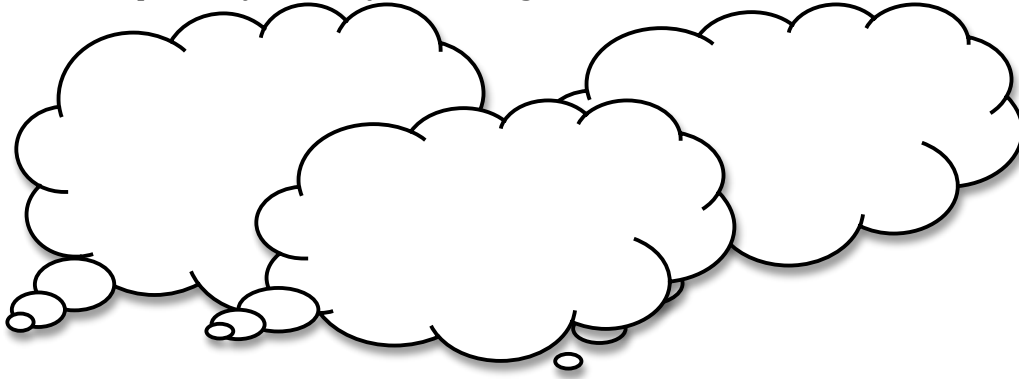


## ***Writing My Own "This I Believe" Essay***

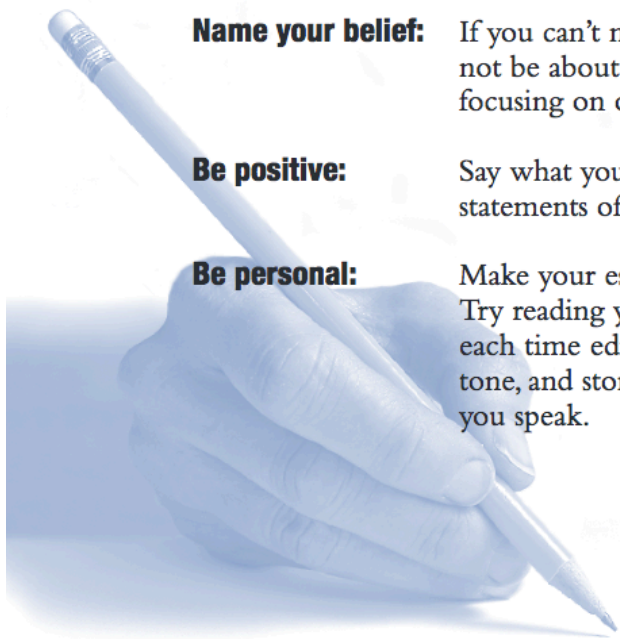
1. Think of some of your most important, deeply felt and held beliefs, those ideas that guide you, that help make you who you are. Begin with the words "I believe..." or "This I believe..."



2. Which events, experiences, and people have shaped and reinforced these important beliefs? Use the chart to fill in your ideas.



3. Now examine each of these ideas. Which beliefs do you feel most strongly about? Which one will be easier to write about?
4. Use the requirements and tips offered by the creators of the "This I Believe" project, which you will find on the following page.



**Tell a story:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Consider moments when your belief was formed, tested, or changed. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and to the shaping of your beliefs.

**Be brief:** Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. The shorter length forces you to focus on the belief that is central to your life.

**Name your belief:** If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.

**Be positive:** Say what you *do* believe, not what you *don't* believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

**Be personal:** Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Try reading 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.

Please submit your completed essay to the *This I Believe* project, by visiting the website: [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org).

5. Finally, you are welcome to use any of the following sentence starters to help you get going.

*I believe...*

*When I was young...*

*If it weren't for my...*

*Because of...*

*Whenever I think of...*

*My experience with...has led me to believe...*

*I will always believe...*

*My belief in...stems from...*

*I owe so much to...*

*Of this I am convinced...*

*To believe in...is to...*

*One thing that makes me...is my belief in...*

*With each day I...*

*Not a day goes by that I don't...*

*Among the most important...in my life is...*

*My belief in...came from...*

*To this day...*

*I have been profoundly affected by...*

*Ever since...I have believed in...*

*In my experience...*

*After...I am certain of one thing:*

*It is my belief that...*

*Can you keep a secret?*

*I am not ashamed to say...*

*No one can tell me that...*

*No matter what...*

## **“This I Believe” Essay Scoring Rubric**

FORMAT (\_\_\_/5 POINTS; 1 POINT EACH)

- Essay is titled; **title is centered**
- Essay has the name of the author under the title
- Essay is **double spaced** throughout
- Correct paragraph structure is used
- Essay is **300-500 words** in length

AUDIENCE (\_\_\_/12 POINTS; 3 POINTS EACH)

- Ideas are clearly written and explained
- “I believe” statement is clearly stated using the words “I believe” at least once during the essay.
- The author **provides a story that explains** how he or she developed the core belief or beliefs
- **Spelling and grammar** rules are followed

TOPIC (\_\_\_/12 POINTS; 3 POINTS EACH)

- The author **stays on topic**
- **Specific examples or anecdotes<sup>1</sup> support(s)** the “I believe” statement
- Author uses descriptive language and sensory details to elaborate
- Author’s tone<sup>2</sup> is obvious to the reader
- **Story relates** to the belief

PURPOSE (\_\_\_/6 POINTS; 3 POINTS EACH)

- The author explains his or her belief using **first person**
- The essay is interesting to read and the reader understands how/why the belief is important to the author

**TOTAL \_\_\_/35 POINTS**

COMMENTS:

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<sup>1</sup> stories

<sup>2</sup> author’s feeling about his or her topic

