

re I die.

Before I Die

A Guide for Creating a Wall
in Your Community



photo by Cary Norton

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 public art project thanks to passionate people around the world. This is everyone's project now, and I created this guide to help you make your own wall with your community. I've tried to include all the things I've learned along the way.

People's handwritten reflections on *Before I Die* have made me feel profoundly less alone and given me inspiration and courage during some of my darkest times. As the world feels more distracting and alienating, it's a small step towards restoring perspective, revealing our inner lives, and seeing ourselves in one another.

Candy Chang

Before I Die Around the World



Santiago, Chile

photo by Bernd Biedermann



Tokyo, Japan



Lagos, Nigeria

photo by Dara Olayebi



Budapest, Hungary

photo by Sziget Festival



Birmingham, Alabama, USA

photo by Sweet Julep Photography

Before I Die Around the World



Najaf, Iraq

photo by Ahmed ALameri



Belo Horizonte, Brazil

photo by Candy Chang



Daegu, South Korea

photo by Juyoung Jung



Kladno, Czech Republic

photo by Spolek Podpruhon



Perm, Russia

photo by Perm Artillery Museum

Before I Die Around the World



Savannah, Georgia, USA

photo by Ahmed Alameri



Querétaro, Mexico

photo by Candy Chang



Nilai, Malaysia



Paris, France



Townsville, Australia

photo by Kim Kamo

Five Main Steps



Choose a Site

A good location has regular foot traffic if you want to make it easily accessible. People have painted on buildings, construction barriers, and interior walls of businesses, museums, and common spaces. They've also built plywood walls and placed them on streets, campuses, plazas, parks, festival grounds, and conferences. We've included examples on the following two pages.



Get Permission

Public spaces are for everyone and 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 the site, like community groups, business owners, and residents. Every city has different rules concerning public art, so consider partnering with a local organization who can help with this process.



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.



Make 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.



Share and Maintain

Check on your wall every day to take photos and document responses. Once 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. People have used social media, print and online publications, local organizations, mailing lists, and flyers to promote their wall. Tag your photos #beforeidiewall or whatever you like, and share your photos with us at hello@beforeidieproject.com. We would love to share it too!

Examples of Wall Structures

The next two pages contain examples of different styles of *Before I Die* installations. There's no right or wrong way, and we welcome you to make it in any format that works for you and your community.



Construction barrier

Made by Shake Shack, Brooklyn, New York



Side of building

Made by Cristina Zabalaga & friends, Lisbon, Portugal



Plywood attached to fence

Made by Black Rock Arts and Chang, Reno, Nevada



Plywood anchored by sandbags

Made by Greenbuild International Conference and Chang, San Francisco, California



Plywood wall anchored by vertical stakes

Made by 3S Artspace, Portsmouth, New Hampshire



Plywood attached to external structure

Made by Kindness Festival, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Examples of Wall Structures



Plywood box outdoors
Made by SICK! Festival, Manchester, England



Paneled box indoors
Made by Texas Conference for Women and Chang, Austin, Texas



Plywood box on wheels
Made by Christopher Newport University and Chang, Newport News, Virginia



Accordion Wall
Made by Dr. Elizabeth Sierra & students, Valdez, Alaska



Boards attached to exterior wall
Made by Les Tombées de la Nuit, Rennes, France















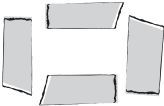



Painted interior walls
Made by Cincinnati Art Museum and Chang, Cincinnati, Ohio

Checklist of Materials

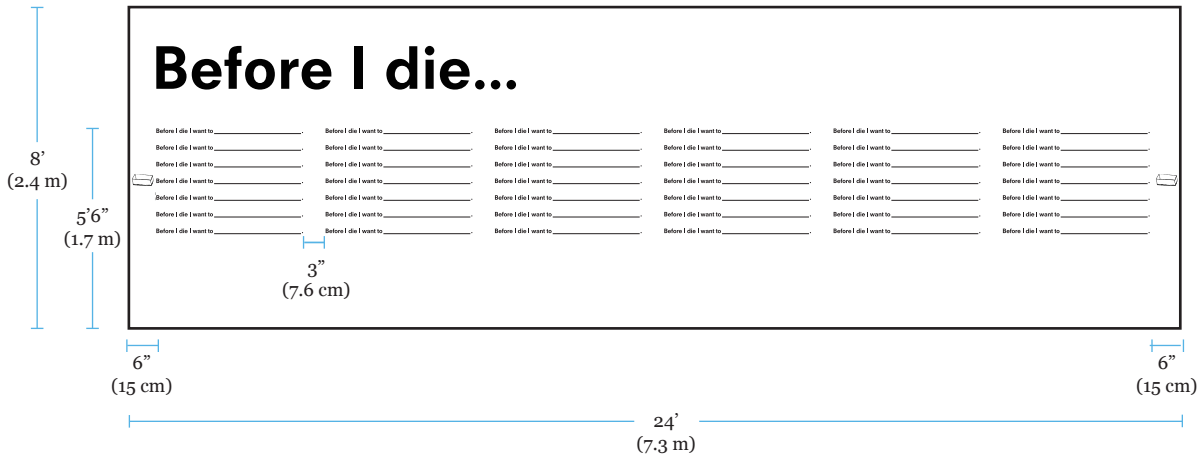
Below is a checklist of materials to make your *Before I Die* installation. We've included approximate costs, which will vary depending on your location and wall size. A 24' x 8' (7.3 x 2.4 m) wall requires 4-5 cans of chalkboard paint and 2-3 cans of spray paint.

You can purchase readymade stencils online (more info on the next page) or create your own. We 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. We found Crayola colored chalk withstood rain better than a few other brands, and we used 3" x 6" x 2" steel wire mesh containers from The Container Store as chalk holders. Feel free to use any weather-proof container with holes to let rain pass through.

 <p>Column/Line Stencil \$90 + shipping</p>	 <p>Title/Header Stencil \$40 + shipping</p>	 <p>Colored Chalk \$1 per box</p>	 <p>Chalk Holders \$4 each</p>
 <p>Disposable gloves When spray painting \$1</p>	 <p>Drop cloth/Trash bags To protect ground when painting \$5</p>	 <p>Chalkboard Paint \$10 each for 30 oz. can</p>	 <p>White Spray Paint \$1-3 each</p>
 <p>Paint Tray & Paint Roller Extension pole optional \$10</p>	 <p>Foam Brush/Paint Brush For touching up \$2 each</p>	 <p>Measuring Tape Or ruler \$5</p>	 <p>Hammer & Nails To attach chalk holders \$10</p>
 <p>Painter's Tape To hang stencils on wall \$3</p>	 <p>String (optional) To align stencils across wall \$2</p>	 <p>Scrap Cardboard/Paper To prevent spray beyond stencil \$1</p>	 <p>Sponge Mop & Bucket For washing off chalk responses \$5</p>

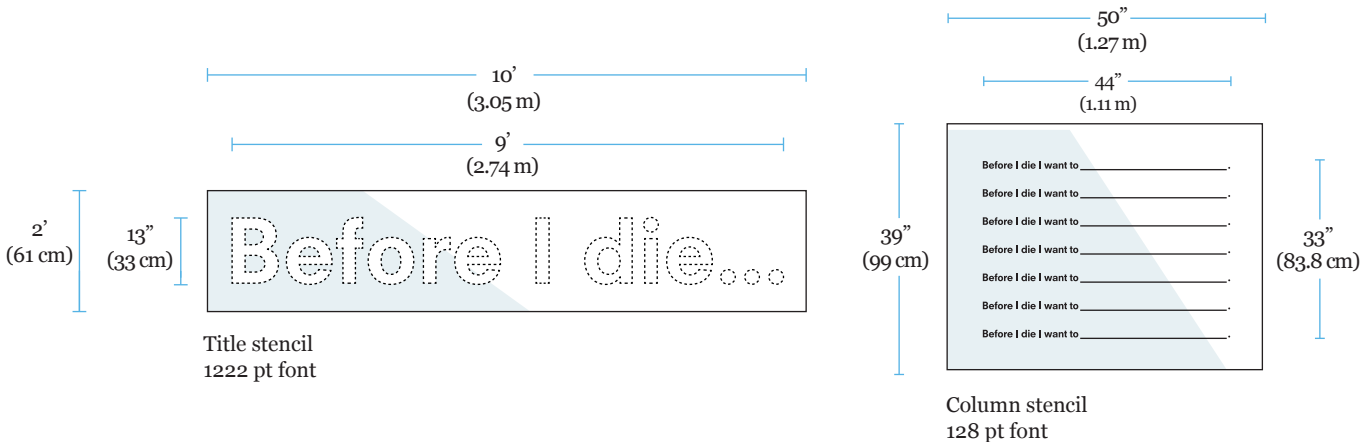
Wall Layout

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. The diagram below is an example of how a 24 ft (7.3 m) long wall could look like. 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.



Stencils

Here are the dimensions of the stencils we've used. You can purchase them in any language, as well as order custom prompts, from the stencil manufacturer Designer Stencils. Just visit their website designerstencils.com and search for "Before I die" to see all of the options (we do not profit from these purchases). The stencil is manufactured from thick .10 mm mylar to make it easy to hang rigid and spray paint with minimal tape and time. Feel free to create stencils from your own sources. Many people buy the column stencil and then print the big title stencil on normal paper for one-time use. Our site includes a folder of files you can download that contain the stencil files for editing and printing. We encourage you to use the same text font, which is Neuzzeit Book Heavy with -25 kerning. It is included in the resources folder.



Make Your Before I Die Wall



Make Your Before I Die Wall



1

Paint

Lay down a drop cloth or any cheap material to protect the ground from paint. Using a paint roller, apply two coats of chalkboard paint. Relax and let the paint dry. This can take several hours depending on your climate.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Drop cloth Chalkboard Paint Tray Paint Roller



2

Measure & Mark

Measure the placement of the stencils so they are evenly distributed across your wall. Taping a piece of string the length of the wall or a chalk line can make it easier to align your stencil at the same height as you go. Remember space for chalk holders.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Measuring tape Chalk String



3

Tape Stencils

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

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Stencils Tape Scrap Cardboard

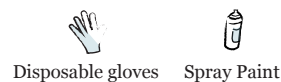


4

Spray Paint

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

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Disposable gloves Spray Paint

Make Your Before I Die Wall



5

Touch Up

Use a brush to touch up the wall with chalkboard paint wherever needed. Cover up any distracting amounts of white “ghosting” from the spray paint.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Foam brush



Chalkboard



Paint Tray



6

Add Chalk

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 stir people's minds about their own reflections.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



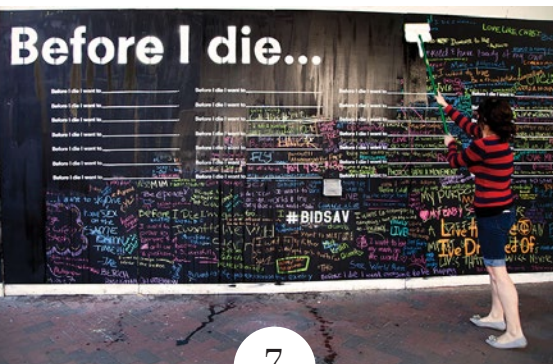
Chalk Holders



Hammer & Nails



Chalk



7

Maintain

Check on your wall every day to document responses and replenish the chalk. When the wall is completely filled or becomes illegible from weather, 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.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



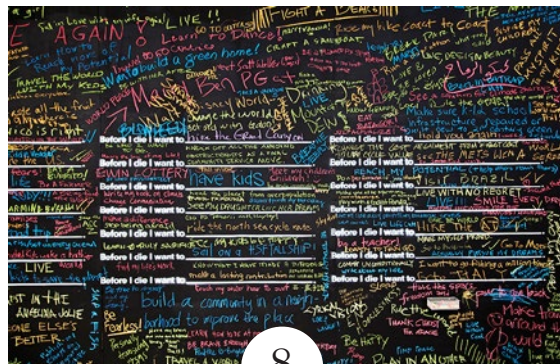
Chalk



Sponge Mop



Bucket of water



8

Document & Share

Take photos of your wall and share them! You can tag them #beforeidiewall and whatever else you like. And send your photos and responses to us at hello@beforeidieproject.com. We would love to share your wall too!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Camera

Additional Resources

The following two pages are optional resources. The first document 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 that you can post by the wall to explain the project to passersby. This is optional and you don't need to post anything. Feel free to create your own sign with information about your team. Thank you and we hope you have a good experience!

STAY IN TOUCH

You can find us here too:

Project site: beforeidieproject.com

Email: hello@beforeidieproject.com

Instagram: [@beforeidieproject](https://www.instagram.com/beforeidieproject)

Twitter: [@beforeidieproject](https://twitter.com/beforeidieproject)

Facebook: [facebook.com/beforeidiewall](https://www.facebook.com/beforeidiewall)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide was created by Candy Chang, Kristina Kassem, and Liz Iacullo with support from the Black Rock Arts Foundation.



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. There have now been over 5,000 walls in over 35 languages and over 75 countries, including China, Argentina, Italy, Iraq, Finland, India, Japan, and South Africa. This public installation is a positive civic engagement project to help us restore perspective, connect with others, 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 it. They are also committed to maintaining it and returning the site to its previous state once the project is done. You can learn more 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. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Candy Chang
Artist, Urban planner
candychang.com

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.