

Smashing Stereotypes 2025 Discussion Pack



About this discussion pack

This discussion pack is designed to help educators, parents, and others interested in learning about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) jobs, share the Smashing Stereotypes campaign with young people aged between 14 and 18. It can provide a starting point for discussions about careers and the variety of ways science is involved in people's jobs.

This deck includes some slides for each person profiled, briefly explaining what they do and a bit about their background.

For each profile, we ask readers some questions relating to the person's career path. The idea is to get young people thinking like the people featured in the campaign, putting them in their shoes and facing the tasks and challenges they did.

We hope you enjoy learning about the wonderful people #SmashingStereotypes, and that you find something inspiring to take into your own day-to-day life!



What is Smashing Stereotypes?

Smashing Stereotypes is a campaign that challenges your perception on what a scientist looks like or does.

We want to show you that scientists come in all shapes and sizes and do super cool things you might not even connect to science.

We created some fun and exciting interviews and videos with talented individuals who work in science, to share their journeys. We hope their stories will surprise and inspire you.

You'll learn about a climate scientist, an astronomer, a neuroscientist and more!



Why do we need to address stereotypes in STEM?

The Smashing Stereotypes campaign is on a mission to shatter perceptions of what it means to work in STEM.

- Working in STEM is so much more than just lab coats and computers — there are so many careers that you may not have even known exist.
- Video games, apps and cosmetics come from the minds of STEM professionals. We want to use their stories to inspire you and show you that science is everywhere!



Scientists aren't all men, middle-aged and dressed in lab coats. Nor do they work on their own.

Introducing our 2025 profiles

#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**PEARL
AYEM**

Physical climate
scientist



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**DR SOPHIE
MEEKINGS**

Speech
neuroscientist



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**DR NIC
BONNE**

Vision impaired
astronomer



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**BEX
SUTTON**

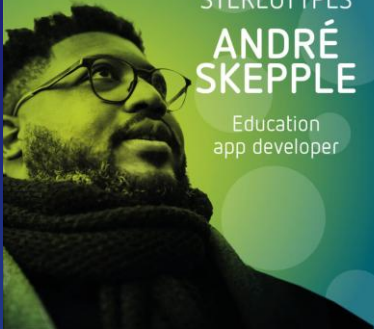
Process and
Mechanical Engineer
at Urenco



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**ANDRÉ
SKEPPLE**

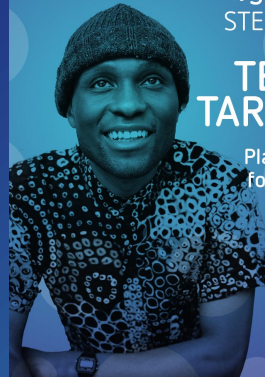
Education
app developer



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**TENDAI
TARUVINGA**

Plant-based
food maker



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**NILE
HENRY**

Founder,
motorsports &
green tech social
enterprise



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

**KAY
PIRALI**

Project Engineering
Manager at Urenco



Pearl Ayem

Pearl loves the outdoors. She was born in India and grew up in Canada, spending lots of time in nature, going on long drives, and exploring different landscapes.

Curious about the world around her, she studied atmospheric science at university, where she learned about clouds, sunsets, and the atmosphere.

Now, she works in climate modelling. She uses data to help companies understand how their actions, like using too many of certain resources or harmful ways of working, could hurt the planet.



Pearl Ayem

Pearl used to think science was only about engineering. But at school, she got involved in tech labs, built cool battle bots, and worked with bandsaws, realising it was so much more!

She's a changemaker and wants to see more women in STEM. She helps with projects like Polar Impact and Women in Climate to get more people into polar research.

She even organised panels at COP26, the world's biggest climate summit where world leaders make decisions about our planet.



Watch Pearl's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8XlvsLGflc>

Dr Sophie Meekings

Sophie is a speech neuroscientist who studies what happens in your brain during a conversation.

She grew up deaf, which made noisy school environments tricky. Her parents homeschooled her and filled her days with fun science experiments, despite having no science background themselves.

Sophie didn't take science A-Levels, but her love for language led her to study it at university. One thing led to another, and she ended up doing a PhD in neuroscience. She never planned to be a scientist. It just happened!

#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

DR SOPHIE
MEEKINGS

Speech
neuroscientist



Dr Sophie Meekings

One of Sophie's proudest moments was getting funding for her PhD. She wasn't sure if she'd get a place, so she was also looking at jobs in other industries.

Not only was she accepted, but she also won the only Research Council studentship in her department! Until then, she saw academia as just one of many options.

When you're young, it can seem like your GCSE or A-Level choices will decide your whole future — but they won't. The key? Follow what you love, and it will lead you to the right path — no matter when you get there!



Watch Sophie's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwGrijxvbaF0>

Dr Nic Bonne

Growing up in Bendigo, Australia, Nic spent his childhood stargazing with his family.

Even though he's blind, his parents described the stars so vividly that he could imagine them. He was fascinated by the universe and wanted to learn more.

Now, Nic is an astronomer! He's working to help everyone, no matter their abilities, to experience the stars and galaxies through touchable, tactile objects.



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

DR NIC
BONNE

Vision impaired
astronomer

Dr Nic Bonne

Nic's journey wasn't easy, but he learned to ask for help when needed and push through challenges on his own.

No one ever told Nic, "You're blind, so this will be too hard." Instead, his teachers and family helped him find creative ways to solve problems.

They worked together to make learning accessible, even if it meant coming up with unusual solutions. That mindset prepared him for a PhD, where thinking differently is key, especially in a visual science like astronomy.

There's always a way. You just have to get creative!



Watch Nic's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUAkXGq3fG>

A

Tendai Taruvinga

Starting in civil engineering, Tendai managed construction projects and coordinated designs with architects and engineers.

But his true passion was food, leading him to launch Veafy, a plant-based African meal prep business.

STEM is still at the heart of his work. Cooking is chemistry, balancing flavours is science, and plant-based eating has so many nutritional benefits.

His journey proves that STEM skills are valuable everywhere—even in the kitchen!



Tendai Taruvinga

STEM is more than lab coats! Tendai used to think scientists only worked in labs, but now he sees so many careers.

When he worked in construction, he noticed there weren't many Black professionals. That's why representation matters.

Now, as an entrepreneur, he wants to inspire young people, especially from ethnic minorities, to explore all the opportunities STEM has to offer—even in business.



#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

TENDAI
TARUINGA

Plant-based
food maker

Watch Tendai's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlw3SCL2IB>

8

Nile Henry

Nile Henry is the driving force behind The Blair Project, an organisation that helps more young people learn about motorsports and hopefully consider career paths related to driving and engineering.

At The Blair Project, Nile and his team challenge students to convert petrol go karts into fully electric e-karts, testing their energy efficiency and speed.



Nile Henry

Nile is a self-starter - he used to be the kid in the playground selling sweets.

Now, he is the Chief Executive Officer of his own organisation. He started The Blair Project because he saw how difficult it was for his brother (Blair) to break into motorsport racing.

If you could start your own company or organisation, what would it be and why?



Watch Nile's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EABmxEggJfQ>

André Skepple

André Skepple founded a company called FullSpektrum, which uses artificial intelligence to understand how neurodivergent people learn.

The team at FullSpektrum identify learning difficulties someone may be experiencing. This then helps teachers and healthcare professionals to find ways to support students, for example with learning plans tailored to them.



André Skepple

André has dyslexia and dyspraxia. His experiences throughout school and university have led him to becoming a tech company founder and CEO on a mission to make learning better for everyone.

What challenges have you gone through at school? What technologies could you create or develop to minimise the difficulties you experienced?



Watch André's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHVUfkYFdUM>

Bex Sutton

Bex Sutton is a process and mechanical engineer at Urenco who are all about creating cleaner, greener energy.

As a competitive swimmer, she trained in pools and open water, where she became fascinated by the science behind it. But swimming in lakes and oceans also made her aware of pollution and the need to protect the environment.

That curiosity led her to study chemical engineering, where she could learn how things work and find ways to make industries more eco-friendly.

Now, she's working on cutting-edge energy solutions that help power the world sustainably!



Bex Sutton

Bex was the first in her family to go to university, and not everyone believed in her dream at first.

But she didn't let that stop her. She studied hard, earned a top degree in Chemical Engineering, and has since worked all over the world, including Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Her advice? Don't be afraid to ask questions, find mentors, and get hands-on experience.

Engineering is for everyone, and if you're passionate about solving problems and making a difference, you can do it too!



Kay Pirali

Kay Pirali is a Project Engineering Manager at Urenco, helping turn engineering ideas into real-life solutions.

She grew up in Trinidad and Tobago, a small Caribbean country made up of two islands.

Her family had moved there from India generations earlier. Her ancestors worked on sugar and cocoa plantations, and later, her grandfather and father worked in the oil and gas industry.

Seeing her family working with big machines and complex systems sparked Kay's curiosity about how things worked.

#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

KAY
PIRALI

Project Engineering
Manager at Urenco



Kay Pirali

Kay works on important projects, including safely decommissioning old equipment that can't be disposed of in regular ways due to security and radiation concerns.

Her job involves working with experts from different fields, from design and research to manufacturing and safety teams. She oversees projects from start to finish, including planning, testing, and making sure everything runs smoothly.

Engineering isn't just about solving problems; it's about teamwork, innovation, and making sure things are done safely and efficiently.

#SMASHING
STEREOTYPES

KAY
PIRALI

Project Engineering
Manager at Urenco



Activity: Spot the STEM trailblazer

Dive into the journeys of STEM trailblazers, unleash your research skills, and share their inspiring stories with your fellow classmates.

Your mission is to research someone who's breaking the mould in STEM.

1. Do your research

Research someone who challenges stereotypes and stands out in the world of STEM.

1. Create a profile

Put together a presentation that introduces your chosen trailblazer, their background, notable achievements, and how they are challenging stereotypes in the STEM field.

Make it visually engaging, and incorporate images, videos, impactful quotes and more.

1. Present your discoveries to your class

Get ready to showcase your findings!

Activity: Spot the STEM trailblazer

Here are some prompts to get you started:

Think about your hobbies, as they are likely to involve science! You don't have to pick someone who describes themselves as 'a scientist'.

For example, if you like sport, you could choose a STEM trailblazer who is a sports scientist or innovator of sporting equipment. If you're into music, what technology is important and who invented it?

Look around you for inspiration. Start asking the people in your life about their work and careers. You may find out something interesting and unexpected!

Your future role? If you have an idea about what career you would like to follow, why not use this opportunity to interview someone who does it?

Do you have aspirations to work in fashion? You could look up someone who works in manufacturing or design and speak to them about what they do.

Explore the full campaign at
www.britishscienceweek.org/smashing-stereotypes

#SmashingStereotypes #BSW25

Share your feedback with us at bsw@britishscienceassociation.org



British Science Association, registered charity 212479 and SC039236.
© British Science Association 2025

