

Things you might not know about Alexander Graham Bell...

- Bell did not like the telephone. He felt it was an “intrusion on his work as a scientist”. He refused to have a telephone in his study.
- At the age of 12, he built a homemade device that combined rotating paddles with sets of nail brushes to create a de-husking machine for his neighbors flour mill. In return, the mill owner gave him the run of a small workshop within which to “invent”.
- His initial work on the telephone was an experiment to recreate something he thought had already been done. A German scientist wrote a book about the transmission of sound through electrical means. Bell who had taught himself German, mistranslated the book and assumed that the telephone had already been invented. He later remarked: *“I thought that Helmholtz had done it ... and that my failure was due only to my ignorance of electricity. It was a valuable blunder ... If I had been able to read German in those days, I might never have commenced my experiments!”*
- Bell learned the Mohawk Indian language and translated its unwritten vocabulary into Visible Speech symbols. For his work, Bell was awarded the title of Honorary Chief and participated in a ceremony where he donned a Mohawk headdress and danced traditional dances.
- Alexander Bell opened his "School of Vocal Physiology and Mechanics of Speech" in Boston, which attracted a large number of deaf. Working as a private tutor, one of his most famous pupils was Helen Keller, who came to him as a young child unable to see, hear, or speak.
- The telephone actually began as an acoustic telegraph. A machine that would allow multiple telegraphs to be sent using a single line.
- Bell offered to sell the Telephone to the Western Union Company (the leading telegraph company) for \$100,000. They said it was a play thing that had little practical value. Bell then formed The Bell Company and became a millionaire.
- Bell is credited with the invention of the metal detector in 1881. The device was quickly put together in an attempt to find the bullet in the body of U.S. President James Garfield. The metal detector worked flawlessly in tests but did not find the assassin's bullet partly because the metal bed frame the President was lying on disturbed the instrument, resulting in static.
- Bell spent the last decade of his life improving hydrofoil designs, and in 1919 built a hydrofoil that set a world water-speed record that was not broken until 1963.
- He invented the photophone. A device that transmits speech by light rays. This was a forerunner of fiber-optics.
- Created the first wax recording cylinder. This was later adapted by Thomas Edison for his phonograph. (A record player!- Like a CD... you darn kids....)
- Bell was the first president of the National Geographic Society.

