

**LUC WRITING CENTER –
“FIRST PERSON VERB TENSE: TO USE OR NOT TO USE ‘I’ IN AN ESSAY?”**

A common issue in essay-writing is whether to use “I.”

Example: “~~I believe~~ that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used the rhetorical appeal of pathos to both admonish and make allies of white fellow clergymen who were not yet supporting civil rights for African Americans.”

Some teachers will allow you to use “I” while others will not. A **good** idea is to Ask your teacher if you can use first person verb tense or not in your writing for that class.

An **excellent** idea is to Avoid using first person verb tense UNLESS you are writing a Response Essay in which you are describing *historical events that happened only to you and informed your unique personal perspective on an issue*. Otherwise, it really is **not necessary** to use “I” in an essay or any piece of non-personal writing.

Remember that YOU are the Assumed Author!

When you are NOT:

- **Introducing Quotes,**
- **Quoting, Summarizing, or**
- **Explaining the Meaning of a Quote or Summary,**

You are the **Assumed Author of the Essay!** Therefore, what you write in your:

- 1) **Thesis statement** (*major point/summary of the entire argument you are about to make*)
- 2) **The first sentence of each paragraph** (*providing the summary of the point you are about to prove*), and
- 3) **In your conclusion sentence to each paragraph** (*summarizing the importance of the point you just proved to your larger argument*), **is assumed to be your words!**

So how do you correct this habit and stop writing “I think/I believe/I am of the opinion that...?”

SIMPLE! Erase Yourself!!!!

Example: “~~I believe that~~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used the rhetorical appeal of pathos to both admonish and make allies of white fellow clergymen who were not yet supporting civil rights for African Americans.”

Example 2: “What made it possible for white clergymen to become allies for African Americans, ~~in my opinion,~~ was King Jr’s expressed respect for them as men of the cloth even while he chided them for their callous indifference to racial injustice.”

Again, *you are understood to be the author*, so **just state your opinion as a point-of-fact, or a factual statement** that you will go on to prove **with quotes, summary, and explanation of quotes and summaries.**