## (Approx. 1433 words)

## Having Fun Making Lists

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I am an inveterate list maker. I've always made lots of lists and during the pandemic, I seem to be making more and more—probably because I have additional time on my hands. Some people might dread lists, thinking only of "to do" lists, which can, I admit, be daunting. However, I enjoy making lists and find them indispensable.

What types of lists do I make, what tools do I use to make them, what are the tips I have discovered? Read on for some answers.

**Grocery Lists > using phone apps + paper**

[](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.safeway.client.android.safeway&hl=en_US&gl=US)I'm a fan of the Safeway app on my phone. I make a list of items I want to purchase using it. (I found I can no longer add custom items to my list on the Safeway website.) While shopping, I click each item when I've put it in the cart. This lets me see what I still need to get. Occasionally I find "Just for You" deals at the store that I hadn't noticed at home, and I can add them. With fewer miles driven, we use our Rewards for dollars off our groceries. Using 7 Rewards for $10 off is a better deal for us than gas discounts (especially with our Prius).

For trips to Costco, I sometimes use a simple text editor (Samsung Notes) on my phone, where I enter the items we typically purchase there. More often, I bring along a scribbled list on a scrap of paper.

**Backyard Bird List > using a spreadsheet + paper**

We post a legal-sized sheet of paper on our refrigerator door where we mark every species of bird or other wildlife we see or hear every day. I created the list in Excel, and add new species to it as needed. I print a new list at the beginning of each month. For a long time, I transferred the data back into the spreadsheet after the month was over, but that was time-consuming. I could be using the [eBird app](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.cornell.birds.ebird&hl=en_US&gl=US" \t "_blank), but our low-tech system is more easily accessible to both of us. It's also easier to look at the paper sheets to find out when the White-crowned Sparrows have headed north for the summer in prior years and when the White-winged Doves are likely to return in force.

**Lists of Authors' Books, in Order > using Word**

My husband and I read lots of books. We try to keep track of the books we have read (though I've found I can reread the same book within a year and not remember it...). To get a list of an author's books in the order written, just search the web for a phrase like "JA Jance books in order". Copy and paste that list into Word, print it, and check off the titles as you read them.

**Lists of Television Episodes > using Notepad + Word**

Because our DVR's season pass for "Iron Chef America" was bringing in only episodes we'd seen (some multiple times), we decided to try "Chopped." Yes, we're a little late to that party (the show started in 2007). To check off episodes we've seen, I decided (naturally) to make a list. I found various websites listing "Chopped" episodes, but some had too much information (such as the winners). I like [this website](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1353281/episodes), which I can sort by season or year. I tried copying the list for a particular year and pasting it into Word, but that created issues: some of the content had active links and things that turned into checkboxes. When I tried to delete them, Word hung. So instead, I pasted the text into Notepad, a simple Windows text editor that removes all formatting and links. Then I could copy that text and paste it into Word. After a small amount of formatting, I was done and happy with the result. Let the cooking begin!

**Opera Lists > using Excel**

We are opera fans and keep track of the operas we have seen. We've watched many of the daily streaming operas offered by NYC's [Metropolitan Opera](https://www.metopera.org/). We have seen some operas many times now, often with different casts and productions set in different eras or locales (Verdi's Rigoletto set in 1960s Las Vegas actually worked very well!). We keep track of all the operas in an Excel spreadsheet. The list is sorted by composer, which I mark with an 'X' at the first occurrence. I also keep track of the number of different versions we have seen of the same opera. Some of the formulas I have found useful are these (they also work in Google Sheets):

* =SUM(A2:A300) — returns the sum of all numbers in the specified range
* =COUNTIF(B2:B300,"X") — returns the number of cells within the specified range that contain "X"
* =COUNTBLANK(C2:C300) — returns the number of cells in the range that are blank

There are dozens of formulas and functions you can use in Excel. Click on the Formulas tab in Excel, where they are sorted by category, or [click here for a complete list](https://www.techonthenet.com/excel/formulas/index.php).

**Shared Lists > using Google Sheets**

As workshop facilitators for nearly all of Tucson Audubon's annual birding festivals over the last 10 years, my husband and I have had to keep track of a lot of information. The festival chair set up a shared Google Sheets file (Google's version of Excel) so we could all access and edit the content stored there. It worked wonderfully and I have since created shared Sheets for other organizations.

To create a shared Sheet you need a Google account (i.e., Gmail address). Log in to your account and at the upper right of the window, click the 9-dot grid, shown at the top of the image at the left. Then scroll down and click on Sheets.

Once you have started the spreadsheet, you can click the green Share button at the upper right of the window. You can specify individuals to gain access to the Sheet by entering their email addresses (Google will send them a notification) or copy the link to the spreadsheet. You can restrict access to just those you have invited, or allow access to anyone with the link. You can assign them Viewer, Commenter, or Editor privileges. The Sheet is always saved automatically regardless of who edits it. You can see a Version History of who made edits.

Shared documents (including Google Docs and Calendars) offer a great way to collaborate with others.

**Tech Talk: How Computers Look at Lists**

To a computer, there are two types of lists: ordered and unordered.

* An ordered list has numbered items that are in a specific order.
* An unordered list (like this one) has items in no particular order. This is typically a bulleted list.

Web programmers use different tags for the two types of lists.
In most web content editors, they can simply choose a numbered or bulleted list as you can in a Word document. But, in some cases, web programmers build their own list using HTML tags.

Programmers use <ul> to start an unordered list and </ul> to end it.
Programmers use <ol> to start an ordered list and </ol> to end it.

Consider a recipe. It typically starts with an unordered list of ingredients, then proceeds to an ordered list of step-by-step instructions. If you don't follow the directions in the right sequence, you may not get the result you want!

This relatively simple recipe illustrates both types of lists.
Source: [www.self.com/recipe/tomato-poached-cod-with-rice](https://www.self.com/recipe/tomato-poached-cod-with-rice)

**Tomato-Poached Cod with Rice**

INGREDIENTS

* 2 cod fillets (4 ounces each), skin removed
* 1 cup jarred tomato sauce
* Salt
* Pepper
* 1 tablespoon olive oil
* 1-1/2 cups cooked wild rice

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Heat oven to 400°.
2. Season fish on both sides with salt and pepper. Drizzle with olive oil.
3. In a medium skillet, bring the tomato sauce to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Place fish in skillet and use a spoon to cover completely with sauce. Transfer to oven and bake 10 minutes, until fish flakes easily.
4. Warm cooked rice in the microwave or a skillet over medium heat with a little olive oil. Serve fish and tomato sauce over rice.

[Click to see the HTML code that generates these lists.](https://mcusercontent.com/fc5b48c8cad5d194a77f4cb54/images/78289091-7645-4d8c-ad66-e4ad2b08aa5f.png)
The <li> and </li> tags start and end each 'list item' in both lists.

This article does not cover all the types of lists I make. Someday I hope I'll again make packing lists for trips.

Try some of these list ideas and see if they help you stay organized!