

Practitioner Toolkit: Social Security Disability Grid Rules by Age for Vocational Experts

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The following tables contain rules commonly called “The Grids” to guide the Social Security Administration (SSA) in determining disability. These rules show how function and vocational patterns are considered when the applicant cannot be evaluated on medical conditions only and the person with a severe medically determined physical or mental impairment(s) is not performing substantial gainful activity or the applicant is not able to perform “past relevant work” (SSA, 2020a). The following tables are based on age, residual functional capacity (RFC) level (sedentary, light, medium, or heavy work), education level, and work experience.

Use of the following grids helps SSA to determine the physical capabilities of the applicant and cross-references those abilities with the applicant’s age, education, and ability to perform past relevant work, corresponding to criteria of a particular rule. Then, the rule directs a conclusion as to whether the person is disabled or not disabled. However, the applicant may present additional information to argue against this conclusion. The rules do not direct disability conclusions for persons with only nonexertional types of impairments such as mental illness. The SSA defines a nonexertional impairment as an impairment that does not directly affect a person’s ability to sit, stand, walk, life, carry, push, or pull (SSA, 2020a).

For comprehensive summaries of these rules including detailed descriptions, please visit the *Code of Federal Rules, Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2* at https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/cfr/20/404/404-app-p02.htm, and for a concise summary of tables, go to *Program Operations Manual System (POMS)* at <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0425025035>

Table 1

Definitions Utilized in Decision-Making with GRIDS

Term	Definition
Advanced Age	Age 55 and Over
Closely Approaching Advanced Age	Age 50 - 54
Closely Approaching Retirement Age	Age 60 and Over
Disability Decision	Based on issue of ability to engage in substantial gainful activity
Limited Education	Ability in reasoning, arithmetic, and language skills, but not enough to allow a person to perform most of the more complex job duties needed in semi-skilled or skilled jobs. Generally, 7th grade through the 11th grade level is a limited education.
Marginal Education	Ability in reasoning, arithmetic, and language skills that are needed to perform simple, unskilled types of jobs. Usually, formal schooling at a 6th grade level or less is considered a marginal education.

Residual Functional Capacity	Maximum degree to which the person retains the capacity for sustained performance of the physical-mental requirements of jobs
Sedentary Occupations	These jobs fall within the skilled, semi-skilled, professional, administrative, technical, clerical, and benchwork classifications. Approximately 200 separate unskilled sedentary occupations are identified, each representing numerous jobs in the national economy. Approximately 85 percent of the jobs are in machine trades and benchwork categories. These jobs may be performed after a short demonstration or within 30 days.
Semi-Skilled Tasks	Requires some skills but does not include complex job functions. It usually requires the ability to remain alert and pay attention to detail and/or protect against risks. An example is a job that requires hands and feet to be moved quickly (including coordination and dexterity) to perform a repetitive task. SVP of 3 or 4 (or between 3 and 6 months to learn).
Skilled Tasks	Work involves good cognitive functioning, skilled job functions, the use of judgment, and knowing how to perform mechanical or manual tasks to create a product, material, or provide a service. Skilled work includes reading specifications, measuring, estimating, and making calculations. It can include jobs that require a person to work closely with others, or with figures, facts, or ideas that require complex, abstract, or critical thinking. SVP of 5 to 9.
Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP)	Indicates how long it takes a worker to learn how to perform their job at an average performance level. SVP 1 (short demonstration); SVP2 (up to 1 month); SVP 3 (up to 3 months); SVP 4 (3 to 6 months); SVP 5 (6 months to 1 year); SVP 6 (1 to 2 years); SVP 7 (2 to 4 years); SVP 8 (4 to 10 years); SVP 9 (over 10 years).
Transferrable Skills	A person has transferrable skills when the skilled or semi-skilled job functions they performed in their past relevant work can be used to meet the requirements of other work within their RFC. All function limitations included in the RFC must be considered transferable.
Unskilled Tasks	Requires little or no judgment to perform simple duties that can be learned on the job in a short period of time (30 days or less). Generally, unskilled work has an SVP of 1 or 2. Examples include answering a standard telephone, basic driving ability, filing papers, greeting customers, and basic food preparation.
Younger Age / Younger Individual	Age 18 through 49

Table 2

201.00 Maximum Sustained Work Capability Limited to Sedentary Work as a Result of Severe Medically Determined Impairment(s)

Grid Rule	Age	Education	Previous Work Experience	Decision
201.01	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Unskilled or None	Disabled

201.02	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	Disabled
201.03	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.04	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	Disabled
201.05	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
201.06	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	Disabled
201.07	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.08	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.09	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Unskilled or None	Disabled
201.10	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	Disabled
201.11	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.12	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	Disabled
201.13	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
201.14	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	Disabled
201.15	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.16	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.17	Younger Age 45-49	Illiterate	Unskilled or None	Disabled
201.18	Younger Age 45-49	Limited or Marginal, But NOT Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled

201.19	Younger 45-49	Age	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.20	Younger 45-49	Age	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transfer- able	NOT Disabled
201.21	Younger 45-49	Age	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Not Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.22	Younger 45-49	Age	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transfer- able	NOT Disabled
201.23	Younger 18-44	Age	Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
201.24	Younger 18-44	Age	Limited or Marginal, But NOT Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
201.25	Younger 18-44	Age	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.26	Younger 18-44	Age	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transfer- able	NOT Disabled
201.27	Younger 18-44	Age	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
201.28	Younger 18-44	Age	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
201.29	Younger 18-44	Age	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transfer- able	NOT Disabled

Table 3

202.00 Maximum Sustained Work Capability Limited to Light Work as a Result of Severe Medically Determined Impairment(s)

Grid Rule	Age	Education	Previous Work Experience	Decision
202.01	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Unskilled or None	Disabled
202.02	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transfer- able	Disabled

202.03	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.04	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	Disabled
202.05	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.06	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	Disabled
202.07	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.08	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.09	Age 50 - 54	Illiterate	Unskilled or None	Disabled
202.10	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Marginal, But NOT Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.11	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.12	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.13	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.14	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.15	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.16	Age 18 - 49	Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.17	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Marginal, But NOT Illiterate	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.18	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled

202.19	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.20	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
202.21	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
202.22	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled

Table 4

203.00 Maximum Sustained Work Capability Limited to Medium Work as a Result of Severe Medically Determined Impairment(s)

Grid Rule	Age	Education	Previous Work Experience	Decision
203.01	Age 60 & Over	Marginal or Illiterate	Unskilled or None	Disabled
203.02	Age 60 & Over	Limited or Less	None	Disabled
203.03	Age 60 & Over	Limited	Unskilled	NOT Disabled
203.04	Age 60 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.05	Age 60 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.06	Age 60 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.07	Age 60 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.08	Age 60 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.09	Age 60 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.10	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	None	Disabled

203.11	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Unskilled	NOT Disabled
203.12	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.13	Age 55 & Over	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.14	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.15	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.16	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.17	Age 55 & Over	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct Entry into Skilled Work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.18	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.19	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.20	Age 50 - 54	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.21	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.22	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills / Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.23	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.24	Age 50 - 54	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills NOT Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.25	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Less	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.26	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Not Transferable	NOT Disabled

203.27	Age 18 - 49	Limited or Less	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.28	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater	Unskilled or None	NOT Disabled
203.29	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Not Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.30	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater / NOT Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Transferable	NOT Disabled
203.31	Age 18 - 49	HS Graduate or Greater / Direct entry into skilled work	Skilled or Semi-skilled Skills Not Transferable	NOT Disabled

NOTE: 204.00 Maximum Sustained Work Capability Limited to Heavy Work (or Very Heavy Work) as a Result of Severe Medically Determined Impairment(s)

Individuals who perform “heavy work” (or “very heavy work”) usually will not have a severe impairment or will be able to perform their past work, which corresponds to a decision of not disabled in “The Grids” (SSA, 2020b). Also, environmental restrictions usually will not significantly affect the range of work in the national economy for “heavy work” (or “very heavy work”). Thus, an impairment that does not preclude “heavy work” (or “very heavy work”) will not usually be considered the main reason for unemployment and the decision is not disabled, even when age, education, and skill level of prior work experience is considered “adverse” (SSA, 2020b).

References

Social Security Administration (2020a). *Code of Federal Regulations Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2*, https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/cfr20/404/404-app-p02.htm

Social Security Administration (2020b). *Program Operations Manual System (POMS)*. <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0425025035>

Author Notes

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