



# national science week 2014

## Steve Abel

### Organic Chemist

I chose to become a scientist because I like to ask a lot of questions, and science is based on discovering answers. At an early age I was one of those kids who constantly asked "Why?" and was dissatisfied with "Just because." As I grew up, I was always keen to learn new things and find out how and why things are the way they are. Growing up in rural Strahan, on the west coast of Tasmania, I had the opportunity of seeing my dad use a gun for hunting. I was intrigued by this remarkable application of chemistry, and this sparked my interest in the field.

I did a Bachelor of Science, majoring in chemistry and biochemistry, and now I am doing an honours degree in chemistry at the University of Tasmania. My research focuses on developing new ways to artificially create two existing ladybug pheromones, which could then be used to control ladybug populations for pest control or agricultural applications.

This involves a lot of time in the lab wearing a white coat and conducting experiments. Sadly this does not involve any large red buttons or getting to yell "PULLTHELEVA!!!" at an Igor in a vaguely European accent but it is still quite a lot of fun none the less.

A key part of these experiments is using a new catalyst to combine two molecules in a very particular fashion that no one else has done before!

I find chemistry incredibly rewarding. When you stand back at the end of the day and realise you've succeeded in manipulating matter to form something new or useful, it can be quite an empowering experience. In the future I would like to undertake a PhD in order to pursue a career as a research scientist, making new compounds in exciting new ways!

**For more information:** [www.utas.edu.au/chemistry](http://www.utas.edu.au/chemistry)

[www.YoungTassieScientists.com](http://www.YoungTassieScientists.com)

