

# be·lieve S1 W1

/b<sup>l</sup>ˈliːv/

verb

- 1** BE SURE SOMETHING IS TRUE [transitive not in progressive] BELIEVE to be sure that something is true or that someone is telling the truth:

*You shouldn't believe everything you read.*

*I believed him, even though his story sounded unlikely.*

**believe (that)**

*I don't believe he's only 25.*

*I **don't believe a word of it** (= I think it is completely untrue).*

- 2** HAVE AN OPINION [transitive not in progressive] BELIEVE to think that something is true or possible, although you are not completely sure:

**believe (that)**

*Detectives believe that the victim knew his killer.*

**it is believed (that)**

*It is believed that the house was built in 1735.*

**believe so** (= think that something is true)

*'Have they arrived yet?' 'Yes, I believe so.'*

**be believed to be something**

*At 115, Mrs Jackson is believed to be the oldest person in the country.*

*The four men are **widely believed** (= believed by a lot of people) to have been killed by their captors.*

*Did you **honestly believe** that I'd be stupid enough to do that?*

*I **firmly believe** that the business will be a success.*

- 3** it's difficult/hard to believe (that)

used when you are surprised that something is true:

*Sometimes, it's hard to believe we've been married for 50 years.*

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## SPOKEN PHRASES

### 4 **can't/don't believe something** SURPRISED

used when you are very surprised or shocked by something:

*I can't believe he's expecting us to work on Sunday!*

*I couldn't believe it when he told me what had happened.*

### **can hardly/scarcely believe something**

*I could scarcely believe my luck.*

### 5 **believe it or not** BELIEVE

used when you are saying something that is true but surprising:

*He enjoys school, believe it or not.*

### 6 **would you believe it! (also I don't believe it!)** SURPRISED

used when you are surprised or angry about something:

*And then he just walked out. Would you believe it!*

### 7 **believe (you) me** TRUE

used to emphasize that something is definitely true:

*There'll be trouble when they find out about this, believe you me!*

### 8 TRUE **you'd better believe it!**

used to emphasize that something is true

### 9 UNTRUE **don't you believe it!**

used to emphasize that something is definitely not true

### 10 **can't believe your eyes/ears** SURPRISED

used to say that someone is very surprised by something they see or hear

### 11 **if you believe that, you'll believe anything** BELIEVE

used to say that something is definitely not true, and that anyone

who believes it must be stupid

## **12 seeing is believing** (also **I'll believe it when I see it**)<sup>BELIEVE</sup>

used to say that you will only believe that something happens or exists when you actually see it

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## **13 RELIGION**[intransitive] RELIGION to have a religious faith:

*She says those who believe will go to heaven.*

→ **make believe** AT MAKE<sup>1</sup> (19)

## **THESAURUS**

### **to believe something**

**believe** to be sure that something is true or that someone is telling the truth: *I believed her when she said that she loved me.* | *Don't believe anything he tells you.*

**accept** to believe that something is true, especially because someone has persuaded you to believe it: *His wife accepted his explanation for why he was late.* | *Leah had slowly come to accept her brother's version of events.*

**take somebody's word for it** (especially spoken) to believe what someone says is true, even though you have no proof or experience of it: *I don't know anything about him, so I'll just have to take your word for it.* | *You don't have to take my word for it – go and see for yourself.* | *'Cakes are very easy to make.'* *'I'll take your word for it.'*

**give somebody the benefit of the doubt** to believe what someone says, even though you think it might not be true: *Unless you have proof, you should give him the benefit of the doubt.*

### **to believe something that is untrue**

**be taken in** (also **fall for something** (informal)) to be tricked into believing something that is not true: *A lot of people*

*were taken in by these claims. | I can't believe she fell for that old excuse!*

**swallow** (informal) to believe a story or explanation that is not true, especially when this makes you seem silly: *His aunt had swallowed his story unquestioningly. | Police refused to swallow his story, and put him in a cell.*

## **believe in** somebody/ something

phrasal verb

**1** BELIEVE to be sure that someone or something exists:

*Do you believe in God?*

**2** APPROVE to think that something is effective or right:

*I don't believe in these diets.*

**believe in doing something**

*The school believes in letting children learn at their own pace.*

**3** BELIEVE to trust someone and be confident that they will be successful:

*The people want a president they can believe in.*

*Believe in yourself, or you'll never succeed.*

### **Word origin**

**Language:** Old English

**Origin:** *belefan*, from *lyfan*, *lefan* 'to allow, believe'

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

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