as the corresponding criterion of a rule. In these instances, we give full consideration to all relevant facts in accordance with the definitions and discussions under vocational considerations. However, if the findings of fact made about all factors are the same as the rule, we use that rule to decide whether a person is disabled.


§ 404.1569a Exertional and non-exertional limitations.

(a) General. Your impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, may cause limitations of function or restrictions which limit your ability to meet certain demands of jobs. These limitations may be exertional, non-exertional, or a combination of both. Limitations are classified as exertional if they affect your ability to meet the strength demands of jobs. The classification of a limitation as exertional is related to the United States Department of Labor’s classification of jobs by various exertional levels (sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy) in terms of the strength demands for sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling. Sections 404.1567 and 404.1569 explain how we use the classification of jobs by exertional levels (strength demands) which is contained in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles published by the Department of Labor, to determine the exertional requirements of work which exists in the national economy. Limitations or restrictions which affect your ability to meet the demands of jobs other than the strength demands, that is, demands other than sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling, are considered non-exertional. When we decide whether you can do your past relevant work (see §§ 404.1520(f) and 404.1594(f)(8)), we will compare our assessment of your residual functional capacity with the demands of your past relevant work. If you cannot do your past relevant work, we will use the same residual functional capacity assessment along with your age, education, and work experience to decide if you can adjust to any other work which exists in the national economy. (See §§ 404.1520(g) and 404.1594(f)(8)). Paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section explain how we apply the medical-vocational guidelines in appendix 2 of this subpart in making this determination, depending on whether the limitations or restrictions imposed by your impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, are exertional, nonexertional, or a combination of both.

(b) Exertional limitations. When the limitations and restrictions imposed by your impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, affect only your ability to meet the strength demands of jobs (sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling), we consider that you have only exertional limitations. When your impairment(s) and related symptoms only impose exertional limitations and your specific vocational profile is listed in a rule contained in appendix 2 of this subpart, we will directly apply that rule to decide whether you are disabled.

(c) Nonexertional limitations. (1) When the limitations and restrictions imposed by your impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, affect only your ability to meet the demands of jobs other than the strength demands, we consider that you have only nonexertional limitations or restrictions. Some examples of nonexertional limitations or restrictions include the following:

(i) You have difficulty functioning because you are nervous, anxious, or depressed;
(ii) You have difficulty maintaining attention or concentrating;
(iii) You have difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions;
(iv) You have difficulty in seeing or hearing;
(v) You have difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings, e.g., you cannot tolerate dust or fumes; or
(vi) You have difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching.

(2) If your impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect
§ 404.1573 General information about work activity.

Substantial gainful activity is work activity that is both substantial and gainful:

(a) Substantial work activity. Substantial work activity is work activity that involves doing significant physical or mental activities. Your work may be substantial even if it is done on a part-time basis or if you do less, get paid less, or have less responsibility than when you worked before.

(b) Gainful work activity. Gainful work activity is work activity that you do for pay or profit. Work activity is gainful if it is the kind of work usually done for pay or profit, whether or not a profit is realized.

(c) Some other activities. Generally, we do not consider activities like taking care of yourself, household tasks, hobbies, therapy, school attendance, club activities, or social programs to be substantial gainful activity.

§ 404.1573 General information about work activity.

The work, without regard to legality, that you have done during any period in which you believe you are disabled may show that you are able to work at the substantial gainful activity level. If you are able to engage in substantial gainful activity, we will find that you are not disabled. (We explain the rules for persons who are statutorily blind in § 404.1584.) Even if the work you have done was not substantial gainful activity, it may show that you are able to do more work than you actually did. We will consider all of the medical and vocational evidence in your file to decide whether or not you have the ability to engage in substantial gainful activity.