**Top 10 Inventions**

**1.** [**The Telephone**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bltelephone.htm)

The telephone is an instrument that converts voice and sound signals into electrical impulses for transmission by wire to a different location, where another telephone receives the electrical impulses and turns them back into recognizable sounds. In 1875, Alexander Graham Bell built the first telephone that transmitted electrically the human voice.

**2.** [**The History of Computers**](http://inventors.about.com/library/blcoindex.htm)

There are many major milestones in the history of computers, starting with 1936, when Konrad Zuse built the first freely programmable computer.

**3.** [**Television**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bl_television_timeline.htm)

In 1884, Paul Nipkow sent images over wires using a rotating metal disk technology with 18 lines of resolution. Television then evolved along two paths, mechanical based on Nipkow's rotating disks, and electronic based on the cathode ray tube. American Charles Jenkins and Scotsman John Baird followed the mechanical model while Philo Farnsworth, working independently in San Francisco, and Russian émigré Vladimir Zworkin, working for Westinghouse and later RCA, advanced the electronic model.

**4.** [**The Automobile**](http://inventors.about.com/library/weekly/aacarssteama.htm)

In 1769, the very first self-propelled road vehicle was invented by French mechanic, Nicolas Joseph Cugnot. However, it was a steam-powered model. In 1885, Karl Benz designed and built the world's first practical automobile to be powered by an internal-combustion engine. In 1885, Gottlieb Daimler took the internal combustion engine a step further and patented what is generally recognized as the prototype of the modern gas engine and later built the world's first four-wheeled motor vehicle.

**5.** [**The Cotton Gin**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blcotton_gin.htm)

Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin on March 14, 1794. The cotton gin is a machine that separates seeds, hulls and other unwanted materials from cotton after it has been picked.

**6.** [**The Camera**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blphotography.htm)

In 1814, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce created the first photographic image with a camera obscura, however, the image required eight hours of light exposure and later faded.

**7.** [**The Steam Engine**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blsteamengine.htm)

Thomas Savery was an English military engineer and inventor who in 1698, patented the first crude steam engine. Thomas Newcomen invented the atmospheric steam engine in 1712. James Watt improved Newcomen's design and invented what is considered the first modern steam engine in 1765.

**8.** [**The Sewing Machine**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blsewing_machine.htm)

The first functional sewing machine was invented by the French tailor, Barthelemy Thimonnier, in 1830. In 1834, Walter Hunt built America's first (somewhat) successful sewing machine. Elias Howe patented the first lockstitch sewing machine in 1846. Isaac Singer invented the up-and-down motion mechanism.

**9.** [**The Light Bulb**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bllight2.htm)

Contrary to popular belief, Thomas Alva Edison didn't "invent" the light bulb, but rather he improved upon a 50-year-old idea. In 1809, Humphry Davy, an English chemist, invented the first electric light. In 1878, Sir Joseph Wilson Swan, an English physicist, was the first person to invent a practical and longer-lasting electic lightbulb (13.5 hours) with a carbon fiber filament. In 1879, Thomas Alva Edison invented a carbon filament that burned for forty hours.

**10.** [**Penicillin**](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blpenicillin.htm)

Penicillin was discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1928. Andrew Moyer patented the first method of industrial production of penicillin in 1948.