ADVANCE READER SAMPLER · INTERACTIVE EDITION



Our Life in Lists of 30

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The opening section of the book, with a checkbox next to every list item. Tick what you'd keep, what made you laugh, or just what you've read. It's a list book. You should get to check things off.

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30 Self-Proclaimed Titles

WHY THIS LIST?

Sometimes I think about being interviewed on a TV show / documentary and looking at my title overlay. What would it say? What if it's something just descriptively random?

- [ ] 1. **Writer of lists of 30** – This is by far the thing I love doing most. I wish I could make a side gig out of just writing lists of 30. ChatGPT will probably make this much easier (or harder). Off-topic, but relevant: we will likely see an explosion of generated and derived content, but it's interesting that the algorithm from this point forward will be learning from the cemented ideas of civilization published on the Internet. It means that original content could be completely frozen while everything becomes an evolution of trained algorithms.
- [ ] 2. **World traveler / adventurer** – I still love traveling and collecting magnets from different places around the world. My personal way of enjoying and remembering my experiences is through reflections and photography. 43 countries in and I'm still looking for more adventures.
- [ ] 3. **Virtual (and IRL) Table tennis enthusiast** – Table tennis is life! I've definitely leaned into ElevenVR TT and use it for both exercise and socialization. I still miss the post TT beers from Spin though.
- [ ] 4. **Slides/PowerPoint extraordinaire** – It must be the recovering finance world of corporate culture to put everything into slides. My evolution of this was to record more videos and shorts for better consumption. I did just take a deeper look at synthesia.io which could be an interesting way of staying in the creative text side of things and then feeding it into a customized avatar of myself. Who needs to re-record each 30 second video 20 times if I can just feed it all into these presentations?
- [ ] 5. **Technical business analyst** – This was a great niche that took advantage of my customer-facing and consulting management skillset. The interview process and documentation was key to my development as a better communicator and organizer.
- [ ] 6. **Solutions Architect** – The evolution of the tech BA work is moving to SA and pre-sales engineering activities.
- [ ] 7. **Digital community builder in DAOs** – DAO consulting is so hot right now. Advisory on creating organic communities is probably easier than actually minding and building the community.
- [ ] 8. **Technology philosopher** – I love just talking about the evolution of technology and its impacts to society. Following Ben Thompson's Stratechery posts leads me to branch into the tilted black mirror reality.
- [ ] 9. **Pixel pusher** – Both in making slides and editing photos. I'm pretty impressed with how much can just get done on my phone nowadays.
- [ ] 10. **Professional Daydreamer** – It's healthy to daydream once a week. Just let your mind wander. I tend to daydream in the shower. Something about being naked in warm water stimulates my brain.
- [ ] 11. **Getter of shit done** – I've never been a fan of analysis paralysis. I just want to set a course and see things get done. I don't have time to keep checking my to-do list and feel stressed. Checker of to-do boxes.
- [ ] 12. **Continuous improver** – The whole point of writing these lists of 30 is to explore different subjects and iterate on my own perspectives on subjects. "There's a list of 30 for that."
- [ ] 13. **Narrative consultant** – The stories we tell about our lives are usually the first impression. Instead of having people put you into a bucket of "buff handsome Asian guy," you can describe yourself and your life story with your own twist. I highly recommend everyone writes out their intros and how they want to describe themselves in their own story.

- [ ] 14. **AI Tweaker** – Now more than ever with ChatGPT, we are entering into a world of prompts and programmability through iterations. Maybe I'll write a ChatGPT List of 30 assistant that helps me publish new posts and reach out to new readers.
- [ ] 15. **Gap filler** – Especially in the start up mentality, I have never thought there was a problem in the company that was outside of my scope if I knew how to help. If there's a gap, then I'd contribute my knowledge.
- [ ] 16. **BUIDLER** – The blockchain/crypto space loves quirky memes. I think it started with HODL (Hold On for Dear Life) of tokens and evolved into BUIDL. There's a whole BUIDL community out there manifesting the Web3 vision.
- [ ] 17. **Joy expert** – I forgot which podcast I heard "happiness is fleeting, but joy is a constant." This stuck with me because I feel like people can achieve content and joy as a state of mind instead of chasing the next happiness jar moment.
- [ ] 18. **Fintech Futurist** – I love reading the Fintech Blueprint by Lex Sokolin (Consensys' ex-Chief Cryptoeconomics Officer). He's kept me updated with the business and finance world.
- [ ] 19. **Listicle blogger** – Probably the title I'd get if I were ever interviewed because it'd be too lengthy to describe the "List of 30" concept on one line. It does make it sound like I write buzzfeed articles. Maybe buzzfeed readers are my audience.
- [ ] 20. **Social introvert butterfly** – The introvert/extrovert thing is a bit of an odd categorization because I think everyone needs some "me-time" to destress or recharge.
- [ ] 21. **Conversation catalyst** – The best way to be interesting is to be interested. I think everyone has their own story and passion.
- [ ] 22. **Noms master** – Sounds better than foodie as I'm not always reviewing restaurants. I just love all aspects of food (mostly eating it).
- [ ] 23. **Beefcake Host** – The North End crew is strong and we love our parties. I'm personally a lover of hosting.
- [ ] 24. **Digital visionary** – This is a bit of a stretch. I don't think you can self proclaim the title of a visionary unless you're infinitely full of it. I might dial it back to "guy that reads a lot about tech and has strong opinions."
- [ ] 25. **Vibe ambassador** – We must always curate the vibe of our environment.
- [ ] 26. **Pragmatic strategist** – Blue sky thinking needs to be brought down to actionable items. Sales thinks in weeks. Product thinks in months. C-suite strategy thinks in years. I want to sit somewhere in between product and c-suite to be practical on delivery.
- [ ] 27. **Relentless mind** – "Sometimes you feel like a nut." I love 90s commercial jingles. I think the ability to turn off a relentless mind is just as useful.
- [ ] 28. **Visual Linguist** – Communication is key and I'm a huge fan of drawing infographics on whiteboards to simplify complex projects. Nowadays I just draw a lot of boxes and arrows with pretty colors.
- [ ] 29. **Loving son, husband, father, and friend** – This is more aspirational and fluid than solidified. I hope to be loved and love you all.
- [ ] 30. **Chief Shilling Officer** – Always be shilling.

> *Random Observation/Comment: A writer writes. Try to create as much content as you consume.*

30 Principles for Writing Lists of 30

WHY THIS LIST?

I'm obsessed with writing lists of 30. It all started from my Epic 30 Day Challenge in 2012 and the subsequent 30 Lists of 30 Challenge. From there I wrote a memoir of my 20s in "My Life in Lists of 30."

Why 30?

Why not 10? 21? 42? To be honest, it's just an arbitrary number that matched the 30 day challenge. After writing more than 100 of these lists, I think I've gotten a hang of it and it's been overall helpful with staying creative. It's the process of writing these lists that makes it valuable. The opportunity to focus on a topic from all different angles using some mental gymnastics.

For this list, I've kept the order and broken down the thought process or questions that have led me to these answers.

How do you get started?

- [ ] 1. Write your list in any format that makes you comfortable: Keep Note, pen and paper, whiteboard, mindmap, typewriter, keyboard, laptop.
- [ ] 2. Write your list in any environment that makes you comfortable: On a train during a commute, in a coffee shop, on your bed before you nap or sleep for the night.
- [ ] 3. Just start writing off of your initial instincts. Getting to 10 should be easy (right?).
- [ ] 4. Choose a topic that you're familiar or at least comfortable with.
- [ ] 5. Initially approach the angles with Who, What, Where, When, Why, How?
- [ ] 6. Save your favorite answers to either the "top 5" spot or "final 5" spots (as these are often read more closely – especially number 30 tends to be a personal joke).

What limits do you give yourself?

- [ ] 7. Write your list of 30 within a day.
- [ ] 8. Do not research the topic by directly looking for other lists.
- [ ] 9. Do not directly copy from other post's ideas (although it's okay to be inspired by them).

How do you refine it?

- [ ] 10. Be methodical about your approach (whichever you choose to take).
- [ ] 11. Categorize your lists by asking questions around the topic. Have your lists answer your own questions.
- [ ] 12. Bold certain words that summarize your list.
- [ ] 13. Do it alone or do it together – Talk to people about the topic for inspiration.
- [ ] 14. Try to relate your everyday activities centered around your topic.
- [ ] 15. Try to not get distracted: Turn off your music and get rid of any open tabs while writing.

What happens when you get half way there?

- [ ] 16. Re-read your existing list.
- [ ] 17. Dive deeper into some of your answers and expand.
- [ ] 18. Regroup all your answers in different ways to find patterns or gaps. Mind mapping is useful here.

What do you do if you get stuck?

- [ ] 19. Re-ask the topic with a new perspective – try zooming in and out or looking at adjacent areas.
- [ ] 20. If you get stuck, don't work on the list for a few hours.
- [ ] 21. If you get stuck, re-invent the topic all together.
- [ ] 22. If you get really stuck, try to make ridiculous jokes about the topic.

What should you not do?

- [ ] 23. Do not give up on a list when you're almost finished.
- [ ] 24. Do not convince yourself this list is not worth writing because you can't finish it.
- [ ] 25. Do not tell everyone you're writing this list and give you additional pressure to finish it with style.

What non-obvious advice can you give?

- [ ] 26. Do physical activity like exercise or sports in order to forget about the topic.
- [ ] 27. It's okay to start another list on another topic (but now you have 2 lists to complete...)
- [ ] 28. Accept that your list will not be perfect and will not cover everything.

What do you save for the end of the list?

- [ ] 29. Remember to have fun!
- [ ] 30. Be proud of yourself for finishing each list.
- [ ] 31. (This always happens...) Come up with an extra one and try to figure out how you can narrow down your list back to 30.

> *Random Observation/Comment: I'm okay being called "that guy that writes lists of 30" all the time.*

30 Reasons Why I Love Lists of 30

WHY THIS LIST?

If you know me, you know I love writing lists (and specifically lists of 30) on fairly random topics. I've written principles on how to write these lists, but never thought about why I love them so much. Why does one love anything? What is love? These lists won't hurt me. This is so meta.

- [ ] 1. They're challenging to write.
- [ ] 2. They make me think divergently and laterally.
- [ ] 3. They spark more questions about different topics.
- [ ] 4. They help me get into deep thought.
- [ ] 5. They make me feel productive.
- [ ] 6. They require creativity.
- [ ] 7. They give me a focus for the day – an underlying theme for which things surround.
- [ ] 8. They usually cover multiple angles and perspectives.
- [ ] 9. They tend to capture my thought process.
- [ ] 10. They tend to cover topics that I've been thinking about related to life problems or observations.
- [ ] 11. They are structured enough to let me focus on different topics.
- [ ] 12. They cut out the fluffy language.
- [ ] 13. They tell a story in their own way.
- [ ] 14. They can be treated as discrete contributions that don't tie to anything.
- [ ] 15. They can be treated as groups of streams of consciousness looking at the positive and negative perspectives.
- [ ] 16. They are fun to write.
- [ ] 17. They are fun to reread.
- [ ] 18. They lead me into a journey of "man, I'm never going to get to 30" into "wow, I need to merge a few to fit in some other ideas."
- [ ] 19. They embody a journey of personal discovery.
- [ ] 20. The reflection ones make me appreciate things more.
- [ ] 21. They help sort and group thoughts.
- [ ] 22. They always teach me something while I'm writing them.
- [ ] 23. They always lead me to additional learning.
- [ ] 24. They're not always serious or take themselves seriously.
- [ ] 25. They helped me write a book.
- [ ] 26. They helped me with on-going memoirs and life commentary.
- [ ] 27. They're a lot easier than writing paragraphs with proper paragraph structure.
- [ ] 28. They're calming, yet puzzling as a perfect routine task for distressing.

- [ ] 29. They would forgive me for repeating or writing a filler item like this one.
- [ ] 30. They can be beautiful to visualize (yay mindmaps!)

> *Random Observation/Comment: Lists of 30 viewed in Mindmaps might just take off. Check my instagram @listsof30 for some mindmaps of the lists from the podcast.*

30 Lessons From Writing 500 Blog Posts

WHY THIS LIST?

Milestones – What a feeling you get when you reach them! Pride. Elation. Serenity. Fulfillment. Thrill. High-five-ness. Hunger (well, I'm always hungry).

Since the writing of this post in Feb 2015, I had started this blog for 6 years and each entry I published was a milestone in itself - at the very least, I've felt the same emotions with each public entry. I thought I'd run out of ideas to share, advice to give, or places to go, but inspiration was found with each person I met, book I read, and place I visited.

How did I do it? Here are some tips and lessons learned.

- [ ] 1. Figure out your writing system. Tools, routines, environments, and triggers. I like writing on Google Keep with my smartphone during my commute and directly in WordPress at home.
- [ ] 2. Write about something you love. Or something you hate. Write about something you care about.
- [ ] 3. Write what you know, and if you don't know, do the research first.
- [ ] 4. Create a writing format/structure. I use the "Random Observation/Comment" opening, "~See Lemons <action>" closing, and lots of lists with bolding..
- [ ] 5. Create a writing style. I reflect through lists and use an informal advice-giving self-help column.
- [ ] 6. Know your audience. I write for my parents mostly. It's an easy audience to please. I've gotten complaints that they usually have no idea what I'm talking about. Perfection.
- [ ] 7. Build/Host on a reliable site. If you get the design right the first time, you won't have to worry about it. If I were to start over again, I'd probably stick to Medium. Wordpress installation to Digital Ocean and Substack platform have been relatively reliable.
- [ ] 8. Pay attention to inspiration. It's everywhere.
- [ ] 9. Read everything. You will draw lines of common truths between concepts and categories.
- [ ] 10. Use appropriately related photos to your blog topic.
- [ ] 11. Write with proper spacing and smaller paragraphs so it's easy to read.
- [ ] 12. Give yourself project blog posts that are connected and similarly themed (e.g. 30 day challenges).
- [ ] 13. Connect with your readers and ask for feedback. I need to work on this one at scale.
- [ ] 14. Don't write for money. If I did, I'd be too worried about bills.
- [ ] 15. If you do write for money, be comfortable with edits and harsh criticism.
- [ ] 16. Don't write for fame. It will probably not happen.
- [ ] 17. If you're blogging, don't worry if it's not perfect. Your first post doesn't need to be magnificent and gain you 10,000 views. The truth is, you'll get 10 and 2 of them are from people related to you.
- [ ] 18. If you really care then you will make time.
- [ ] 19. Don't worry too much about flowery, poetic language. Simple words do wonders.
- [ ] 20. Just keep it simple and get to the point.

- [ ] 21. Put yourself in the reader's shoes (or eyes).
- [ ] 22. Work without distractions. Don't have 5 other tabs open or other apps running because it's easy to do something else if you reach a part that takes deeper thought.
- [ ] 23. Write your story to relive it.
- [ ] 24. Don't get caught up on a sentence and how it's structured or worded. In today's skimming-heavy world, you'll be forgiven as long as they know what you're talking about.
- [ ] 25. Write a title/headline first and then rewrite it when you're done.
- [ ] 26. Don't worry about format or publishing until later. In fact, just write in a notepad.
- [ ] 27. Write a stream of consciousness and outline it. Then stream of consciousness off the outline.
- [ ] 28. For editing, read your own writing out loud as if to someone you admire.
- [ ] 29. Read a WordPress "preview" of your article with a fresh mind. You can do this the next day or after doing anything else but writing before you publish.
- [ ] 30. Be willing to put in the hard work. The process of writing will develop other skills that help your professional world.

Bonus: "Don't take anyone's writing advice too seriously."

> *Random Observation/Comment: I'm a half-kilo blogger. That's a lot of time writing...*

REVIEWER NOTES

Your notes

Favorite item (list and number)

One list you'd write after reading this

Your review in exactly 30 words

Anything else for Clemens

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