



Questions about Conscientious Objection



These questions are from Form 22, the Selective Service System Documentation Form for Conscientious Objectors. The explanations are from the Center on Conscience and War.

Question 1: Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for your claiming conscientious objection to combatant military training and service or to all military training and service.

This question asks you to describe, in some detail and as honestly as possible, the basic principles by which you guide your life. You should describe those values which are of utmost importance to you, such as God, love, truth, etc., and why these beliefs are in conflict with participation in war or paying for war or preparations for war. You should begin by saying that you are conscientiously opposed to participation in war, and then describe the beliefs that lead you to such opposition.

The second part of this question seeks to determine whether as a draft registrant you claim noncombatant status in the military or a full exemption from military service. You should specify what it is about noncombatant service that would violate your conscience if this is the exemption you seek. Conscientious objectors to paying taxes for war should specify what it is about paying taxes for war that violates your conscience. If your convictions lead you to be a non-cooperator, your answer to this question might be useful should you ever be prosecuted or seek financial aid or other help from sources such as FEAT which provides school loans to CO nonregistrants.

Question 2: Describe how and when you acquired these beliefs.

In answering this question, you should include anything of significance which helped to form your beliefs. Mention any religious training you have had if you feel such training has helped you arrive at your position. If you feel you arrived at your beliefs with no formal training, there is, of course, no need to mention any. The influence of clergy, teachers, family members, books, television, movies, membership in organizations and experiences in your life should be listed. Be specific. You need to show that strong influences in your life have stimulated you to think clearly and seriously about participation in war.

Specific incidents can be mentioned, such as seminars or assemblies you have attended, courses taken, trips taken, contact with refugees, demonstrations you were in, to show that your beliefs had substantial formation beyond a merely "academic interest." Obviously, if you have experienced war, be sure to reflect on it. Take care not to give the impression that your belief is primarily a matter of political considerations, expediency, or merely an arbitrary, personal moral code unrelated to higher values. Unconventional beliefs do qualify, but they will require careful statement.

Question 3: Explain what most clearly shows that your beliefs are deeply held. You may wish to include a description of how your beliefs affect the way you live.

This may be a difficult question for objectors who have not had many experiences that can show sincere beliefs. Select the best illustrations of your convictions. Think about community service; church, mosque or synagogue participation; clubs; sports; or relationship with friends. You can always discuss how your future plans are strongly affected by a commitment to those beliefs. Describe kinds of employment you have had or plan to have which reflect your commitment. Discuss any public expression, written or oral, you have given to your beliefs. Describe your lifestyle, mention your life's goals as you have set them, and show how they are an outgrowth of your beliefs. Don't forget to mention movies, video games, and other aspects of our violent culture that you don't participate in, if that is the case for you. This question allows you to demonstrate the sincerity with which you hold your beliefs.