

3.6.3.120 Guidelines to Table 12 - Visual Function

Summary

Table 12 is used to assess functional impairment when performing activities involving visual function.

The diagnosis of the condition must be made by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner. There must also be supporting evidence from an ophthalmologist or ophthalmic surgeon.

If the person uses any visual aids, such as spectacles or contact lenses, they must be assessed on their ability to undertake activities listed in Table 12 while using any aids that they have and usually use.

In determining whether the person has received all reasonable treatment for their impairment, consideration should be given to the aids and equipment or other assistive devices the person has and usually uses. For example, if a person would benefit significantly from spectacles or contact lenses but chooses not to use them, consideration should be given to whether they have received all reasonable treatment and their impairment can be considered fully treated.

Where severe or extreme loss of visual function is evident or suspected, it must be recommended to the person that they undergo an assessment by a qualified ophthalmologist to determine whether they meet the criteria for permanent blindness ([3.6.2.20](#)) as per SSAct section 95.

Act reference: [SSAct](#) section 95 Qualification for disability support pension - permanent blindness
[Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2011](#) Table 12 - Visual Function

Determining the level of functional impact

When determining which impairment rating applies to a person the rating that best describes the person's abilities or difficulties must be applied. In applying the descriptors, each descriptor sets out how the points within it are to apply.

For example, to meet the 20 point descriptor in Table 12 a person must meet all the points under (1). Under point (1)(d) they must satisfy either (i) or (ii).

The 30 point descriptor allows for assessment of people who are not considered permanently blind but have an extreme level of vision impairment which impacts their ability to mobilise and perform their daily activities.

The descriptors in Table 12 use the term 'assistance'. Assistance means assistance from another person, rather than any aids or equipment the person has and usually uses (see [3.6.3.05](#) (E) Use of aids, equipment & assistive technology).

Guidelines to the Tables effective from 1 January 2012

Determination of the descriptor that best fits the person's impairment level must be based on the available medical evidence including the person's medical history, investigation results and clinical findings. A person's self-reported symptoms must not solely be relied on. It would be inappropriate to apply an impairment rating based solely on a person's self-reported functional history if this level of functional impairment is not consistent with the medical evidence available.

Consideration should be given to the fact that 2 people with the same level of vision loss can have different levels of independence and skills. Assumptions must not be made based solely on the clinical level of blindness the person has.

A single impairment rating under Table 12 should be determined, regardless of whether one or both eyes suffer vision loss.

Act reference: [Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2011](#) Table 12 - Visual Function

Some conditions causing impairment commonly assessed using Table 12

These include but are not limited to:

- diabetic retinopathy,
- glaucoma,
- retinitis pigmentosa,
- macular degeneration,
- cataracts.

***Example:** A 50 year old woman was diagnosed with glaucoma several years ago. She has undergone surgery for this condition which has slowed down the progression of the disease but medical evidence states that her current symptoms will not improve and will eventually get worse. This woman has lost much of her side vision and has very limited vision to the sides when looking straight ahead. She has difficulty seeing bus route numbers and reading normal sized print. She is not able to drive but does regularly use public transport independently. She sometimes needs to ask someone to inform her of the numbers of approaching buses. She uses special computer software to magnify computer screen displays and read text on screen out loud.*

The condition is considered fully diagnosed, treated and stabilised and under Table 12, this woman would receive an impairment rating of 10 due to the moderate functional impact her condition has on her ability to function. Under the 10 point descriptor this woman would meet (1)(a), (b), (c) and (d)(i) and (2)(a) and (b).

Guidelines to the Tables effective from 1 January 2012

Act reference: [Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2011](#) Table 12 - Visual Function