

Rules About Answering Questions

1. You must tell the truth. Do not exaggerate your problems at the hearing. Do not make your symptoms better or worse than they are. Tell it like it is. Do not be John Wayne. You are not there for an award for bravery. If it hurts, testify to that fact. If you can not do something, testify that you can not do it.
2. Be specific with your answers. The best way to be specific is by using numbers. The Judge will ask: How long can you stand/sit? How far can you walk? How much can you lift? When you answer these questions use numbers: I can stand/sit for 30 minutes, one hour, three hours or what amount of time you can remain standing/seated until your symptoms increase to a point that you must change positions. I can walk $\frac{1}{4}$ of a block, $\frac{1}{2}$ of a block, one block, three blocks, one mile or whatever is the correct answer.
3. Before you answer how much you can lift, think about what you lift around your house. A gallon of milk weights about 8 lbs., a five-pound bag of sugar, 10-pound bag of potatoes, a 20-pound bag of fertilizer--bags of garbage and groceries are just a few examples. Remember, when the Judges ask these questions, he/she is asking them from the viewpoint of an eight-hour working day, five days a week. So if you can lift 20 pounds one day but it causes you to be in bed for the next two days, your answer should not be 20 pounds. You must be able to do what you answer on a regular sustained basis in a work-like setting. The Judge realizes that you do not feel the same way every day. Your answers can be an average or a range of time. "I can stand from 15 to 30 minutes." You can state that you have good days and bad days, and the different tolerances on each.
4. Explain your answers. For example: "I can only sit for 30 minutes because the pain in my back increases to a point that I have to move. Sitting for more than one hour causes severe back spasms which last for hours. On a good day, I can walk for a block but on a bad day, I have problems walking around inside my house." If the Judge asks you if you clean your home and you simply answer, "Yes," then the Judge might assume that if you can clean your house, you could work cleaning some other person's house. Therefore, you need to explain what cleaning you do, whether it is sweeping and mopping or light dusting or laundry. Also, explain if you have changed the way you do these tasks. For example: You do smaller loads of laundry; you no longer use a mop bucket; you use a dust pan with a long handle. If the Judge asks you if you cook, you need to explain whether when you fix meals if they are large meals or sandwiches or if you warm prepared meals in the microwave.
5. If you do not understand a question, tell the Judge you did not understand and he/she will rephrase it. This will keep you from giving misinformation to the Judge.
6. Good answers are: "Yes," "No," "I don't know," "I don't remember."
7. The hearing is tape recorded. This is the official record of the hearing. Therefore, when you answer questions you must answer by talking. Do not nod or shake your head to answer. Do not point to any area on your body—you must verbally describe it. Examples are, "My right arm, the middle of my back," or "The pain goes down my right leg to my calf." You must speak loudly and clearly.
8. Do not show the Judge what you can and cannot do. Just answer the questions. For example, if the Judge asks if you could make a fist, do not attempt to make the fist, just answer yes or no and why.

9. If you need to stand up or walk around during your hearing, do so. You should first ask permission from the Judge, Remember, if you testify that you can only sit 15 minutes at a time, and then you sit in agony through a 45-minute hearing, the Judge will think that you are not telling the truth.