

First and Last Name  
ENG 050  
Assignment #2: This I Believe  
Due:

**Assignment #2: *This I Believe***

**Prompt:** Please compose an assignment that explores a personal belief that shapes your daily life.

**Purpose:** You choose the purpose: Persuade. Inform. Entertain. You can have a primary, secondary, and tertiary purpose.

**Audience:** You will perform an informal, oral presentation of this essay to our class.

**Focus:** Your belief may not be unique to you, but the way you present it should be personal and individualized. You may begin with a larger, general belief, but you should narrow your belief down to one story or example(s) with concrete details that describes particular life experience(s). Your audience should read your essay and see through active description how your belief emerged from the experience. For example, your story/example could show how your belief in *second chances* stems from the time your significant other took you back after you cheated and now you're happy together.

**Style:** This is a short essay, so you will need to be concise and choose only the most important details necessary to describe your belief. You'll want to have a good "lead," a sentence or two that draws your reader in and sets up the topic. You can use humor, or you can take a more serious approach. Think about what style would best reflect your own personality—and best reflect the belief you choose to discuss. *Be sure to avoid lecturing to your audience.*

**Process:** To begin, *Think On Paper* about your day-to-day life: freewrite, list, cluster, blog, discuss, and read other *This I Believe* essays to generate ideas and answer these questions:

- What influences your decisions, your outlook, and your interactions with those around you?
- What principles guide your life?
- What significant event or person shaped a strong belief in you?

After you've established one belief to focus on, **you will then need to choose a specific, personal story or example(s) that illustrates this belief and how you live by it.** Be specific. This is an essay that can only be written by you in multiple drafts.

**Product:** This essay must be around 500 words and formatted as follows: Times New Roman, double-spaced, one-inch margins all-around. Please include an original title centered at the top of the essay. These don't count as original titles: *This I Believe* or *I Believe in \_\_\_\_\_*. We will use these criteria to evaluate your essay:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Your thesis statement explains your belief and guides your essay (I believe in \_\_\_\_\_).
- \_\_\_\_\_ You use a specific story/example(s) with to argue/illustrate how this belief shapes your life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your essay is personalized and unique to you and expresses your own voice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your essay is well organized and your thoughts developed in an effective manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your essay is at about 500 words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your essay shows signs of careful proofreading, with minimal grammatical or spelling errors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your assignment sheet is stapled/attached to the back of your packet.

**The guidelines listed here are from the “This I Believe” webpage. Please keep these guidelines in mind as you start drafting your essay. <http://www.thisibelieve.org/essaywritingtips.html>**

- **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.
- **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.

You will need a powerful hook to get any readers attention. The lead is the doorway through which a writer welcomes and orients readers to the idea. **Avoid beginning an essay with the statement “This I Believe.”** Try at least two of the following strategies as more effective leads. Then you can choose the better opening with the help of a peer or group member. Examples:

- üü **Question:** “When was the last time you went without a meal?”
- üü **Quotation:** (from someone famous or from someone significant in your life)  
“*Be careful* were the last words my father said to me each time I left the house.”
- üü **Strong statement** (that your essay will either support or dispute) “If you eat enough cabbage, you’ll never get cancer.”
- üü **Metaphor:** “The starlings in my back garden are the small boys in the playground, impressing each other with their new-found swear words. The crows all belong to the same biker gang. You need to know their secret sign to join their club.”
- üü **Description** (of a person or setting): “Michael once mowed the lawns around Municipal Hall wearing a frilly apron, high heels, and nylons, with a pillow stuffed under his sweater so he looked pregnant. And it wasn’t even Halloween.”