

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## This I Believe Guidelines

### Introduction

*A sneak preview of a movie. It gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the paragraph, but doesn't reveal everything. It introduces the main idea (what value you believe in).*

→ **4-6 sentences long**

→ **First sentence is your hook**

◆ **Ask a question that gets to the point of your paragraph: Example:** “when was the last time you saw someone do the right thing?”

◆ **Make a list: Example:** “The next time you go to a museum, make sure you have the right clothes, supplies, and fellow travelers with you!”

◆ **Share a story: Example:** “I will never forget the last time I had to make a difficult choice.” You would then go on to explain what happened.

◆ **Use a quote related to your topic.** There are wonderful websites online that provide thousands of quotes for you to use. Make sure you credit the original author!

→ **Include your thesis statement: Example:** “I believe in the value of \_\_\_\_\_”

→ **How You Learned that Value:** Briefly describe what your narrative will be about. Example: “I learned the value of love on a cold, winter day at my grandpa’s house when I was five years old.”

→ **Concluding Statement/Transition Sentence**

### Body Paragraph 1

*This is the part in your essay when you will tell the story of when you learned your value. It should be full of details to make the reader feel as if they are there with you.*

→ **Minimum: 6 sentences long**

→ **Explain the story in detail**

◆ 1st person point of view

◆ Use your five senses

◆ Include: who, what, where, when and why

◆ Include dialogue

◆ Bring your reader into the moment

→ **Concluding Statement/Transition**

### Body Paragraph 2

*The reflective part of your narrative when you discuss how that moment in your life changed you/ the value you learned.*

→ **Minimum: 5 sentences long**

→ **Explain how that story changed you**

◆ Go into detail about the value you learned from that experience

→ **Explain how it changes who you are today**

- Compare and contrast who you were before you learned the value and who you are now
- Concluding Statement/Transition

### Conclusion

*A good conclusion doesn't have to wrap up all loose ends; many wonderful conclusions leave the reader thinking long after the story has concluded.*

- 4-6 sentences long
- Re-emphasis what you believe (value)
- Why is this value important for the reader
- Try not to summarize in your conclusion. Repeating thoughts and information previously stated will force your reader to hurry through the end of your essay.
- Say “bye-bye” to “This is why”: It is easy to end your paragraph with “This is why...” a much more effective option is to restate your main idea (from the introduction) in a different way.
- Goals for your conclusion:
  - ◆ **Challenge the reader to think:** You may want the reader to walk away from your essay thinking about his or her own life. **Example:** *“I know I am not the only person who has ever had to fight to keep my faith alive but I know I am stronger for having done so hopefully I am not alone.”*
  - ◆ **Put your story in a bigger context:** Most likely, there are people out there who can relate to your story. Sometimes it is effective to put your personal story in perspective of a bigger world. **Example:** *“As a middle school student, I know I am not able to drive a car, vote for our president, or see an R-rated movie. Yet, these are my frustrations, but I know eventually, as with everyone who came before me, and everyone who will come after me, I will grow up.”*
  - ◆ **Ask the reader to do something:** If you are writing about a cause that is important to you, or a situation that has possible solutions, you can gently urge your reader to act on your message. This puts the reader in a position of power. **Example:** *“The next time you are about to head to the grocery store, try to remember all of the plastic bags you see flying around your neighborhood. Grab a canvas bag instead and make a stylish statement.” Just remember, you aren't here to ridicule, or chastise your reader!*

### Remember!

- **It's all about you**– Write about you and your thoughts. Tell us your story in the first person, and try to avoid sentences like “We feel this way.”
- **Keep it personal**– Don't try to use words or phrases you wouldn't normally say. Remember, if you wouldn't be comfortable saying the words out loud, it is probably too formal.
- **Timing is everything**– Make sure that you read your finished essay out loud. It shouldn't be more than three minutes long when read at a normal speaking rate.
- **Say what you do believe, not what you don't**– Write about what you think, but not at the expense of others. Keep the focus on you, and what you believe, not what you disagree with.
- **Have fun!** How many times are you allowed to be 100% free with your choice of topic, and what you want to say about it? This is your chance to write about your personal philosophy of life, so don't be shy—let it out!