

## How to Write a Life List

By Jill Smolinski

Writing a life list—a list of what you hope to do before you die—can help you get more out of each day. Like a map, it provides steps and points of interest to make the journey of your life a lot more enjoyable. Here, some tips:

1. Write it down. This may seem obvious, but plenty of people talk about their dreams, and that's all it ever is: talk.
2. Brainstorm, either on your own or with friends. You don't have to write down every idea that occurs to you, but bad ideas often lead to good ones. \_ \_
3. Not sure how many tasks to include? Aim for 10 to 50—enough to be interesting, but not so many as to be overwhelming.
4. Write in pen or pencil vs. blood. A life list isn't a dictum from the gods. It's simply a guide for your life—and the thing about life is that it changes. Allow yourself the freedom to dream and the flexibility to cut goals that no longer suit you.
5. Have fun! If your life list is the floatation device you're using to keep from drowning in a sea of boredom, then by all means take it seriously—but, hey, you can still go for a few goals that make you giggle.

### The type of goals to include:

**Ambitious.** A few “big ticket” goals give you something to strive for. Run a marathon. Get your Master's degree. Publish a novel. Earn a million dollars. Become a pro golfer. Visit every continent. Have children. Get out of debt. Can't think of anything? Imagine yourself on your deathbed: What do you wish more than anything you'd done/seen/accomplished? That's it.

**Fun.** The world is always ready give you work—a life list is a reminder to make room for joy. Swim with dolphins. Go on a hike. Learn the words to Bohemian Rhapsody. Try a new restaurant every day for a week. Moon somebody. Eat dessert first. Skinnydip. Get a massage. Test-drive a Porsche. Send a message in a bottle. Play Twister. Go on a roadtrip. Go incognito.

**Skill-based.** Whether it's speaking a foreign language, playing guitar, golfing, knitting, shooting a gun, baking a soufflé, or even mastering a stick shift, it's never too late to learn.

**Unlikely.** Finish the sentence, “I'm not the type of person who would...” Then add to

your list whatever it is that you'd never do. Sing in public? Ask a stranger to dance? Wear leather pants?

**Scary.** There's the old saying, "That which does not kill us only makes us stronger." Consider adding something to your list that makes your heart race: skydiving, motorcycle riding, public speaking, wearing a bikini—or even confronting a phobia that's been holding you back.

**From someone else.** Throw yourself at the mercy of those who know you best and let a close friend or family member pick a few goals for your list. They'll often tap into something you'd never have the guts to do otherwise. Peer pressure isn't always bad.

**Bettering.** Most of us have things we'd like to change about ourselves: lose weight, quit smoking, start exercising, get more sleep, etc. Adding them to your life list can help strengthen your resolve.

**Philanthropic.** Try to find something to make the world glad you were in it. Volunteer. Recycle. Buy a low-emission car. Donate to charity.

**Easy.** Jump-start your efforts by including at least one thing you can do right away—if only for the thrill of crossing it off.

**Reproduction of this information is encouraged with the following credit:**

**Jill Smolinski is the author of the novels *Objects of My Affection* and *The Next Thing on My List*; visit her at [jillsmolinski.com](http://jillsmolinski.com)**