Lessons from TED
or: Top Ten TED Talk Tips

The popular TED.com and TEDx events have raised the bar for inspirational, informative, and motivating presentations. The talks featured on TED.com and in regional events provide some great examples of how to take your speeches to the next level—and they remind us of speaking fundamentals that are sometimes easy to forget.

Thou Shalt Tell a Story.
TED organizers have been known to send out a small stone tablet to speakers called “The TED Commandments.” This is the Fourth Commandment.

Tell and Not Sell.
Another fundamental TED rule. A good reminder that—even if you have a persuasive or motivational appeal to make—the power’s in the story. First and foremost: tell a good story.

Work Without a Net.
Ultimately, you are your presentation. If you can speak comfortably and passionately alone on a stage, if you can control your voice and body and not rely on speaking aids to feel comfortable, you’re golden.

There’s No Substitute for Passion.
If you’re not genuinely enthused (or concerned, enraged or delighted), your audience won’t be.

Embrace Your Personal Style.
It’s not about trying on another speaker’s style, it’s about naming and claiming your own. (Though one might claim there’s emerged a “TED style.”)

Visual Aids are Just That.
Treat visual aids as speaking aids only. Prepare to do without them.

First Moments Matter.
Know the first words and the first minutes of your presentation by heart. Reduce the “run-up” time (that is, don’t wait until 2 minutes into your speech to bring out your best self).

Say Just Enough. Then Stop.
TED speakers make their impact in 3-, 6-, 9- or 18-minute talks. You always get the sense these speeches are distillations into satisfying kernels; the speakers present their best.

Know Your TED Category.
If you were delivering at TED, into which category would they place your speech: jaw-dropping, persuasive, courageous, ingenious, fascinating, inspiring, beautiful, funny, informative?

Organize Around Sparkling Key Messages.
Clear, concise key messages ground your presentation and become the hooks upon which your audience hangs all of your other information.