responses such as those listed above. The key word in the response is NO. No, it is not difficult to handle finances. No, it is not difficult to prepare meals. Without getting into a debate, let's point out a tip and then discuss the power of the VA LV VFQ-48.

We have already discussed two important points that apply here. The first is not to assume to know what you think the person is saying. The second point is to determine how a person usually performs the task. The response to the above cooking question can generate several opinions; the person cannot cook at all, he can cook but won't because of poor vision, he can cook but his wife won't let him in the kitchen, he may have a physical problem that keeps him from standing for long periods of time, he has an arthritic condition that makes cooking too difficult, he can cook but hates to cook and cleanup..etc.

The power of the VA LV VFQ-48 is that it does NOT have to be a stand-alone questionnaire. If you want to pursue details of situations we've described you may insert filter questions to extract more thorough data. The questionnaire is short enough to allow filter questions, demographic information and/or other questionnaires.

Here's a different twist to the response:

Q: Is it difficult to handle finances?

A: I can't do that anymore so my son comes in twice a month to pay my bills.

Q: Is it difficult to prepare meals?

A: I used to cook a lot, but now my wife does all the cooking.

Since the person has indicated there may be a degree of difficulty you can begin to clarify. Do not ask WHY, but use the questionnaire and the tips we've already discussed.

Q: Is it difficult to handle finances?

A: I can't do that anymore so my son comes in twice a month to pay my bills.

Q: Is that because of your vision?

A: Yes, I just can't read the bills anymore or write checks.

Q: Would you say it's extremely difficult or impossible to do your bills?

A: It's impossible without my son to help.

Q: Is it difficult to prepare meals?

A: I used to cook a lot, but now my wife does all the cooking.

Q: Do you not cook anymore because of your vision?

A: Yes. I can't see to measure or read recipes.

Q: Is it extremely difficult or impossible for you to cook?

A: I suppose I could do it if I tried but it would be extremely difficult.

If the person indicates there may be a difficulty then pursue clarification. If they indicate the task is not a problem because someone else does the job for them, move on to the next question. It's probably not a good idea to take a situation the person perceives as not difficult and begin to establish doubt in their minds.