Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths

STEM IN A NUTSHELL

This Nutshell explains what STEM is and why STEM skills are important.

What and why STEM

STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects give all young people important skills for their future lives and work. Employers are looking for young people with these skills, but there's a big shortage (skills gap).

The skills which come from doing STEM subjects are used in many different jobs from cooking to commerce; finance to farming; apps/game development to animal welfare; and brewing to building.

Some jobs might be STEM-specific, for example developing new food and drink products or calculating the likelihood of rain tomorrow. Others might be in a STEM-type workplace, for example a librarian in a medical school or a lawyer in an energy company.

Whether or not young people end up working in a STEM job or workplace, they need the skills which STEM subjects give them.

Everyone needs STEM skills

There are STEM jobs at all levels. STEM skills are useful in almost any job sector you can think of.

The top ten skills which employers of 2020, worldwide, want are:

- Complex problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- People management
- Coordinating with others
- Emotional intelligence
- Judgement and decision making
- Service orientation
- Negotiating
- Flexibility

These are STEM skills.

STEM isn’t about lists of facts to be learned but about ways of thinking
In 2017, STEM-related occupations accounted for around one third (32%) of all occupations in Scotland.

265,000 skilled entrants required annually to meet demand for engineering enterprises through to 2024.

Now

2028

13,000 new IT jobs every year in Scotland for the next decade

51,200 new STEM-related jobs between now and 2028

In UK, shortfall of 400,000 STEM graduates/year

Particularly engineering and IT professionals

265,000 skilled entrants required annually to meet demand for engineering enterprises through to 2024.

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How you can encourage your child

There are many ways for children to learn STEM subjects and skills through Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (from age three to 18). In secondary school this includes national qualifications in subjects such as physics, biology and computing science. There are also Foundation Apprenticeships, National Progression Awards and Skills for Work courses.

You can help your child see the point of STEM subjects and skills:

- Emphasise the message: STEM subjects and STEM-based jobs are for everyone: women and men
- Talk about STEM in a positive way, so you encourage your child to believe in themselves and their ability to understand and enjoy STEM subjects
- Let them know that these subjects are good choices for them and show them how they fit with their interests
- Help them discover the connections between what they do in school and the things they care about. It depends on your child’s age and interests, but it might include how their mobile phone works; how their clothes are made; what goes into designing a computer game; or understanding how chocolate gets into the packet. If they can see the point of, or value of, these subjects, they are more likely to stick with them and do well at them
- Talk with your child about how you use STEM skills in your everyday life or your job
- Look for opportunities to improve your own number skills
- Take the time to find out about STEM jobs and careers and just how many different options there are
- Explore the different routes into these careers such as college, university, apprenticeships etc.
- Encourage your child to feel confident and capable with STEM subjects. You can give them all sorts of experiences and opportunities outside school: watching weather forecasts and environmental programmes together on TV; family outings to science festivals and museums, which are often free; cooking and baking, and talking about the different processes involved or where food has come from

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There’s a huge drop off in the number of girls studying core STEM subjects at the age of 16 (regardless of their academic performance). This limits their chances of a future career in STEM.

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These eight areas need people, at all grades, with STEM skills.

Also, many of the jobs which people used to do, won't be around. Many have already gone or are disappearing fast. Others will change as mobile internet, cloud and robotic technology takes hold. Worldwide, the biggest employment decline is in office and administrative jobs. The biggest increase is in business and financial operations; management; computer and mathematical; architecture and engineering.

So young people need to be flexible, to learn and to keep learning, and to be smart about what they choose to learn. STEM skills are portable: young people can use them in any job. They make young people adaptable: so they can change alongside their changing world.
Parents can help young people opt into STEM subjects by showing the connections between these and the world of work. Young people are more likely to continue with STEM subjects if they see the value of them for their future jobs and careers.

STEM is not a list of facts to be learned: it’s a way of thinking.

STEM skills are important for all fields. Employers want young people with STEM skills, with the right attitudes and aptitude, and who are flexible.

Certain industries and jobs are in decline; others are expanding. The expansion is in fields in which people need to have STEM skills. Not enough people have these skills: so there are vacancies and opportunities.
Being a STEM parent

FIND OUT ABOUT:
STEM subjects, skills and careers

Subjects included in STEM at:
education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/sci43-DefiningSTEM.pdf
and at Parentzone at:
education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-in-scotland/curriculum-areas/stem

What STEM skills are at:
mykidscareer.com

Career information and advice at:
myworldofwork.co.uk

Apprenticeships:
apprenticeships.scot
Apprenticeships in a Nutshell
npfs.org.uk/downloads/apprenticeships-in-a-nutshell

SPEAK TO:
your children, your school, your children’s teachers, careers advisers

TAKE YOUNG PEOPLE TO:
inspiring science places such as museums, science centres and nature/marine places. Many are free, or partly free, or have passes/concessions for children and local people. Have a look around to see what’s around near where you live.

LOOK AT:
ways in which you can learn and work with your child, such as the NPFS ‘Learning Together’ online numeracy tutorials
youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOYfhw7VpEowOhE9fh7EdC6jHG_Tegiai

CHECK OUT:
other nutshells in this series:
• Career conversations
• Career education
• Creativity, enterprise and employability: skills for learning, life and work
• Curriculum for excellence
• Cyber security skills
• Digital skills
• Skills
All these and more at:
npfs.org.uk/downloads

With thanks to:

www.parentforumsScotland.org
enquiries@parentforumsScotland.org
parentforumsScotland

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the National Parent Forum of Scotland

www.parentforumsScotland.org
enquiries@parentforumsScotland.org
parentforumsScotland

JUL 2020