A FREE SAMPLER FROM LISTS OF 30



Chapter 0

The Director's Cut

Three lists of 30 that didn't make it into
My Life in Lists of 30 or *Our Life in Lists of 30*

1 **30 Petty Grievances** — March 2025

2 **30 Manners I Want Evie to Learn** — June 2021

3 **30 Life Decisions and Systems** — February 2025

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BEFORE WE START

Every book has a cutting room floor

Mine happens to be a blog with 500+ lists of 30.

These three lists aren't in either book, but they're some of the most-opened lists I've sent to the Lists of 30 newsletter. One was written in 2021, while *Our Life in Lists of 30* was still taking its sweet time getting published. The other two came after it shipped, and they're probably early drafts of whatever comes next.

They follow the same format as the books: a Random Observation/Comment to open, a “Why This List?”, 30 items, and a sign-off. Read them in any order. One is petty, one is about raising a classy kid, and one is about the decisions that quietly shape a life.

Then do the thing the books are actually for: write your own.

~See Lemons Roll the Credits

DIRECTOR'S CUT · LIST 1 OF 3 · MARCH 2025

30 Petty Grievances

> *Random Observation/Comment #869: If we get another pet, I'd call it "peeve" so I can say, "Here's my pet peeve."*

WHY THIS LIST?

I started writing this list because I heard something on a podcast my wife introduced me to in a long car ride. My first book, My Life in Lists of 30 (free ebook), had a list of 30 pet peeves (I hate wet socks). In this list, I was thinking more about how a lot of these topics could be an introduction to some tight-5 comedy routine.

I also binge watched a lot of episodes of Monk before it left Netflix, so I was wondering what my OCD compulsions and irrational fears could be. This was a fun one to write. I guess, I am human.

As I wrote this, it may also seem like I'm taking cheap jabs at things my wife does - it isn't intentional. These are petty and I've likely accepted this is the world I live in.

1. **Spam calls** Firstly, the calls are just a pain in the ass because it interrupts the podcast I was listening to. Secondly, why do Democrats still ask for my money when the major election voting is over? I didn't even confirm my number. Get me off these lists.
2. **All digital things making me nervous someone is trying to steal my identity** All scammers are going to hell. They're preying on innocent people and really making the experience of just being in the digital world a less trustworthy place.
3. **Internet Trolls** I see some people really try to create content and share interesting things. They're finding joy from doing things and engaging with people. Does your comment even add any value or discussion? Why do people have to argue and need to be right? Why are people so mean about it?
4. **Forwarded messages on Whatsapp groups** Everyone has got that family member that somehow gets some image/video that they think helps to get forwarded into my protected space. Don't spread me this misinformation. I can read my version of misinformation through my normal channels.
5. **Voicemail** I don't even know why this exists anymore. I also don't know how I can remove this stupid Android notification that says I have unheard voicemails. Yes, I know. I refuse to waste my time figuring it out.
6. **Physical mail** Where's my unsubscribe button to all physical mail? Why you sending me stuff? I don't want your coupons.
7. **People who leave their shopping carts in the middle of parking lots** Vigilant justice is needed for these people. What world do you live in that you can't take 5 steps to push the cart to a designated spot?
8. **Websites that put a less than 16 character limit on passwords** This is more than just poor web security. It used to be some field type in the database, but you're not even storing the plain text password, so this doesn't make any sense. Any limits on the number of characters is really just limiting the randomized hash space, which increases the ease of password rainbow table look-ups.
9. **People who don't replace the toilet paper roll** Replenish!
10. **Ads on podcast apps that are louder than the podcast** This rubs me the wrong way. I also enjoy ads that are explicitly spoken by the podcasters.
11. **Having to click through multiple "Accept Cookies" notices on websites** It's really annoying that every website has a different format for this as well. I personally don't even use cookies or ads.

12 **When your house has the worst possible phone connection, but it's fine literally everywhere else** It's literally just my house where the SMS and calling doesn't work. It normally doesn't bother me, but other people visiting my house have the same problem.

13 **People who talk loudly on their phones in public** It's also weird when people turn their phone forward and talk at it like they're dictating a book. What happened to putting the phone on their ear?

14 **Having to pay for a subscription just to watch one movie** In general, we do have way too many subscriptions. It's upsetting when there's that one series on Hulu.

15 **When the Uber/Lyft ride shows the spinning car** I've been burned before where a driver has accepted, but their GPS just doesn't change. This is always a means of stress (especially when I'm with family and we're freezing outside).

16 **Going to Red Rocks Amphitheater and not leaving early** The venue is awesome, but it's really a mess. You'll be waiting outside for hours to get your ride if you're with the huge crowd..

17 **When you connect to your own WiFi, but it says "no Internet"** Damnit. I don't know how to troubleshoot you anymore.

18 **When the person you're eating with orders something you can definitely cook better** Why you getting this pasta carbonara? I make an excellent pasta carbonara.

19 **Long group conversations** I really like Inbox Zero notifications - it's a digital obsession. When the notification says (120 unread) in an old college group chat, I get a little deflated. It's time to just mark unread and face the consequence of not knowing what BS was exchanged between us this day. I will mute this notification for 8 hours.

20 **Bluetooth switching to Android Auto** I spent many years without Android Auto installed and never plugging in my phone to my car because I'm usually listening to something in my headphones. The slight disruption when joining the car is such a brief bit of pain.

21 **Suggested tipping for unnecessary to-go orders** What in the world is happening? I don't want to tip you for checkout at the airport Hudson market that has already marked up pieces of gum. It's even crazier when the tip choices start at 22%. Stop psychologically shaming me.

22 **Photo tagging on Facebook** I thought we were over social media posting already. Please ask my permission before putting me on the web. I'll likely say yes, but don't also tag me. I curate my photos way too much for that.

23 **Recipes on food sites that include a full background story** Sometimes these are interesting, but sometimes I just want to know what the oven temperature is and approximately how long the bake should be.

24 **Apps that ask for additional permissions** I know my phone is spying on me, but does my alarm clock also need my location data? What are you doing?

25 **Physical receipts** Why do I even need these anymore? "I don't feel like I've ever needed to prove I've bought a donut"

26 **Voice assistants that don't work as intended** It's annoying when they find the wrong song or it sometimes picks up from my phone and the local speaker, so it doesn't know which one to do it on what device. Ugh. I also find it funny when my Google assistant just ignores my wife.

27 **Spoilers and/or poorly written endings** I'm personally really bad at this, but it is still a pet peeve. I do like the excitement of watching and figuring it out. It's also disappointing when the last episode or season is just crap.

28 **Missing puzzle pieces** The whole family loves jigsaws. It's the worst when you lose a piece or if the box itself already has a missing piece. Monstrous.

29 **When I cook food and it doesn't get eaten within time** I show love through acts of service like cooking. I do get slightly mad when the food gets cold because the eaters have not started eating it. Gah!

30 **When someone borrows your keys and they're not returned to the same place** This definitely does mess up my day. I dislike not knowing where personal things are because they are stored in particular places in my brain and it's distressing when they're not in their home.

~See Lemons Have Pet Peeves

DIRECTOR'S CUT · LIST 2 OF 3 · JUNE 2021

30 Manners I Want Evie to Learn

Random Observation/Comment #719: Class never goes out of style.

WHY THIS LIST?

Manners represent social norms and levels of kindness. From a Chinese background, poor manners are disrespectful and could lead to dishonor or disappointment. In these important years of parenting Evie, I want her to at least learn some of these phrases, actions, and situations.

1. **"Please" / "Thank you" / "You're welcome".** I'd be happy with just this out of this list.
2. **"Bless you" / "Gesundheit".** I find the source/story to be irrelevant – Saying this is acknowledging a sneeze and maybe it means something to them.
3. **"Excuse me".** Off of a sneeze, burp, walking through a crowded train station, or just leaving the table during dinner.
4. **"May I...?"** Especially when you're visiting somewhere or it's not your house.
5. **"May I pet your dog?"** Specifically pointing this one out because we have a lot of dogs walking around the neighborhood and it's always polite to ask.
6. **"This is delicious."** Complimenting food, (especially if someone you know cooked it for you) is key. The cook always wants feedback and see happy eaters.
7. **"What can I help with?"** Just asking can really make someone's day. You'll 80% get a "I think I'm good", but you might learn something new or apply something you've learned.
8. **"How was your day?" / "How's <person or recent life event>?"** I've added this to the list because a well mannered person may also have great memory in social situations. Caring about other people's lives and making space for them to express their feelings is kind.
9. **"Can I get you an ice pack or a band aid?"** This shows concern for someone else (maybe only relevant within toddler minor injuries).
10. **"I'm going out. Can I get you anything while I'm up/out?"** I'm guilty for not always doing this because we've been locked inside and we haven't gotten sick.
11. **"Would you like another?" / "Please, help yourself to more."** Observing people's state (empty cup or plates) and then offering to help them is a great host attribute.
12. **"Do you have any food restrictions?"** This means there's an opportunity to contribute to an event by buying or cooking, which is a kind thing to do and considerate thing to ask.
13. **"I'll get the next round" / "This one's on me. You can get the next."** Probably to be learned later when you make enough money and have friends to do this. I do miss drinking in rounds.
14. **"Nice to meet you."** Who knows if handshakes will come back, but the handshake and eye contact technique has many layers.
15. **"I'd like to push back on that point."** Conversations are an art in their own way. You can navigate it with sophistication and respect even if you disagree on the topic. I hope the etiquette of debate can be taught.
16. **Giving up your seat on a subway.** It doesn't even need to be specifically for a disabled person, family, pregnant lady or elderly person. Sometimes it's just a nice thing to do.
17. **"Can you offer your seat for her?"** Another layer of kindness and upholding manners is by asking on behalf of someone else to offer a seat. Kindness sometimes also needs a reminder.

18 **“Good game.”** Good sportsmanship and winning/losing with grace is important.

19 **“BRB” or “Let me get back to you in <timeframe>”** No one likes to be left read without a response. I think this is more forgiving as messages don’t need to be at conversational speeds.

20 **“Can we come by?”** It’s just weird showing up to a house unannounced. Are you selling me something? Are you a serial killer?

21 **“Here’s a thank you note.”** I think hand written notes are super cool and classy. I am a big fan of mailing these out and providing hand crafted invitations.

22 **Helping elderly cross the street.** This doesn’t come up all the time, but respect for elderly is a good virtue.

23 **Respecting local customs.** Read up on these if you’re traveling. Some of these are things you can say (learn a few phrases) or things you don’t do.

24 **Serving the guests, eldest, and the females first.** This is pretty old school, but I like it.

25 **Make sure everyone has enough to eat and drink.** This has to do with hosting and prepping properly.

26 **Never showing up to a house empty handed.** At least a bottle of wine, right?

27 **Take your hat off inside (especially in a church or during the national anthem).** I’m not offended for not doing this, but I know other people might be. The consideration here is for other’s beliefs.

28 **Tipping well.** If you’re able to give and they did a good job, then why not?

29 **Giving someone without a Valentines Day card a card.** It’s just a sweet thing to do. School social situations can be tough.

30 **If you’re up 10-0 on a table tennis match, then throw the next point.**

~See Lemons Raise a Classy Lady

DIRECTOR'S CUT · LIST 3 OF 3 · FEBRUARY 2025

30 Life Decisions and Systems

> *Random Observation/Comment #866: I chose the path of perfect simplicity.*

WHY THIS LIST?

Over the years, I've realized the little choices you barely notice, like whether you'll invest in a decent desk chair or uninstalling that mobile game your wife hates, are much more important than you think.

This list started as a number of decisions I made that would have made me a completely different person with a different routine with these pivotal forks in the road. It wound up being a look into the meta decisions we make on my habits and interests that have shaped my systems, routines, and therefore how I spend my time. This was certainly a fun and enlightening one to write.

1. **Choosing a Spouse or Life Partner** This is your anchor relationship; pick someone who supports your growth. Love and passion is important, but also look at shared values, ambition, and mutual respect to make life's journey smoother. It also helps if your life partner is also a great cleanly roommate.
2. **Having or Not Having Children** Kids are both an immeasurable joy and a lifelong responsibility. Weigh your timing (it's never going to be a perfect time), financial readiness (you're absolutely under budgeting), and the emotional bandwidth you can commit. 9/10 would do it again knowing the journey at the sacrifice of my hair and money. The 1/10 would likely have seen way too much travel and some freak helicopter accident.
3. **Defining Your Core Career Path** Whether you're climbing the corporate ladder or launching a business, the key is alignment with what you love to do. Career shapes so much of your identity and daily life. It's who you're spending time with and how you're spending your time devoted to a life cause. Damn, that's a lot of pressure. 10/10 would choose a high paying job that can be done by Clembot, so you can focus on the fun artistic things without worrying about a paycheck.
4. **Deciding Where to Live** A location that resonates with your priorities. This is the community, pace, climate and it creates a sense of belonging. Carefully balance proximity to work with your desire for a certain lifestyle. We totally lucked out changing cities from Brooklyn to suburban Denver when we did. I think being awesome people will make the place you live awesome.
5. **Buying or Renting a Home** Ownership has pride and financial upside, but renting offers freedom. We evaluated job stability, the real estate market, and personal goals. Being homeowners is really rewarding and also a lot more work than I thought in the beginning.
6. **Choosing a Car or Transportation Method** A car can be a statement of style, comfort, and/or necessity. We were car-free for so long that we needed to adjust our workouts in Denver to replace the amount of walking we did back in NYC. This might be a moot point if we get autonomous taxis. C'mon, tech billionaires. Make it so.
7. **Investing in Health Routines** Your daily habits (e.g. exercise, nutrition, sleep) are those slow-burn choices that define your future vitality. Small, consistent steps often beat dramatic but unsustainable changes. Yes, we're doing dry January (or at least a sober curious dry-ish January), but wouldn't it be better if we just reduce the intake of toxins that distract us from reality?
8. **Selecting Your Social Circle** Friends shape your perspective. Seek people who challenge you to improve, but also allow you to be yourself. This balance of support and honesty helps you grow. You're also the curator of this circle. Be the active leader to host parties and attend fun events. The Northend beefcakes are crushing it.

9 **Building a System for Continuous Learning (and tinkering)** Formal education aside, staying curious with books, podcasts, online courses, or mentors keeps you relevant and energized. I've found that the Bachelor and Master's program I attended was just scratching the surface of the obsessions I dove into afterwards. Constantly staying curious and taking the opportunities in front of me is because of this system of tinkering.

10 **Choosing Hobbies and Passions** Hobbies restore creativity and keep you balanced. Whether it's music, painting, table tennis, disc golf or coding projects - explore and commit to at least one outside-your-job passion. It helps if that activity also gets you outside and keeps you active.

11 **Investing in Quality Tools** From a reliable laptop to a solid set of kitchen knives, the right tools optimize time and reduce frustration. Over years, investing in durability pays off. I will likely get the better microphone, speaker, water bottle, camera, smart phone, etc. because it'll last me longer. I will also likely buy that $20 AI subscription if I can figure out how it can improve my daily flow. This was the most fun way of spending my winter vacation.

12 **Managing Personal Finances** Budgeting, saving, and investing aren't just about numbers; they're about peace of mind. Set financial goals to give yourself wiggle room for bigger life moves. Be sure to learn the basics of finance because rich people are not using their salaries to become wealthy - they're using their investments and compound interest.

13 **Establishing a Morning/Nighttime Routine** Whether it's journaling, stretching, or reading, a consistent morning routine sets your day's tone and fosters a sense of control.

14 **Choosing Mentors or Role Models** Identify people whose insights guide your growth. These can be peers or people at the top of their industry (maybe even your parents). They are the folks who steer you through both inspiration and practical advice. More important than having a mentor is keeping them up-to-date with your life choices and milestones.

15 **Practicing Emotional Regulation** How you manage anger, anxiety, or sadness determines your resilience. Choose methods like meditation, therapy, or consistent reflection to be a part of your normal routine. I think this was a part of my life that was fairly stoic and needed some color to feel the emotional ranges. I also think dealing with this independently is different from dealing with this as a couple.

16 **Pursuing a Side Project or Small Business** Side projects can offer secondary income, creative fulfillment, and new skills. They can also future-proof you against economic shifts. Most successful millionaires have more than 5 streams of income. It's important to diversify and also figure out what area truly brings you joy. For me, it's building a useful app and maybe figuring out how to create a disc golf course near my house. For you, it might be something related to your hobbies and passions. Wouldn't it be cool if you could look at the articles you read, videos/shorts recommended, and podcasts you listen to in order to get a printout of your ideal side project? Time to build it for boomers.

17 **Designing Your Workspace** A space that energizes rather than drains you can dramatically improve focus. Consider ergonomics, lighting, and personal touches. I personally have also created habits that might be specific to certain devices. I love writing on a keyboard with my laptop setup, but I might also find more productivity if I get into the zone while on my phone. Perhaps this is also cutting down the distractions in your workspace so you're not tempted to play a round of VR table tennis when something hard comes up. Hold, please.

18 **Investing in Self-Care and Relaxation** You can't pour from an empty cup. Scheduling time for spa days, nature walks, or creative pursuits can prevent burnout. Also, get an awesome antigravity massage chair in your basement so you can use it after lunch for a short nap. Works every time.

19 **Choosing How to Give Back** Philanthropy, volunteering, or simply helping a neighbor fosters empathy and a sense of purpose. Find causes that resonate with your values. This is another underinvested area for most people (including myself). I do think giving back is important, but we just want to do it with highest impact. Is it the dollar donation for a homeless person or a hamburger?

20 **Deciding on Your Online Presence** Social media can open doors or become a source of stress. Manage your digital footprint by organizing your relationship with it. Be deliberate in what you share and how you want to engage. I personally love taking photos and making AI artwork because it helps me record my life. It's interesting how much of my time is devoted to capturing the moment for my future enjoyment. I don't get rid of that photography eye.

21 **Developing Communication Skills** Learn the art of active listening and clear expression. This single shift can upgrade personal relationships and professional influence. Public speaking might be one of these as well. I think the biggest arbitrage to AI advancement is in-person physical communication. AI won't be able to make me cry, right?

22 **Building Conflict Resolution Strategies** Whether at work or with loved ones, healthy confrontation can save relationships. Learn to disagree respectfully while preserving trust. This is a skill that is learned by many husbands to diffuse fights. She has longer heels and they're dug into more stable ground.

23 **Curating Your Daily Consumption (Media & News)** The content you consume shapes your mindset. Be selective and avoid mental clutter - quality over quantity. Don't get stuck in your echo chamber and be sure to have an open mind to the incentives behind each article.

24 **Staying Organized with Systems** Organization isn't just cleanliness; it's mental clarity. Simple to-do lists, time-blocking, or workflow apps keep you from feeling overwhelmed. I do love a list. It has helped me with a lot of coordination.

25 **Mapping Your Personal Philosophy** Define what "success" and "meaning" look like to you. Reflecting on life principle (e.g. kindness or curiosity) helps you navigate tough decisions. I think this reflection is also an under investment as the decisions you make on this philosophy of values should guide you with the harder decisions.

26 **Planning for Emergencies** Have a buffer fund, insurance, and even contingency plans for career setbacks or natural disasters. Peace of mind grows with preparation. I'm not a prepper, but I like being prepared.

27 **Approaching Marriage or Life Milestones with Intention** Ceremonies like weddings or milestone birthdays can be transformative or superficial. Decide which traditions resonate and make them genuinely yours. I love having parties coinciding with holidays to look forward to each month.

28 **Setting Boundaries** With family, friends, or colleagues, it's crucial to protect your time and emotional well-being. Boundaries aren't selfish - they foster respect. These boundaries are even more important for guiding your child.

29 **Deciding When to Reinvent Yourself** Over time, your interests and priorities shift. People change. Embracing personal reinvention (e.g. switching careers, mastering a new skill, joining new communities) can keep you inspired and evolving. It can also be very scary. Dip your toe in or throw yourself in the deep end. Either way, be kind to yourself while you're on this journey.

30 **Narrow down your creative outlet** Mine just so happens to be writing lists of 30. It's the best I could do for myself in research, understanding, and self-reflection. It might not be for you, but you'll need to find the thing that helps you get through your stress.

~See Lemons Make Important Decisions

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