

# Write like Sedaris: Writing Challenge

## Brief

### The challenge

Create a 900-word essay following David Sedaris' exact [approach](#) from his essay "[Diary of a Smoker](#)." This exercise will teach you how master writers work on multiple levels simultaneously, addressing universal themes through specific, personal material.

### Strategic planning: The 'WHAT'

#### Step 1: Choose your universal theme

Select one theme that resonates with you. It could be:

- Belonging
- Control
- Authenticity
- Freedom
- Identity
- Change
- Justice
- Connection
- Purpose
- Trust
- Growth
- ...something else important to you

#### Step 2: Find your uncommon perspective

- What contrarian or surprising view do you hold about this theme?
- What would people not expect you to think about this topic?

#### Step 3: Identify your specific topic

- How will you explore this big theme through something smaller and more concrete?
  - What specific subject, habit, or area of life will serve as your vehicle? (Remember: Sedaris uses "smoking" to explore the broader theme of "acceptance")
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## Tactical execution: The 'HOW'

### Gather your material

Create a list of **6+ personal anecdotes** that illustrate your uncommon perspective. These should be stories that only you can tell; specific moments, conversations, or experiences that support your viewpoint.

### Plan your essay: 3 Sections

- **Sections 1 & 2:** Illustrate why you have your particular perspective (don't "tell," but "show" your contrarian view in action)
- **Section 3:** Reveal more personal context to show why you hold this perspective in the first place

### Essential constraints

- **Maximum 900 words**
- **Concrete, specific details** in each section that only you could write
- **Surprise and humour** wherever possible
- **Dialogue** (bonus points for including conversations)
- **Strong section endings** that leave readers wanting more. Each of your three sections should end with a sentence that creates stakes and forward momentum

### The pattern to follow

Like Sedaris, structure each story as: **Anecdote** (specific moment/scene) → **Evaluation** (your perspective on what happened)

## The mission

Write an essay that works on two levels: surface level (your specific topic) and deeper level (universal theme). Readers should be entertained by your specific stories while unconsciously connecting with the bigger human truth you're exploring.

**Deadline:** 22 June, 2025 **Submission:** [This Google Form](#)

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