



national science week 2019

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Playing LEGO with atoms

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I want a job where I set fire to things on a regular basis. I want to make funny smells, funky colours and beautiful crystals. That's why I do chemistry.

Chemistry has a reputation as being really complicated and hard, but I don't think that's true. Instead of doing mind-bending maths or looking at slime down a microscope, my job is to throw things in a flask and see what happens. If it goes purple, then I want to figure out why. If nothing happens, I still must figure out why not! That's part of what makes it exciting. The other interesting part is the chemicals that I use; some of them catch fire when you open the bottle!

My type of chemistry is called synthesis, which means "making stuff". I try to build molecules just like you build a LEGO set; I put small, simple pieces together to make something larger and more complicated. Just like with LEGO, you don't have to follow the instructions. With about a hundred different pieces (the elements), the possibilities are infinite.

Science was always the most fun subject for me. In grade 12, I had a great chemistry teacher, and that was all I needed to get me started. I found YouTube videos of people doing chemistry with things you could buy from the supermarket, so I gave that a go. I launched my first rocket at the end of grade 12, and I've been hooked on chemistry ever since.

For more information see: www.utas.edu.au/chemistry

