



Top 10 Tips to Succeed at TEDxMileHigh Auditions

1. Focus on one idea worth spreading.

Keyword: one. If this is an area you're particularly passionate about (and we hope that it is!) we understand that you probably have a lot of ideas to cover. But, if you do a stellar job with this TEDx Talk, you'll probably be invited to give another. So for the sake of this audition, choose one single idea and then craft the entire talk in support of it.

2. Remember: this is not a lecture, motivational speech, or personal story.

While they may contain elements of those three genres, TEDx Talks are idea-centric. What's an idea? [TED's Chris Anderson](#) says, "an idea is a pattern of information that helps you understand and navigate the world." Here are a few examples from well known talks: [Sir Ken Robinson](#) - Creativity is key to our kids' future; [Simon Sinek](#) - Leadership is a choice, not a rank; [Kate Adams](#) - It's never too late to change your story; [David Baron](#) - Duration of experience does not equal impact. The beauty of the TED format is that while you may not chase eclipses like David Baron, and while you may not work in Soap Operas like Kate Adams, these ideas have the power to shape your life.

3. Walk the walk.

We often joke that the people best suited to do a TEDx Talk are those least able to do so, and that's because they're so busy pursuing their ideas in the real world. When you're choosing what to focus on, ask yourself, "What are my biggest passions? What am I thinking about and *acting* on regularly? What makes me uniquely qualified to present this idea?" The speakers that end up on stage don't just talk the talk, they walk the walk.

4. Give your audience a reason to care.

If you watch a lot of TEDx Talks you'll notice a pattern - the first 30 seconds of the talk, "the hook", isn't used to thank the audience, introduce yourself, or summarize your long and illustrious career. TEDx speakers dive right in. The hook is a place to grab the audience's attention and spark their curiosity. Don't assume that the audience will be interested in your topic - make it interesting for them! Challenge their assumptions, reveal blind spots, and ask provocative questions. Check out these examples of how to start a talk powerfully: [Esther Sullivan](#), [Amal Kassir](#), & [Daniel Pink](#).

5. Be solution – oriented.

In TEDx Talks, and perhaps in life as well, it is much more powerful to be pro-something than anti-something. The good news is that an anti-talk can easily be transformed into a pro-talk - just focus more on the solution than you do on the problem. Answer these three questions when you're writing your talk: What's the status quo? What's the problem with the status quo? What's the solution? Let's use [Phil Mitchell's](#) talk as an example. Status quo: When you have a medical emergency, you call an ambulance and go to the ER. Problem with the Status quo: ER visits are expensive, inefficient, and time-consuming for both the patient and the doctor. Solution: For non-life-threatening emergencies, let's send the ER to the patient and provide medical care in the comfort of their own home.



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6. Tell stories.

Human beings are wired for storytelling. In fact, audience members are more likely to remember a concept if you share it in the form of a story rather than a series of facts, data, or statistics. Personal stories, too, can be a great way to establish your credibility and share your experience. Here's a tip for writing compelling stories: consider incorporating any of the five senses - sights, smells, tastes, textures, and sounds. Your goal is to make your audience feel like they were right there with you, along for the ride. Here are three masterful examples of storytelling: [David Baron](#), [Jovan Mays](#), & [Jill Bolte Taylor](#).

7. Be clear and conversational.

The TED brand is associated with the most brilliant and intellectual people in the world. Speakers often think they need to use complicated or technical professional jargon to impress the audience. But in truth, the secret to TED's success is clarity and simplicity. Remember to start where your audience is at and then build your idea using concepts that they understand. When you're done writing the first draft of your talk, go through each sentence and ask yourself, "Would an 8-year-old understand this?" If the answer is no, rewrite it. TEDx talks are conversational in tone - imagine you're speaking to a friend over coffee or dinner.

8. Design simple slides.

Whether you use slides or not is up to you. Some talks need slides, but many don't. If you decide to use slides, remember this - use images or graphics where necessary and keep text to an absolute minimum. Nothing bores an audience or distracts them from what you're saying more than the traditional bulleted PowerPoint. So keep it simple. A photo is often the best slide. Here are some great examples: [Amy Adele Hasinoff](#) & [Erica M. Stone](#).

9. Practice, practice, practice.

How you deliver a TEDx Talk is just as important as the script itself. Many people are surprised to learn that TEDx speakers don't use a teleprompter - their talks are delivered fully from memory. While we don't expect your script to be fully memorized for the audition, the closer you can get, the better. The better you know your content, the more confident you will feel, and the more confident you feel, the better your delivery will be overall. Here are three quick tips to help you prepare:

1. Record an audio file of your talk on your smartphone and listen to it over and over again while you walk, run, drive, or clean.
2. Memorize the basic structure of your script. You may not know every word or sentence, but knowing the overall structure will be very helpful in keeping your place.
3. Practice starting and stopping at random places in your script. If you get lost during the audition, it probably won't be on the first line. Looking for delivery inspiration? Here are three amazing examples: [Esther Sullivan](#), [Meta Sarmiento](#), and [Theo E.J. Wilson](#).

10. Give, don't take.

This subtle shift in mindset will completely transform your talk. Your goal should *not* be to sell your brand, get more customers, attract social media followers, or promote a political agenda. Many speakers desperately want to plug their book in their talk, but we've found from past experience that the best way to sell a lot of books is to give an amazing talk and never even mention the book once. Give the audience your knowledge, insight, wisdom, and stories while asking nothing in return.