

1. Unlike many mathematicians, I live in an irrational world; I feel that my life is defined by a certain amount of irrationalities that bloom too frequently, such as my brief foray in front of 400 people without my pants.
2. I almost didn't live through September 11th, 2001.
3. When I was 8 years old, I shocked my family and a local archaeologist by discovering artifacts dating back almost 3,500 years.
4. When I was in eighth grade I couldn't read.
5. While traveling through the daily path of life, have you ever stumbled upon a hidden pocket of the universe?
6. The spaghetti burbled and slushed around the pan, and as I stirred it, the noises it gave off began to sound increasingly like bodily functions.
7. I stand on the riverbank surveying this rippled range like some riparian cowboy—instead of chaps, I wear vinyl, thigh-high waders and a lasso of measuring tape and twine is slung over my arm.
8. I have old hands.
9. Flying over enemy territory, I took in Beirut's beautiful skyline and wondered if under different circumstances I would have hopped on a bus and come here for my vacation. Instead, I saw the city from the window of a helicopter, in military uniform, my face camouflaged, on my way to a special operation deep behind enemy lines.
10. My younger sister, Jessica, arrived home one day reeling about the shirt that her friend had worn to school. It had simply read, "Genocide, Homicide, Suicide, Riverside."
11. I'll never forget the day when my childhood nightmares about fighting gigantic trolls in the Lord of the Rings series became a reality. Sword in hand and clad in medieval samurai armor, I dragged myself into the battleground as I faced my opponent, a warmongering giant.
12. Some fathers might disapprove of their children handling noxious chemicals in the garage.
13. I was paralyzed from the waist down. I would try to move my leg or even shift an ankle but I never got a response. This was the first time thoughts of death ever crossed my mind.
14. As an Indian-American, I am forever bound to the hyphen.
15. Journey to Gulu's outskirts and you will uncover the scene where education was raped 11 years ago; some Ugandan teens also lost their innocence in exchange for their lives.
16. I have been surfing Lake Michigan since I was 3 years old.
17. On a hot Hollywood evening, I sat on a bike, sweltering in a winter coat and furry boots.
18. I change my name each time I place an order at Starbucks.
19. If my life were a play, there would be two sets, two acts, and two sets of characters. Like many first-generation Americans, I was born in the US to immigrant parents who spoke a foreign language, cooked foreign foods, and lived a foreign lifestyle in a crime-ridden community on the "wrong side" of the SEPTA tracks. But, unlike my neighbors, I was shipped away.
20. I recite ancient Chinese poems, but adore Jane Austen. I devour spicy chicken feet, but drool for ballpark franks. I dream in Chinese, but think in English. 10 years ago, my family moved to China from the US, and bridging these two cultures has become part of my identity.
21. There is a hefty blue book in my bookcase that is older than any other book in the house. Across its spine are emblazoned the words My First Encyclopedia. For others this book might have served as a passing interest or an occasional point of reference; for me, it was the quiet, unremarked, yet vastly monumental introduction into a life shaped by the tenets of science.

22. I was born with an extra hand—kind of. Anatomically, I'm normal. I don't have a third arm protruding from the center of my chest or anything of the sort. I do, however, have the unusual ability to use both hands equally well.
23. I had never broken into a car before.
24. In the US, legal adulthood comes at 18, but it is my understanding that adulthood comes through responsibility, tears, laughter, and most of all: parenthood. It is effortless to watch other people's children grow and flourish, but having my own was a terrifying new world for which I was ill-prepared. I was not ready for my first, Stanley, but now I cannot envision a world without him. Today, I am the proud parent of not one, but seven beautiful, boisterous, carnivorous plants. Within my small family I have four sundews, two Venus flytraps, and one tropical pitcher plant. Of course they have scientific names, but I only use them when I am angry and my inner-parent reveals itself.
25. I've recently come to the realization that community service just isn't for me. Now before you start making assumptions, keep reading.
26. Growing strawberries in a high school locker seemed fairly simple at first.
27. Pushed against the left wall in my room is a curious piece of furniture. Initially, it was a six foot tall and three foot wide red oak bookcase. Strangely, as the five shelves began to fill with books, the dimensions of the bookcase slowly evolved into a looking glass. Now, years later, my reflection is almost complete: each bookshelf cradles the stories of my life.
28. Rarely have I studied a topic that flows from my ears to my brain to my tongue as easily as the Italian language. The Italian blood that runs through me is more than the genetics that gave me my dark hair and thick eyebrows.
29. Having explored the myths from ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt, my curiosity was piqued in eighth grade by a simple legend from Japanese lore. If you fold one thousand paper cranes, the gods will grant you one wish. I took it as a challenge.
30. The most exciting time to live in Vermont is mid-February. This is the time when one is given the privilege of a 30-minute walk to school in sub-zero temperatures, with a 30-minute trudge home in the dark after a long day. It's been four months since winter began, and it'll be two more until it's over.
31. "On and off," I squealed as I fiddled with every remote control device in the house—from the TV to my RC toys. For hours, I strove to unravel the connection between the wires, circuits, and switches that "magically" activated these appliances. Although my ruminations did not provide immediate explanations, they spurred my imagination and fueled my fascination for electronics.
32. My mom once joked that I should audition for the role of Cho Chang. I threw a chopstick at her. Cho Chang was weak, so terribly weak that Harry dumped her.
33. Leaping into the air from the couch, flapping my arms, ambitiously trying to achieve flight. The first dream I ever had was to fly. This dream drove me to consistently jump off the couch, believing I would touch the sky.
34. The Model United Nations (MUN) Committee Chair taps his gavel, while delegates from across the country rip papers and pass notes. Whispers flow through the air, and nervous delegates click their pens. The atmosphere is like no other: intensely dynamic and powerful enough to make delegates speak, debate, ally and divide over the issue of women's rights in the Middle East. Like everyone else, I feel the presence of resolve, tension, focus and youthful passion. I am conscious of appearing red-faced, sweaty, and anxious, but deep down, I, the delegate of Iran, am determined, confident, excited and ready.
35. My Sundays and my Wednesdays hate each other.
36. A wise woman once told me that I have had an extraordinary number of failures for someone my age. I'd never thought about it that way before, but she's got a good point.
37. Ever since kindergarten, I have been a teacher—call me Ms. Brown, please. Situated in my basement was a rickety old chalkboard that my dad bought at one of his flea market adventures. The chalkboard was patterned with six-year-old scribbles, but in my mind, they were carefully thought-out diagrams of area, perimeter and volume. There I sat, wobbling on an old-fashioned diner chair, writing all afternoon, while speaking in my loudest voice to an imaginary class.