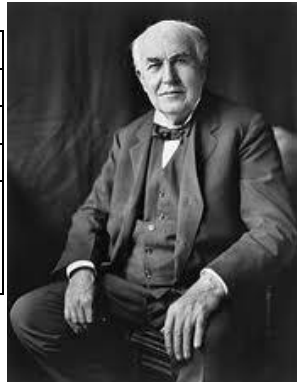


Thomas Alva Edison

Name	Thomas Alva Edison
Country of birth	USA
Born	1847
Died	1931
Inventions	Electric bulb Phonograph Motion picture camera



Thomas Alva Edison's schooling ended when he was just eight years old. His teacher told his mother that the boy's brain was "addled" and his mother, furious, took him out of school. Despite his lack of formal education, Edison went on to become one of the world's greatest inventors.

In 1876, he set up an 'invention factory' at Menlo Park in New Jersey, USA. Other inventors had laboured hard to make an electric light that people could use in their homes, but without success. It was persistence that helped Edison succeed. After repeated failures to find a filament that would not break or melt or evaporate he finally found what he was looking for in carbonised thread. His bulb with its filament of scorched thread burnt brightly for 600 hours at its first trial. Along with the bulb, he also created generators, fuses, conduits and other equipment's, which made his bulb a practical invention rather than an interesting novelty. People were so impressed by his invention that they called him the 'Wizard of Menlo Park'. He also invented the phonograph (the forerunner of the record player) and the microphone. In 1914 he connected the phonograph to a camera he had developed, to make a talking picture. Besides this he made improvements in the telephone and came close to inventing the radio.

But Edison was not one to rest on his laurels. By the time of his death in 1931 he had patented nearly 1300 inventions! Edison believed that the secret of success was plain hard work. Indeed, he believed that genius was 'one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration'. But he detested analytical and plodding methods and preferred to tackle a problem head-on.

Once, so the story goes, he wanted to get the internal measurements of an irregular glass bulb and asked one of his assistants, a mathematical expert, to help him. The expert sat at his desk and got down to work. A week passed. Edison asked him if he had found the measurements.

"No, sir," said the assistant. "It'll take another week."

"But why is it taking so long?" asked Edison. "It could be done in a minute. Let me show you how." He filled the bulb with water.

"Now pour the water in a measuring glass and you've got your answer," he told the astonished expert.

In 1960 his country honoured him by choosing him a Member of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans.

Edison Fact-file

- Edison was fascinated with the subject of sound, even though, ironically, he was part deaf
- Edison spent most of his life's work improving devices that already existed, like the telephone, and only a few of his inventions were completely his own thought and research
- When he was in Primary School, Edison's teacher called him "Addled", meaning backward
- Edison married his first wife on Christmas Day, 1871
- Edison has been titled, 'The man who invented the future' and 'The Wizard of Menlo Park'
- When Edison died in 1931, all of the lights in houses and streets were turned off for a minute in honour of him
- Thomas Edison holds around 1,093 U.S. patents as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, Germany and France
- Edison built his first laboratory at the age of 10 in his basement
- Edison proposed marriage to his wife Mary Stillwell... through Morse Code!