

This I Believe Essay-Writing Guidelines

Rough Draft Due:

Final Draft Due:

"Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent." — Edward R. Murrow

Background:

"This I Believe is an international organization engaging people in writing and sharing essays describing the core values that guide their daily lives. Some 100,000 of these essays, written by people from all walks of life, are archived here on our website, heard on public radio, chronicled through our books, and featured in weekly podcasts. The project is based on the popular 1950s radio series of the same name hosted by Edward R. Murrow" (thisibelieve.org).

For Our Class:

For this type of persuasive speech, you will be asked to write a *personal* statement about a *personal* philosophy you hold dear and by which you live your *own* life. This is an exercise that is very similar to what you might be asked to write in your personal statement when applying to colleges in the future. Because it is about you and your beliefs, you should use "I" and you may attempt to elicit an emotional response from your audience. Please peruse the guidelines below to make sure you are following the intentions of the This I Believe project.

Essay Requirements:

- 1) Write a well-developed response to the questions: What is my personal philosophy? How has this shaped my understanding of the world (i.e. Why is it important)?
- 2) Your essay should be no more than 500 words.
- 3) You **MUST** follow the This I Believe guidelines below.
- 4) Use "I" statements and anecdotes to connect your experiences to your belief and ultimately to your reader
- 5) Use ethos, logos and pathos in your essay to defend your reasons why this is an important philosophy to YOU.
 - a. Logos: an appeal based on logic/reason
 - b. Pathos: an appeal based on emotions
 - c. Ethos: an appeal based on the character or ethics of the speaker
- 6) Publish your essay to thisibelieve.org AND submit a paper copy to me typed in MLA format (see parent release below).

HINT Follow the examples given to you in class, or explore the website to see/hear more examples

This I Believe, Inc. Guidelines

We invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. We understand how challenging this is—it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.

Be positive: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

Be personal: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Graphic Organizer: Use the following chart to help you plan your essay:

- Choose 5 belief statements (statements that tell us something about you, who you are/how you think and how you have been defined. These must be statements that are personal to you and would be something you continue to live your life by/would teach to your children)

Belief Statement	Why I Believe This	How it has shaped/changed me.
EX. I believe in the power of the family dinner	- Leads to discussion/sharing - Brings families and generations together - Develops character - Friends who didn't have this were more stressed/didn't do as well in school	- Led to my sense of service - Allowed me to distress which made me better able to deal with problems in my life. - Created an everlasting bond between sisters
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Parent/Guardian Release

At This I Believe, we ask that parents or guardians participate in the essay submission process for anyone under the age of 18. This I Believe is committed to complying fully with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998. It is the policy of This I Believe, Inc., to create website content that requires minimum collection of information from youth. Generally, This I Believe limits the display of personally identifiable information of youth on our Web site to include only the first name, city, state, and country of residence. As the parent or guardian submitting an essay on behalf of a child under the age of 18, you agree and consent to the collection of that child's limited personal information. No personally identifiable information (e.g., last name, address, email address, telephone number) will be made public on our Web site or shared with third parties—ever. All other personally identifiable information collected by This I Believe shall be for contact purposes only in the event that an employee or representative of This I Believe wishes to be in contact regarding the essay submitted (for possible broadcast or publication).

By signing below, I DO NOT accept the terms and conditions of This I Believe, Inc. and DO NOT give my permission for my student to submit his/her essay to thisibelieve.org.

Parent Name: _____ Signature: _____
E-mail: _____

The Original Invitation from This I Believe

This invites you to make a very great contribution: nothing less than a statement of your personal beliefs, of the values which rule your thought and action. Your essay should be about three minutes in length when read loud, written in a style as you yourself speak, and total no more than 500 words.

We know this is a tough job. What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. We ask you to write in your own words and then record in your own voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this for you to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down they may become of untold meaning to others.

We would like you to tell not only what you believe, but how you reached your beliefs, and if they have grown, what made them grow. This necessarily must be highly personal. That is what we anticipate and want.

It may help you in formulating your credo if we tell you also what we do not want. We do not want a sermon, religious or lay; we do not want editorializing or sectarianism or 'finger-pointing.' We do not even want your views on the American way of life, or democracy or free enterprise. These are important but for another occasion. We want to know what you live by. And we want it in terms of 'I,' not the editorial 'We.'

Although this program is designed to express beliefs, it is not a religious program and is not concerned with any religious form whatever. Most of our guests express belief in a Supreme Being, and set forth the importance to them of that belief. However, that is your decision, since it is your belief which we solicit.

But we do ask you to confine yourself to affirmatives: This means refraining from saying what you do not believe. Your beliefs may well have grown in clarity to you by a process of elimination and rejection, but for our part, we must avoid negative statements lest we become a medium for the criticism of beliefs, which is the very opposite of our purpose.

We are sure the statement we ask from you can have wide and lasting influence. Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent. Your belief, simply and sincerely spoken, is sure to stimulate and help those who hear it. We are confident it will enrich them. May we have your contribution?

Adapted from the invitation sent to essayists featured in the original 'This I Believe' series. Excerpted from 'This I Believe 2,' copyright © 1954 by Help, Inc.