Caroline Gardiner

From the moment that I took Biology as a subject in high school, I have always had a passion for Science and knew that I would eventually choose it as a career. I studied Medical Biochemistry and Forensic Science at university and have worked in various Science roles since leaving university in 1999.

The skills that I developed at school, including group working, planning and communicating have been very important in all of my Science jobs and I have continued to develop them during my career and to gain new skills.

I worked in a team to plan and carry out a project to develop a DNA database for the West of Scotland, which is now used as the gold standard reference database by other researchers. DNA is a list of the instructions for how a living thing grows.  Making lists of these instructions takes a long time, careful work and is expensive.  We observed that we could get the same results using half the chemicals. This saved a lot of money.

Concentration and care are needed in this kind of work. You cannot afford to get lazy or sloppy in your work just because you have repeated it many times. Getting dirt in a sample could destroy the entire project.  I learned that good routines were important and that the last sample should be treated with the same care as the first and I became better at the tricky skills that are involved.

My communication skills were useful in presenting the work and writing it up for publication in Forensic Science International and for my university degree. Best of all, the BBC came to the lab to interview me about the work for the evening news!

In all scientific roles, it is very important to want to find things out and to ask questions. Team working is important because it allows everyone to bring their skills and ideas together. In a lab, it is important to plan well and to follow the plan carefully.

I have always had a passion for Life Science, particularly DNA, and now I get to teach and inspire others, encouraging them to think about this as a career path. Perhaps you will develop a love of finding out about Science and decide to choose this path when you leave school. Good luck!