

Before I Die

A guide for creating a wall
in your community.

This is everybody's project now.

Thank you for your interest in creating a Before I Die wall!

What started as a small experiment in my neighborhood has grown into a global project thanks to passionate people around the world.

I created this guide to help you make your own wall with your community, and I've tried to include the things I've learned along the way: getting permission, introducing the project to the community, finding a good stencil manufacturer, and more.

The responses people have shared on these walls have made me feel less alone and given me courage during some of my darkest times. As the world feels more alienating, I hope this project will be a small step towards revealing our inner lives and seeing ourselves in one another.

Candycane



Overview

1

Choose a location

A good location has lots of foot traffic. People have painted on buildings, construction barriers, and the interior walls of businesses, museums, and lobbies. They've also built plywood walls and placed them on streets, campuses, plazas, and parks. You'll find examples on the following pages.

2

Get permission

Public spaces are for everyone, so it's important to respect the community where you plan to install your wall. A good way to obtain permission is by speaking to the property owner and people who live or work near by. Every city has different rules concerning public art, so consider partnering with a local organization who can help with this process.

3

Make a plan

Figure out the measurements of your wall and the placement of your stencils, and purchase all the materials you'll need. We've included a checklist of materials, stencil details, and other tips in the following pages. Inform the people who live and work around the wall about your plans so they know what's happening.

4

Build your wall

In the following pages you'll find a step-by-step guide to help you on installation day. A typical wall can take a day or two to paint and stencil. Depending on the weather, the chalkboard paint can take several hours to thoroughly dry, so many people paint the wall with chalkboard paint on one day and stencil on the next.

5

Clean and maintain

Check your wall often to take photos and document responses. If the wall is full, wash it with water to start fresh again and replenish the chalk when needed. Writing a few thoughtful responses on the wall goes a long way to setting the tone and stirring people's minds about their own reflections.

Choose your site

Here are some examples of different approaches people have used to create their Before I Die installations.

There's no right or wrong way to create your wall, and we welcome you to make it in any format that best serves your community.

Painted building

LISBON, PORTUGAL



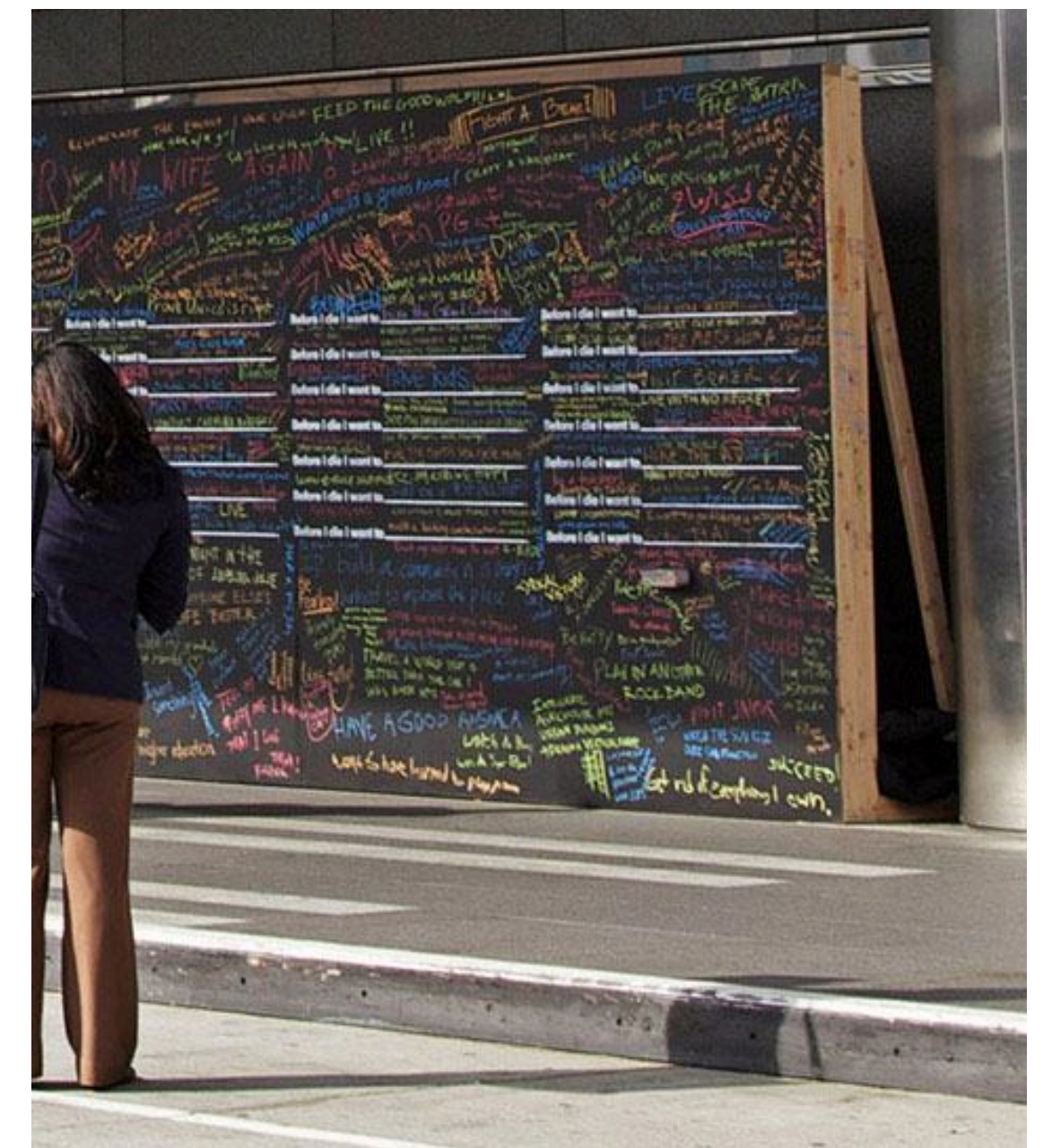
Construction barriers

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK



Plywood anchored by sandbags

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



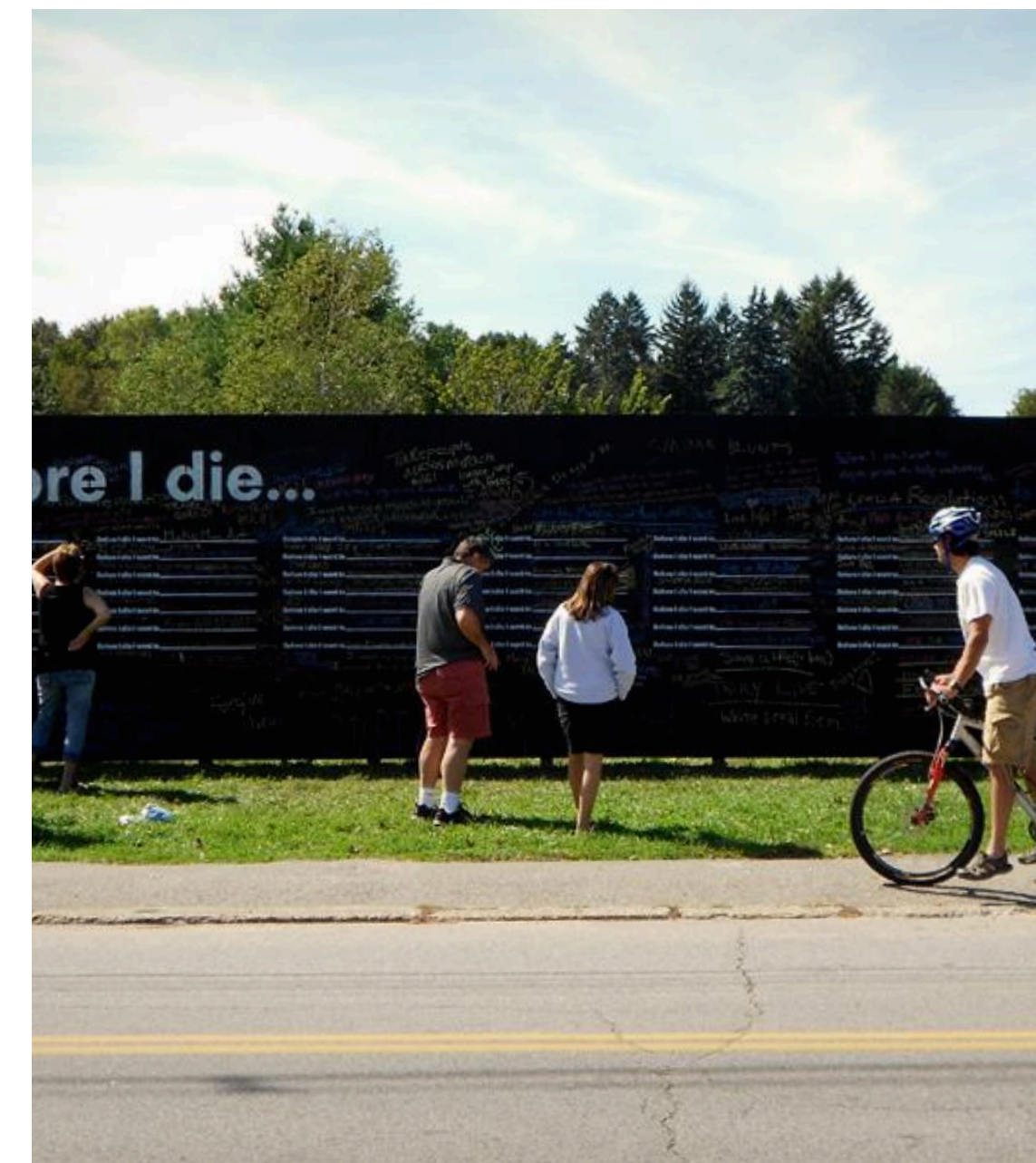
Plywood box

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



Plywood anchored by stakes

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE



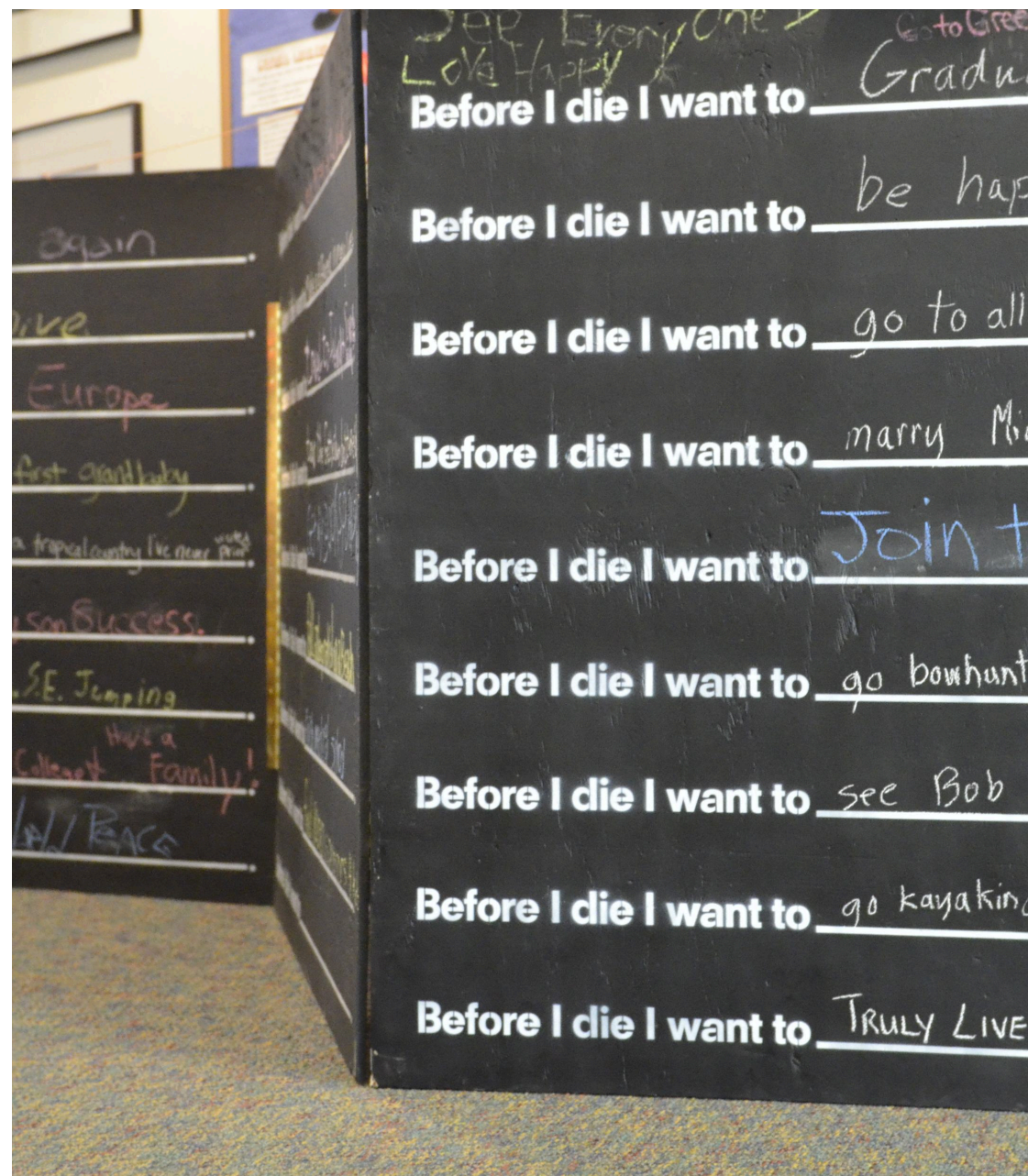
Plywood on fencing

RENO, NEVADA



Accordion

VALDEZ, ALASKA



Include the community

The folder of resources includes two documents that might be helpful. The first is a Letter of Support you can use if you need help to gain permission to create your wall.

The second document is a sign you can post by the wall to explain the project to passersby—or feel free to create your own sign with information about your team.

Letter of support

To Whom it May Concern,

Before I Die is a global community art project that invites people to reflect on their lives and share their personal aspirations in public. The original wall was created in my neighborhood in New Orleans after the death of someone I loved. Since then, passionate people have created walls in their own communities and there are now over 5,000 walls in over 35 languages and over 75 countries, including China, Argentina, Italy, Iraq, Finland, India, Japan, and South Africa. The wall is a positive civic engagement project to help us restore perspective, understand our neighbors in new and enlightening ways, and improve the well-being of our communities. The project has been featured on NBC, CNN, TED, and Oprah Magazine.

Each Before I Die wall is created and maintained by a local individual or group of people who are passionate about creating a space for their community to share more with one another. They are investing their time, money, and energy to create the project. They are also committed to maintaining it, cleaning it, and returning the site to its previous state once the project is done. You can learn more about this project at beforeidieproject.com. On behalf of the organizers presenting this letter, I ask for your support of their effort to create a Before I Die wall in your community.

Sincerely,
Candy Chang

Project description

Before I die...
















It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and forget what really matters to you. Before I Die is a global public art project that invites people to reflect on their lives and share their personal aspirations in public. Originally created by artist Candy Chang after the death of a loved one, this community installation is here thanks to passionate local residents who want to create a space to restore perspective and reflect with others. More than 5,000 walls have been created around the world. This wall is yours.

Collect your materials

Here are the materials you'll need. I've listed the approximate costs, which will vary depending on your location and the size of your wall. As a reference, a 24' x 8' (7.3 x 2.4 m) wall typically requires 5 cans of chalkboard paint and 3 cans of spray paint.

You can purchase readymade stencils or create your own. I used Rust-Oleum Flat Black Chalkboard Paint and Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch 2X Flat White Spray Paint, but any chalkboard paint and spray paint will work.

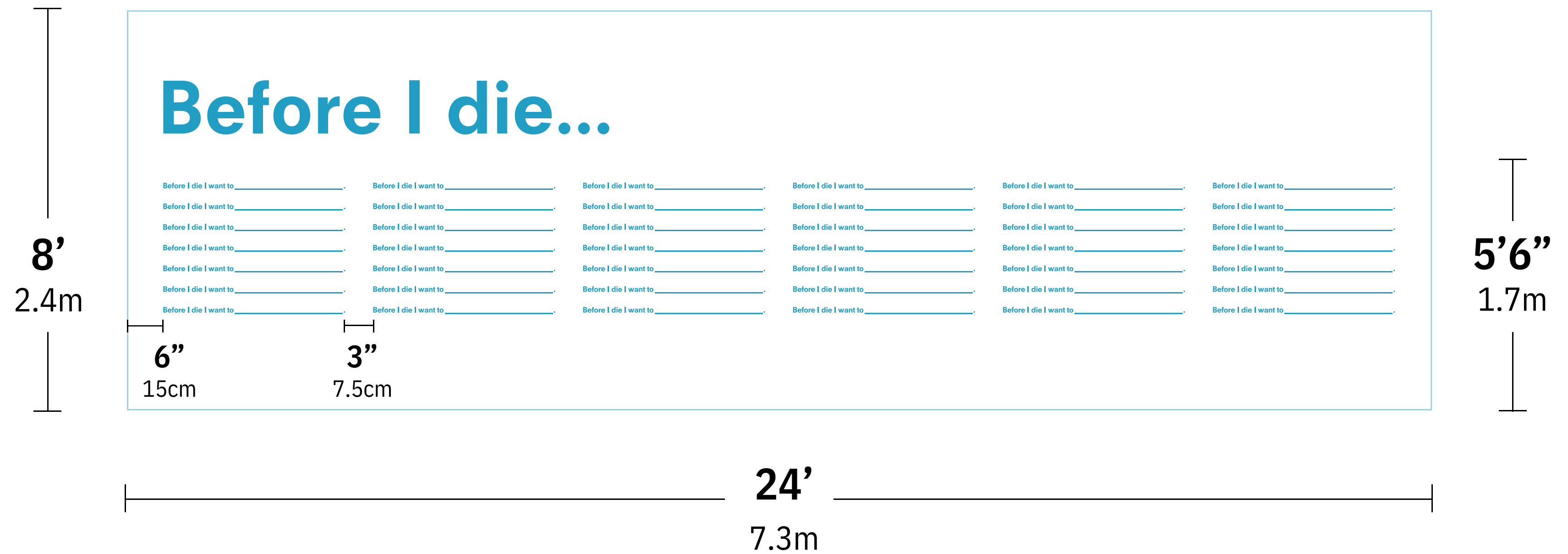
Crayola chalk withstands the rain better than other brands, and I used steel mesh containers from The Container Store as chalk holders. Feel free to use any weather-proof container with holes to let rain pass through.

 <div>PROMPT STENCIL</div> <div>\$90 + shipping</div>	 <div>TITLE STENCIL</div> <div>\$40 + shipping</div>	 <div>MEASURING TAPE</div> <div>\$5</div>	 <div>PAINTER'S TAPE</div> <div>to attach stencils</div> <div>\$3</div>	 <div>WHITE SPRAYPAINT</div> <div>\$5 each</div>
 <div>DISPOSABLE GLOVES</div> <div>\$1</div>	 <div>DROP CLOTH</div> <div>\$1</div>	 <div>CHALKBOARD PAINT</div> <div>\$10 per can</div>	 <div>PAINT ROLLER & TRAY</div> <div>extension pole recommended</div> <div>\$3</div>	 <div>BRUSHES</div> <div>for touch-ups</div> <div>\$5 each</div>
 <div>MULTICOLOR CHALK</div> <div>\$2 per box</div>	 <div>CHALK HOLDER</div> <div>wire mesh basket</div> <div>\$4 each</div>	 <div>HAMMER & NAILS</div> <div>to attach chalk holder</div> <div>\$5</div>	 <div>SCRAP PAPER</div> <div>to prevent spraying beyond the stencil when painting</div> <div>\$1</div>	 <div>SPONGE MOP & BUCKET</div> <div>for washing your wall</div> <div>\$10</div>

Determine the layout

Depending on the size of your wall, the number of columns and spacing will vary. Our wall in New Orleans was 41 feet (12.5 meters) long and fit 10 columns of prompts. Keep in mind space for chalk holders.

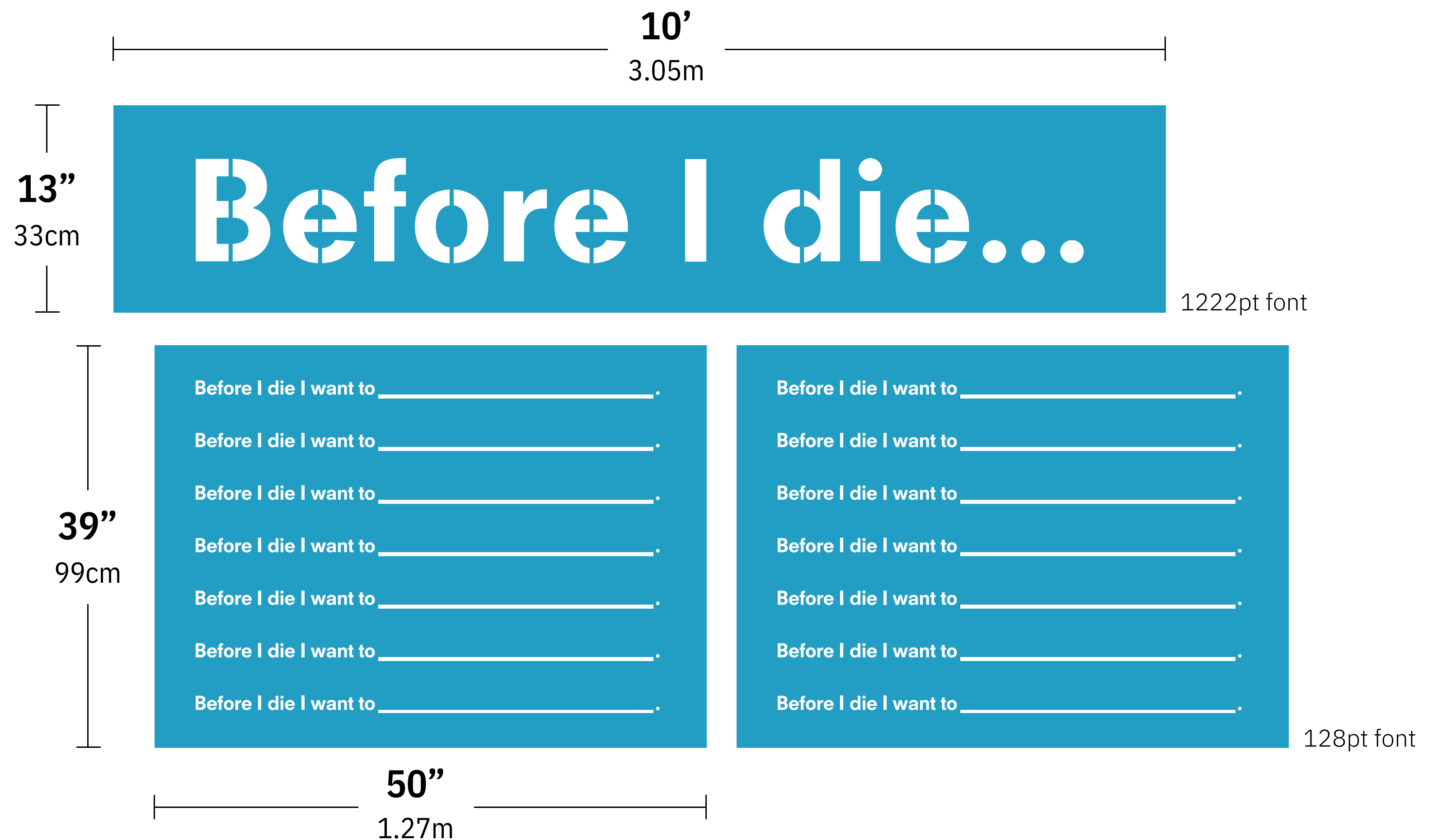
This diagram shows how a 24 ft (7.3 m) long wall could look. It also looks great when people stencil the prompt so it fills the full height of the wall. Feel free to do what feels right for you.



Get your stencils

Here are the dimensions of the stencils I've used, The files are in the resources folder, and you can purchase the [title stencil](#) and [prompt stencil](#) from [designerstencils.com](#). I do not profit from these purchases, but I recommend them because their stencils are thick .10 mm mylar that make it easy to hang so you can paint with minimal tape and time. But of course, feel free to create stencils from your own sources.

Many people buy the [column stencil](#) and print the big title stencil on normal paper for one-time use. I encourage you to use the same text font, which is Neuzeit Book Heavy with -25 kerning. It's included in the resources folder.



1

Paint



Lay down a drop cloth or other material to protect the ground from dripping paint. Using a paint roller, apply two coats of chalkboard paint. Relax and let the paint dry. This might take a few hours depending on the humidity and your climate.



DROP CLOTH



CHALKBOARD PAINT



PAINT ROLLER

2

Measure & Mark



Measure the placement of your stencils so they're evenly distributed across the wall. A chalk line or a piece of string will make it easier to keep your stencils aligned while you work. Remember to keep space available for chalk holders.



MEASURING TAPE



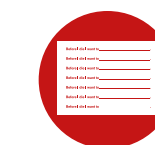
CHALK

3

Tape the Stencils



Tape your stencils to the wall. Add cardboard or scrap paper around the perimeter of the stencils to prevent spraypainting beyond it. You can touch up the wall with chalkboard paint later, if needed.



STENCILS

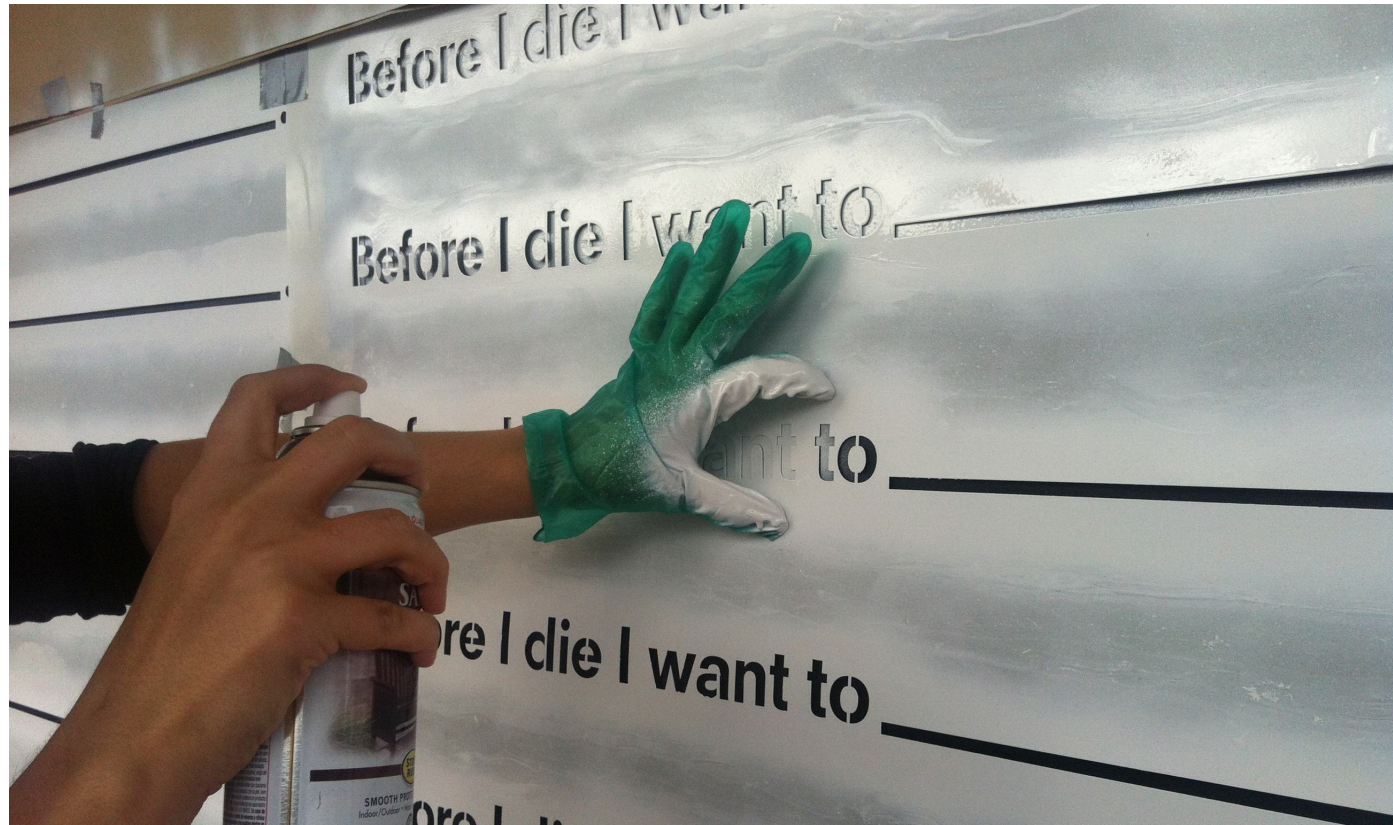


TAPE



SCRAP PAPER

4
Spraypaint



Shake your can well and spray in light strokes. Press the stencil flush to the wall with your other hand to make crisp lines. Pull off the stencil and move to the next space. Disposable gloves often rip from paint build-up, so you may need multiple pairs.


SPRAY
PAINT



DISPOSABLE
GLOVES

5
Touch-ups



After the spraypaint dries, use a small paintbrush or a foam brush to touch up the wall with chalkboard paint where needed. Be sure to cover any distracting areas of “ghosting” from the white spraypaint.


CHALKBOARD
PAINT


BRUSH

6
Add chalk & holders



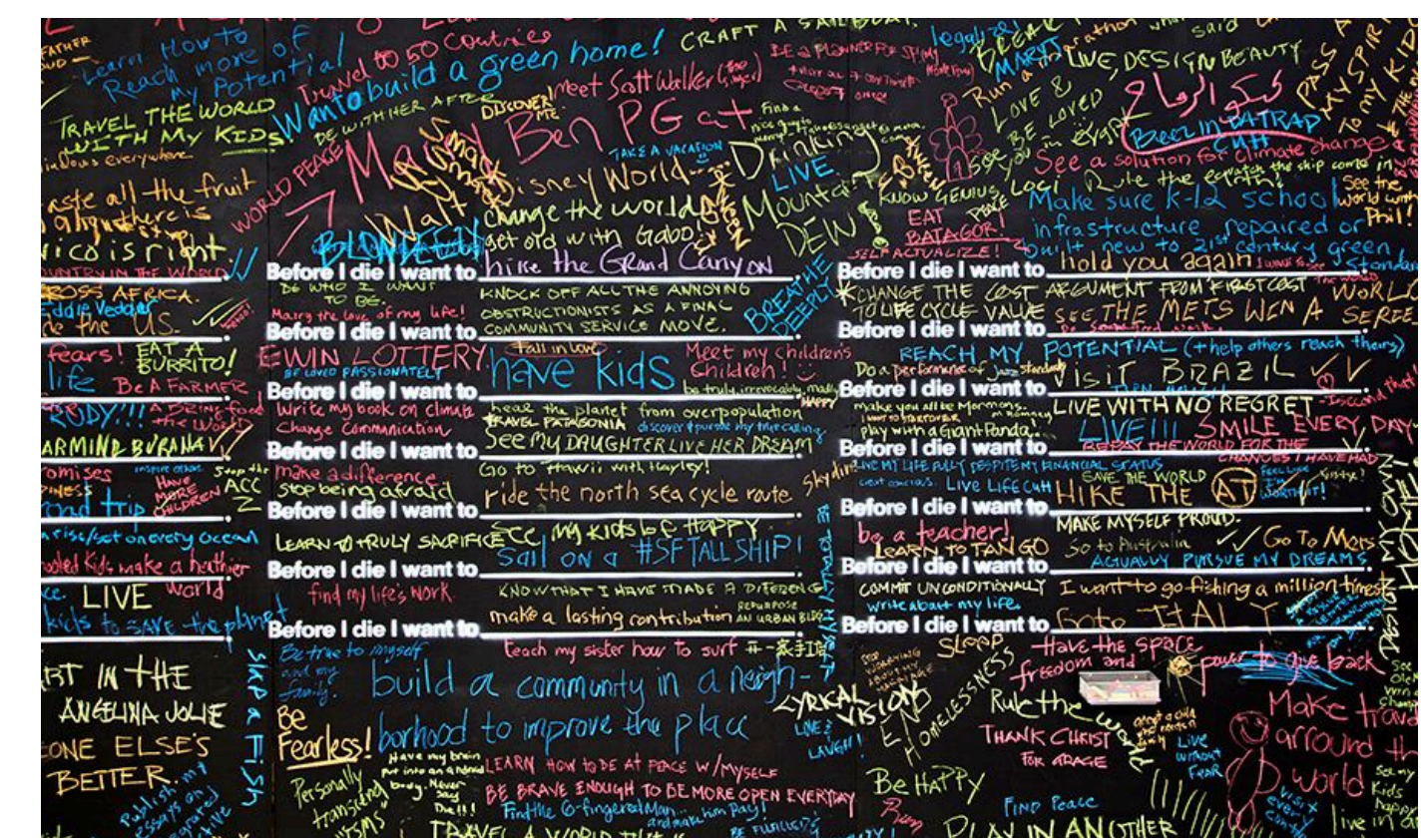
Attach chalk holders with nails or screws. You can use any weather-proof container that allows rain to pass through. Add chalk and let the sharing begin! Write a few thoughtful responses to set the tone and help stir people’s minds about their own ideas.


CHALK


CHALK
HOLDER


HAMMER
& NAILS

Document

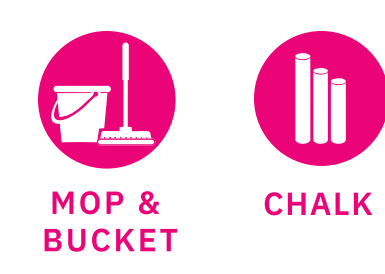


Congratulations on building your own Before I Die wall! Now take photos of your wall as it begins to fill in and share them.

Clean & Maintain



Check on your wall every day so you can replenish the chalk, if needed. When the wall is completely filled or becomes illegible, wash it with a sponge mop or towel to start a new round. Leave or add a few thoughtful responses to help set the tone.



Congratulations!

Thank you making the Before I Die project a global movement with over 5,000 walls in over 75 countries and 35 languages.

Each wall is created by passionate people like you who want to make space in their community to restore perspective and reflect with one another.



BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL



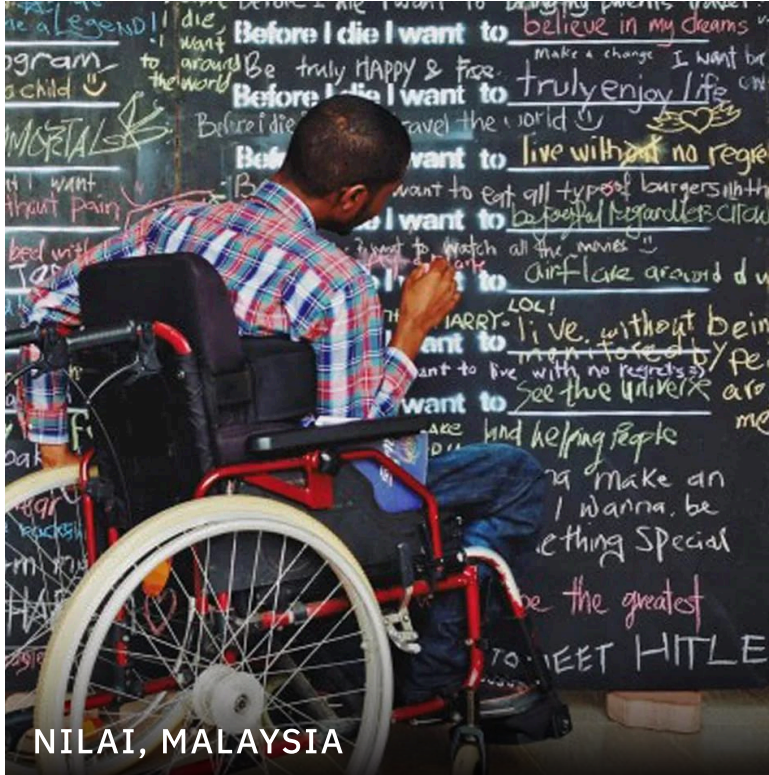
TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA



PERM, RUSSIA



BUDAPEST, HUNGARY



NILAI, MALAYSIA



TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA



BEER SHIVA, ISRAEL



NAJAF, IRAQ



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



SALEM, OREGON



MONTREAL, CANADA



EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS



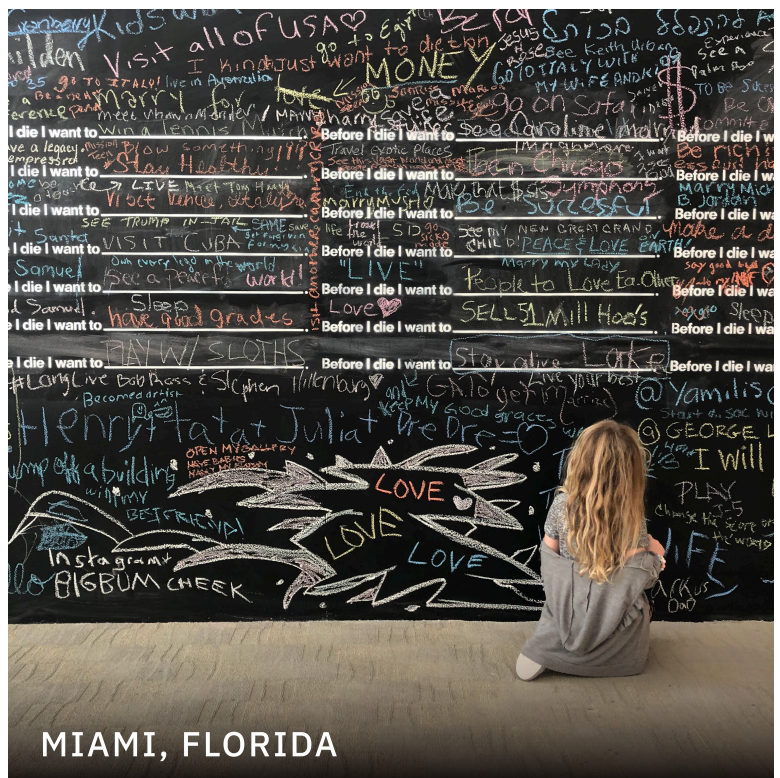
TAICHUNG, TAIWAN



RENNES, FRANCE



DAEGU, SOUTH KOREA



MIAMI, FLORIDA