

Get Work Ready

Your Choices



Employer Spotlights

DYW

**EDINBURGH, MIDLOTHIAN
& EAST LOTHIAN**

Developing the
Young Workforce

Christopher Mantle

Edinburgh Community Food
Senior Food and Health Development Officer
Third Sector (Charity)



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, History, and Latin

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I didn't know what I wanted to be when I was at school, so I chose the subjects that I liked. Most subjects offer skills and learning that we can apply in other fields. In such a people-focused, community-oriented job, communication skills are key. Having a good grasp of English language, and the ability to both speak clearly and to listen well, is important both for group work and with colleagues. Studying History and English at school also taught me to write well and this has proven massively beneficial for writing crucial funding applications and reports. It's also important for boiling down and communicating complex nutritional messages to community groups and in training course delivery. Maths and Biology would have been very useful for my role as a Nutritionist but I wasn't very good at them at school so didn't take them!

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I continued with History, studying at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. By that time, I'd become disillusioned with the prospect of a career in history and wanted to do something with my life that helped other people in real ways. While still not really knowing what I wanted to do, I lived abroad for a few years, during which time I became increasingly serious about Nutrition. Whilst abroad, I took Open University modules in science, before returning to the UK to take a degree in the subject. While at university, I volunteered with the charity that is now employing me!

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, communication, time management, integrity.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I taught English in South Korea for 4 years.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

If you don't yet know where you want to go, choose the subjects that you're good at and get the best marks you can. They'll teach you plenty of transferable skills and also to study, focus, and meet deadlines (also vital skills in life). In my experience, most employers are more interested in your skills, demeanour, and experience than whether you took French or German, or what marks you got. The door to learning is always open and if you, like me, change your mind and take a new path, then it's possible to retrain at any age.

Dina Subasciaki

Edinburgh Women's Aid
CEDAR Co-ordinator (Children & Young People)
Third Sector (Charity)



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Modern Studies and History

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English developed excellent communication skills, I have to be able to read, understand, interpret information critically. Modern Studies gave me the grounding in understanding the complexity of social issues and the inequalities faced by individuals and groups. Modern Studies has allowed me to thoroughly analyse our society and the world around us. History helped me to understand the circumstances that created the world we live in. We can look to history, investigate, and question what has come before and how this impacts the way we live and work.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After I left high school, I went to Edinburgh College and completed a HNC in Childcare and Education. I was in full-time employment from the age of 18 -22 years old. I then returned to formal education at the age of 22, and achieved a BA in Social Sciences from Edinburgh Napier University. I have been employed in the community/third sector/charitable sectors in Edinburgh and New Zealand from the age of 24. During my employment, I gained a Masters of Science in Policy Studies from the University of Edinburgh.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My job requires me to work closely with mothers and children, carry out assessments and run 12 week therapeutic group sessions with children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. I need to have integrity, be nonjudgemental, compassionate, understanding and respect the client's situations, lived experiences and stories. I have to have excellent communication skills in order to listen to and relay sensitive information in a clear, calm and concise way. I have to have excellent written communication skills to record the outcomes of each participant to our managers and various funders to show achievements and areas that could be improved, be able to identify these areas, problem solve and communicate our future plans and strategies. I have to facilitate a group which requires flexibility, leadership skills, good communication and organisational skills. I have to think on my feet and problem solve. I work with a multitude of organisations, so networking is key to this role.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Cleaning up a kiwifruit orchard

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick subjects that interest you and that you feel excited about what you might learn.

Chris Bruce

NHS Lothian
Head of Equalities & Human Rights
Health and Care Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, Biology, Chemistry and what in England we called General Studies - a bit like Modern Studies.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Well... I do need to use and interpret data, for example statistics about staff and patient experience. But mainly, apart from helping me to train as a nurse, I don't use my sciences - just an enquiring mind. Good science teaching develops that.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Community Development, home care, learning disability nursing, community care planning, commissioning health services, organisation development, voluntary work, u.lab

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, Curiosity, Integrity

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Maybe this one - there are perhaps 20 of us in NHS Scotland, which employs 140,000 people

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Do what you love, love what you do. Doors will open when you need them to - if you let them.

Mandy Rawlinson-Tyszko

Aberdeen Standard Investments
Head of Management and Strategy (Europe, Middle East & Africa)
Financial Services



Aberdeen
Standard
Investments

Which subjects did you take at school?

RMPS, Business Management, Modern Studies, English.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Having an understanding of different cultures and religious beliefs from my RMP studies has been a massive asset in the work that I currently do. I have spent time in India & Hong Kong, and have developed strategy for Japan, where cultures are very different to what we experience in the Western World. Morality and integrity also play a large part in my role, where we are regulated and required to always consider fairness and doing the right thing, especially as we look after and make decisions with other peoples' money.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I am a qualified lawyer (LL.B Scots law - University of Dundee) and am also qualified to practice in England & Wales. I have undertaken executive study at Harvard Business School and Edinburgh Business School.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-Solving, Team Work, Communication, Resilience, Leadership, Integrity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Teamwork is key - I need to understand very technical issues and I rely on my network of subject-matter experts in areas like Tax, Compliance, Finance and Investments to be able to do that. Without my team, I wouldn't be successful in my role. It's OK not to know everything, as long as you are open to asking others for help.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I used to work in a Bingo Hall and a Butcher Shop.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

It's ok not to know what you want to be, or which path you want your career to take. If this is you, chose subjects that give you a broad spectrum of skills and allow you to try things out, to understand what you like, and you have a passion for. Once you find what you enjoy, it's easier to think about what career might be right for you. I didn't know that I wanted to be a lawyer, but I'm glad that my subject choices gave me this opportunity.

Lindsay Anderson

Healthcare Chaplain
NHS Lothian
Healthcare



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, German, History and not forgetting Latin!

How have these subjects helped in your career?

All my subjects are useful, particularly English, which developed my communication skills, while the rest gave me a good basis to go on to learning more later on.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I trained as a Registered General Nurse and then as a Midwife. I really enjoyed working with people and being part of a team. While taking a break to bring up my children, I volunteered for various charities and eventually worked for a local children's charity. I found myself drawn to working with people professionally again and, because I was interested in spirituality, I trained to become an Interfaith Minister and completed an Honours degree in Theology at Aberdeen University. This combined with my transferable skills from Nursing and Midwifery led me into Spiritual Care and becoming a Healthcare Chaplain.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Before I started my Nurse training, I had a summer job at a whisky bottling plant, working on a production line sticking labels on day after day. The people I worked with were great fun and helped me become less shy and reserved. I still don't like whisky though!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Take subjects that you are interested in, subjects that will help you follow your chosen path when you are older. Don't always follow the crowd. I think subjects that you choose now are a foundation from which we grow and expand our interests and experience. Life is a constant learning experience!

Meg Binns

6VT Edinburgh City Youth Café
Lead Youth Practitioner
Third Sector (Charity)



Which subjects did you take at school?

Outdoor Education, Health and Social Care, Religious Studies, Art

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Health and Social Care enabled me to look into support and caring roles, and it also helped me to develop skills needed within a caring profession. These skills led me to volunteer in my teen years, where I found an interest in youth and community work and ended up studying in my undergraduate degree. This then directed me to my further studies and then onto career. Religious Studies helped as I have worked within communities with various religions and diverse heritage. I have utilised art in my supporting roles as it can be a way to help young people express themselves.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After finishing school, I took two gap years, where I worked in France, Portugal, and then in Cornwall. All my gap year jobs were within the hospitality industry. I then went onto study Youth and Community Development at University. A university placement led me into my first paid youth and community job, which I did alongside my studies I then went on to complete a Masters Degree in Equality and Human Rights and worked part-time. After this I worked within a youth and community organisation. I then relocated to Edinburgh, and was given the opportunity to become a Lead Practitioner on a brand new youth service. Alongside my job I am currently on two organisations' Board of Trustees, which I love!

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

One example of a skill I use often is creativity - I like to develop new creative ideas for group work and supporting young people.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked in a nightclub in Cornwall.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Do something you enjoy and try to avoid any pressure from family or friends. This is your life, so you need to be the one who makes the decisions. Remember what you learn in your subjects and that the skills you will pick up will be transferable to future studies and jobs.

Sarah White

Edinburgh City Council
French and Spanish Teacher
education



• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Which subjects did you take at school?

French, Spanish, English, Maths, Biology, Geography, History, Chemistry.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

All of my subjects have provided useful in my career. In subjects like maths and chemistry, I developed my analytical and problem-solving skills which have allowed me to see things from a different perspective. This is something that is important when learning how other countries use language. The languages and social subjects that I studied at school sparked my interest in learning about and understanding other cultures, and these are things I share with my pupils today.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went to university to study French and History. After realising my love for Spanish, I changed degrees and after graduating, I worked in Spain. Living different parts of Spain has provided me with more resilience and confidence in meeting new people. Plus, the weather was much better than Scotland!

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

In my job as a teacher, I've found that my problem-solving skills and my ability to adapt to situations quickly have been very important. When learning languages, communication is key. In order to motivate my pupils to do this effectively, I have had to lead them by example and showcase my own communication skills (something that I continue to develop even to this day!).

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I taught English using virtual reality software!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose something that you think you will enjoy, this will allow you to throw yourself into anything that is presented to you. I would also recommend giving yourself a variety of subjects, if possible, and to look into any future career plans before choosing. It's important that you pick what's right for you and your future, rather than what your friends are taking.

Kenny Holt

Vine Trust
Medical & Marine Lead
Third Sector (Charity)



VineTrust

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Business Studies, History, and Modern Studies – surprisingly, I didn't take any languages, although I wish I did! I learnt to speak Spanish as an adult by living for an extended period of time in South America.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Yes, I've found having studied a wide range of different subjects has been very helpful.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I went to University after school to study Business Studies. After University, I initially went to South America on a 1-year volunteer expedition to be involved in charity work and landed up living there for 15 years, before coming back to Scotland to work with Vine Trust.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, adaptability, integrity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I am in regular communication with our partners in Peru, discussing a wide range of topics. Although some of the team speak English, others cannot. As a result, being able to write or speak in Spanish to the team allows me to communicate clearly and arrive at decisions more quickly than if it had to be done through a translator. A big part of language is also understanding the culture. You need to be able to understand the context of place and people you are communicating with, and the nuances within the language to make sure you are speaking/writing in the right way.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked as security officer for a few concerts at the Barrowlands in Glasgow.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Study subjects you enjoy, that you engage with. Don't put too much pressure on yourself. There will be opportunities to learn new skills in the future.

Julie Gillespie

Connectology
Director
Leisure/Health & Fitness



CONNECTOLOGY

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, French, Modern Studies, Biology, Chemistry

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English has helped for writing business cases, proposals and training content. French has helped when I go to European conferences.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Studied BA Sport in the Community at Strathclyde University, and continued to work in this field. Sports performance & coaching then moved to the business side of the industry before establishing my own company in business coaching & training for the leisure sector.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I use my communication and interpersonal skills daily, particularly when I am meeting new clients and managing existing relationships. I use teamwork regularly, as many businesses need you to be able to collaborate with a number of stakeholders to achieve the best result for their organisation. I need to be organised when managing each of my client's projects to ensure I meet deadlines and don't miss key information. Finally, problem-solving and resilience are skills that I use daily, particularly in the past year where we have all had to pivot our business and ways of working. If you can solve a customer's problem, and be part of the solution, you will always have a job - this is what I try to do every day!

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Picking Kiwi fruits!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Keep your options open, choose subjects you enjoy as you will always find it easier to work hard when you like the subject matter. Try to choose subjects where the learning can be transferred to a number of sectors/careers.

Sam Wilson

Forrit Technology Ltd.
Apprentice Web Developer
Technology Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Getting high enough grades in my subjects to be accepted at college helped me, as it was college that was the first time I'd done anything related to my current career.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I studied Zoology at university, Computing was never a passion of mine, though I did enjoy the odd video game. After some unfortunate medical developments, I dropped out of university and worked in a call centre full-time for two years. I wanted out of the call centre, but found that my ex-peers from my zoology days were all struggling to find jobs, so I decided to learn something practical and employable, and applied for a HND in Web Development.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-Solving, Team Work, Communication, Curiosity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I am currently working with the QA team, and when faced with a new product from the development team, I have to think of the best way to test it. This is the problem-solving aspect of the job - figuring out what I can do to this website to ensure it meets the standards are clients are expecting. Curiosity also plays a huge part in QA, as "what happens if I enter something unexpected". Naturally, when I find a means of breaking a website, it's up to me to pass on details of the issue to the developer who created it. No one wants to be told the thing they built isn't good enough, so communication skills are important, by maintaining positive relationships with the people build the systems, breaking things becomes an important and valued part of the collaborative process that is web development.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Babysitter for a baby monkey - paid in chewed up leaves by its mother.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Don't overthink it - I'm in a career that has very little to do with the 'three sciences' route I went down in high school, or even the route I went down at university. Do whatever you want, but whatever that is, do well - that's what sets you up for inter-disciplinary success.

Katrina Terry

Morrison Construction
Graduate Quantity Surveyor
construction sector



Morrison
Construction

Which subjects did you take at school?

Admin & IT, Design and Manufacture, Graphic Design, English, Art, Physics and Geography.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

As a Quantity Surveyor, I use Admin every day. It has saved me so much time from trying to organise information as a QS. I was always more interested in the practical side of subjects and as a QS, I get to see this every day on site. I think English helped a lot with understanding Construction contracts and with networking in the industry, as you always have to read between the lines.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went straight to university to do a degree in Quantity Surveying. I had done a careers event in my school that recommended careers based upon my favourite subjects and construction popped up! University really helped with networking and developing the knowledge needed to go into the construction industry. We were given a lot of support and practical experience, site visits, and industry networking. I really enjoyed university and after an internship, I was keen to join another contractor, so I joined Morrison's as a Graduate QS.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, communication, adaptability

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Construction is all about communication and team building, you need to know what everyone else is doing so, if an issue comes up, then everyone knows the impacts on each individual and how to mitigate the impact on the team. Every day is different in construction and being adaptable is key as you never can predict everything that is going to happen next, that's what makes it so exciting!

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I used to volunteer part-time at a cat shelter.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Subjects are very interchangeable so just because you take one now does not fix you into any one area. A lot of companies are just looking for a passion in what you are applying for. Don't think that you can't do any career because of stereotypes you have heard, take subjects that you have a genuine interest in and want to learn more about. Remember careers change all the time and it is ok to not have a plan yet!

Libby Hartley

SJS Property Services
Bench Hand Joiner
Construction Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

CDT, English, Drama, Maths, Home Economics, PE, History

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I use maths daily, calculating measurements from the drawings provided to the timber or material being used for the job. CDT was a huge help as I learnt how to read technical drawings and to visualise what the end product would look like, as well as to problem-solve to ensure I could achieve the best possible outcome. PE was useful, as I am always on my feet, walking about the workshop or up the stairs to talk to the CAD drawers about the work I am undertaking.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

At high school, I knew that I wanted to become a joiner and I was fortunate to meet someone from a recruitment agency, who passed my CV to the company I am with now. I completed a four year apprenticeship, which was a hybrid of workshop and college training.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, leadership

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

The skills I have which I use daily are my ability to problem solve and work as a member of a team. This means that we can deliver bespoke work to our clients from conception to completion.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I used to clean up at a local golf range when I was still at school.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Think about the subjects you enjoy the most, the ones that excite you and do not dread, then speak to someone who can help you look at what options these subjects may open for you when you leave school. Also, think about if you are academic or practical and choose based on what you really like doing.

Andy Matthews

Forestry and Land Scotland
Forest Work Supervisor
Forestry Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, Physics, English, Modern Studies, Computer Studies, Craft & Design.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Maths – I deal with numbers constantly in my role, for example when calculating timber volumes, specifying quantities of materials required for work, and developing formulas for spreadsheets to review data. Computer studies – I regularly use various different software applications to look at maps, communicate with colleagues and to develop work programmes for staff. Craft & Design Technology – This subject gave me the basic knowledge and understanding of using tools correctly and their application.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Blind and Awning fitter - Petrol station sales assistant - Landscaper - Arboricultural contractor - Dutch Elm Survey assistant for Local Authority - Gardener/ Grounds person for Local Authority - Forest Craftsperson - Forest Work Supervisor.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, teamwork, communication, time management, adaptability.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Traffic census taker.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Don't worry too much. Career paths are not always clear at this stage, so you should figure out what you really enjoy doing as a subject. Maths, Geography and a sound knowledge of IT systems are key for a role in forestry, but we have people joining us from all different backgrounds and not necessarily with these skills. I did not do too well at school but I ended up getting a job that I really enjoy and that I find rewarding and worthwhile.

Fiona Gillespie

Rathbones Investment Management
Head of Charities, Scotland
Investment



Rathbones
Look forward

Which subjects did you take at school?

I was mainly focused on Maths, English and Sciences.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

The analytical aspects of maths are key elements, especially as maths is an important component for professional exams. You don't have to be a super mathematician, but you do need a good grounding.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I have worked at three organisations since I left school, all in the investment industry. My roles have evolved and changed, starting at a fairly low level and working my way up. That has certainly been a good approach, as you learn the basics and build up on that, then evolve further. All the time spent gaining experience and knowledge is vital to use at the next stage. I also sat various professional exams.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Organisation, adaptability, curiosity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Adaptability and organisation skills are not only key to working with a client base, but also in a role which takes in information from many sources to analyse and act upon. Curiosity is important for understanding investment opportunities for our clients, because you have to ask the right questions to make sure you have a really clear knowledge and deep understanding of the companies and strategies you are investing your clients' money in.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Not so much of an unusual job, but in my early days I would spend at least an hour a day of stuffing envelopes with client contract notes!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Do what you enjoy! If you enjoy your subjects, you will do well and have a natural pathway to a successful career. When you enter the world of work, you can generally learn what you need for that role then. There are some exceptions clearly, but stick with what you like.

Fraser Risk

Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick
Trainee Building Services Engineer
Construction



Balfour Beatty

Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, Music, Media, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Drama, Computing Technology, Modern Studies

How have these subjects helped in your career?

The mathematics and computing subjects taken at school have helped me in developing my skills in my career.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I spent 3 years working as a Butcher full-time, a role which I previously been working in for 2 years part-time while still at school. During this time, I worked my way up to a supervisory role. Following this, I switched jobs and was employed as a bottled gas engineer/forklift driver/In-yard truck driver for 2 years. It was during this employment that I realised I truly wanted to work in the engineering industry, so I returned to education and studied Electrical Engineering at college for 2 years. From this, I gained many skills in electrical installation which enabled me to join Balfour Beatty as a Trainee Building Services Engineer.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, team work, communication, organisation, time management, leadership

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My skills assist me in my day-to-day work in the use of applications such as Microsoft Office, including Excel, PowerPoint and Word, and in other applications. Some of my other skills assist me in understanding the installation methods of mechanical and electrical services in the construction industry.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I once had a job folding graduation gowns for a week.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

There is no rush to realise what you want to do in life, what is for you won't pass you. I was 22 when I realised I wanted to work in the engineering industry. What I wouldn't do is just sit around waiting for something to happen - get out there and work in any industry because you might just meet the person or do a small task that triggers your interest in your future career path.

Dr Lisa Davies

Scottish Water
Senior Scientist
Water Quality



Which subjects did you take at school?

Chemistry, Biology, Physics, English, Maths, Information Technology and German.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Having a good foundation in Science and Maths meant that I was able to build on this knowledge and apply this into my working laboratory career. As a keen gamer, I am comfortable with technology and aware of programs available to help me to keep up to speed in this increasingly modern world. Using my skills, I have been able to help ensure that safe drinking water is supplied to everybody living in Scotland.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went on to study a BSc Forensic Science degree. From here, I worked as Scientist in an Environmental Chemistry testing laboratory. After finding I really enjoyed this subject area, I went on to undertake a PhD research project looking into the application of Ultrasonic Technology to Waste Water Treatment. Upon completing this, I then started working for Scottish Water as a Scientist in the Inorganic laboratory, and after two years in this position, I moved into the Senior Scientist role.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, team work, communication, time management, adaptability.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Working in a scientific background, adaptability is important with changes happening in science at a fast pace. Problem-solving is crucial in the role as a Scientist, in order to resolve any issues with laboratory instrumentation. As we work together as a team, it is important that we work well together and are able to effectively communicate in order to achieve our aims.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Shop assistant in a Launderette.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Avoid following the crowd and choosing subjects because your friends have chosen them. My advice would be to select subjects that interest you and those that you have a passion for. It is also good to try to think ahead, and see how these subject choices will fit into your preferred job prospects in the future, and what route you could take to get into your desired work area. Don't be afraid to be ambitious, and set those goals in life.

Cameron Wallace

NHS Lothian
Respiratory Physiology Assistant
Healthcare Science



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, PE, Information Systems.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I use skills and knowledge from studying History at school when I investigate objects and records in our collections and write new school workshops, tours and resources. I use the knowledge and approaches I learned from studying Physics, Biology and Geography when I'm explaining how things work. Studying Art and Design at school has also proved useful when I'm working with designers and illustrators to produce trails and digital resources for our website.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Upon leaving school, I enrolled in a Biomedical Sciences degree course, later specialising in Physiological Sciences. After graduating, I spent a short time travelling through Europe before applying for my current position within the NHS, where I have been able to develop skills within the role through both in-house and external courses.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, organisation, time management.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

The key transferable skills involved in my job are communication, planning (e.g. time management) and teamwork. I use communication skills when I'm talking with visitors, doing presentations for different audiences, writing workshops, resources and website content and when I'm working with people from other departments or organisations. I use planning and problem-solving skills when I'm working on projects - making sure they're completed on time and meet our objectives.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Goal Line Technology System testing which involved working in conjunction with Hawk-Eye Innovations Ltd, UEFA, FIFA and the German Football Association (DFB).

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose subjects which you enjoy and are interested in learning more about. Listen to your teachers to find out more about what your strengths are. Have a think about practical questions like - whether you like working outdoors, prefer working on your own or as part of a team? Remember there is not just one route to most jobs and so don't stress if you suddenly realise you might need a subject you haven't chosen later down the line - you can always pick it up again later at college.

Lucy Bull

National Museums Scotland
Learning Enabler
Culture & Heritage Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

History, Physics, Biology, Maths, English, Geography, Art & Design and French

How have these subjects helped in your career?

My job is to help visitors learn more about the museum's collections. I use skills and knowledge from studying History at school when I investigate objects and records in our collections and write new school workshops, tours and resources. I use the knowledge and approaches I learned from studying Physics, Biology and Geography when I'm explaining how things work e.g. running experiments and science demos with visitors. Studying Art and Design at school has also proved useful when I'm working with designers and illustrators to produce trails and digital resources for our website.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went to university to study Archaeology and Anthropology. I then worked for a short time as a field archaeologist before getting a part-time job in the Visitor Experience team at the National Museum of Flight. At the same time, I did a postgraduate degree at university which involved researching how school groups interacted with objects at museums across Scotland. This, along with running tours, science shows and birthday parties at the National Museum of Flight, was excellent preparation for my current role in the Learning and Engagement team at the National Museum of Scotland.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, communication, time management, adaptability, creativity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

The key transferable skills involved in my job are communication, planning (e.g. time management) and teamwork. I use communication skills when I'm talking with visitors, doing presentations for different audiences, writing workshops, resources and website content and when I'm working with people from other departments or organisations. I use planning and problem-solving skills when I'm working on projects - making sure they're completed on time and meet our objectives. I work as part of a big team, and so team-working skills are an essential part of the job.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I was a field archaeologist - getting very muddy, digging up the remains of medieval Aberdeen.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose subjects which you enjoy and are interested in learning more about. Listen to your teachers to find out more about what your strengths are. Have a think about practical questions like - whether you like working outdoors, prefer working on your own or as part of a team? This will help you think about the kind of job you might like to do in the future, which will make picking subjects easier. Remember there is not just one route to most jobs and so don't stress if you suddenly realise you might need a subject you haven't chosen later down the line - you can always pick it up again later at college.

David McLean

Edinburgh Leisure
Head of Operations Development
Health, Wellbeing, Sport & Physical Activity



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Modern Studies, PE, Religious Education & Science.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Science really helped with my HND in Sports Coaching with Development, it certainly made a difference with energy systems and getting a grasp on Anatomy & Physiology. When I was 21 years old, I moved to Saudi Arabia to work in a gym. This is where having knowledge of religion eased my integration and transition in the way of life there, as well as building relationships. Most of all, PE supported my understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing and the impact that being physically active makes.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I attended Edinburgh Telford College and, through a work placement, I secured a role working in a health club. I then worked abroad in gyms and on private yachts. I came back to Edinburgh and started personal training, working for a private club as well as running my own PT business. I started working for Edinburgh Leisure in 2008 as Assistant Health and Fitness Manager and have been in my current role for 18 months (though 12 of these have been through the pandemic).

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, prioritising, problem-solving, adaptability, resilience, creativity, curiosity, different communication styles.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My role is primarily managing a team who manage different areas of the business. Some days, it can be problem solving, other days, long term planning and some where I am attending events, presenting, or looking at new equipment/developments that are business opportunities.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Sorting Office for one shift with Royal Mail.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Put in the effort for the grades you need to help you secure a job doing what you want to do. Enjoy your job, the people you work with and find a good work life balance. Always keep time for physical activity for your own physical and mental health.

Deborah Taylor

Mercat Tours
Sales Executive
Tourism Sector



Mercat Tours

Which subjects did you take at school?

Home Economics: Lifestyle & Consumer Technology, English, Maths, Modern Studies, Information Systems.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

These subjects gave me the basic skills I required to be able to understand the behaviour of the public when purchasing goods, composing emails with competency (e.g. spelling/grammar), Cash handling/sales/end of day reconciliation & use of a computer to create spreadsheets.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went on to Edinburgh's Telford College to study Dental Nursing. I was a Dental Nurse for 10 years before moving into Tourism. I decided to switch profession because I've always had an underlying passion for Tourism & Attractions and wanted the opportunity to experience working in this industry.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem solving, team work, communication, organisation, time management.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Working with the rest of the Mercat team in order to establish which tasks need to be completed. Looking to the week ahead via Outlook Calendar to check meeting/appointment times & planning work around any scheduled events. Ensuring that I arrive at work on time each day & that I prioritize my workload so that the most important/urgent tasks are completed first.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Flyering for a Ghost Tour company. I had to walk The Royal Mile carrying a tall sign, dressed in black with a fake severed finger in my pocket, to 'show what happened to the last person who entered the underground vaults'.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

I would advise you to consider English, Maths & a computer/IT course, as these subjects will provide you with the basic skills you'll require in everyday employment. Most companies are looking for good communication skills & experience of using Microsoft Word, Outlook and Excel. Then I would suggest taking subjects that you are passionate about and think might benefit you in your chosen field of work.

Sophie Taylor

The Broughton Hotel
Commis Chef
Hospitality Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Professional Cookery, Chemistry, Health and Food Technology, Art and Design, Mathematics

How have these subjects helped in your career?

They prepare you for what's involved in a kitchen, being a chef isn't just about cooking there is creativity, learning about reactions of different foods put together and also knowing how to calculate profit and loss as well as menu costing.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Academy's course part time in 5th and 6th year then college to learn the practical side of the kitchen and now university to understand management

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Team-work, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, creativity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Service is a fast-paced environment so you need to be quick, but also manage your time well to ensure that your food is prepared at the same time as your team's.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Food runner for Hearts Football Club.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

If you are unsure what is the career path for you, keep a variety of subjects but still make sure you enjoy the ones you choose.

Willie McPherson

Vine Trust
Chief Executive
Third Sector (Charity)



VineTrust

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Modern Studies, Maths, Chemistry, Economic History, Geography, Physics.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

In many ways, these were traditional subjects when I was at school, with the aim being to provide a broad grounding for future employment opportunities. Personally, they have provided exactly that, particularly in relation to understanding finance and global economic disparities.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I entered the voluntary sector, where I have worked throughout my career, which was a natural development from my wider volunteering as a teenager and young adult. I have always enjoyed working with people.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, leadership, coaching.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Throughout my school years, communication and expressing ideas was encouraged in most subjects through discussion groups, extra-curricular activities in team sports, and representing my school through the debating society and various community projects. Key in all subjects was communication and listening to others and, in debates, presenting a compelling argument! These are skills and attributes which have served me well throughout my career, and are every day tools both in my work as a manager and in representing my organisation and its partners, both nationally and internationally.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Project leader for International Youth Year and sending unemployed volunteers to Ethiopia and Sudan to participate in famine relief.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

If you are clear on what you want to do, then seek guidance from teachers in choosing your subjects. Otherwise, keep things broad in relation to future training course requirements, and don't regard practical training or apprenticeships as in any way second best - often they provide fantastic opportunities with long-term career prospects.

Jennifer Neil

Stewart Investors
Investment Communications Associate
Investment Marketing



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Art, Film & TV, Modern History, Biology

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English has perhaps been the most versatile subject I studied and provided me with skills I have relied on in all sorts of ways, from writing essays at university, to preparing a CV and completing job applications, communicating with clients and colleagues, and in my current role, writing and proofreading. I enjoy writing and reading so much that part doesn't even feel like a job! Having a background in art has also been useful in my current role which includes preparing financial presentations and trying to think of creative ways to visually present investment concepts with impact.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I completed a degree in visual art. I then travelled and worked in different jobs, one of which was working in client administration for an investment company in Edinburgh. From there, I moved through various roles in the investment sphere and now have found a place in marketing, which is a varied and creative role where I can really put to use the knowledge and skills I have learnt along the way.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, team work, communication, time management, creativity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Good communication skills are important for writing and editing content for an external audience but also necessary for clearly articulating your thoughts and ideas to colleagues on a daily basis. In order to meet our many deadlines, time management and creative problem-solving is key, and being able to work as part of a team is really useful to bring together different ideas and solutions to produce the best marketing material possible.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Perhaps taxi cab controller. I wasn't very good at it. There might still be people waiting on those taxis!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Focus on what you enjoy the most and where your talents lie. Your natural instincts are probably correct! It is a good idea to then investigate where those subjects could take you in practical terms. What jobs appeal to you? Is that job or role in demand? How do you get there in terms of what you need to study? It can be a lot of pressure to choose the right subjects so it's also good to remember that you can change your mind along the way, a lot of skills are transferrable and there are lots of different career paths.

John Campbell

Museums Galleries Scotland
Senior Skills Development Manager
Cultural and Heritage



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Modern Studies, Spanish, Physical Education, Geography

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English has given me a better understanding of language and how we use language to communicate with others. It is important to be able to adapt language and vocabulary to suit your audience.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I haven't followed a traditional pathway. I left school and attended college to study Health & Fitness and Sports Coaching and, while I found this enjoyable, it was not a pathway I ended up pursuing. I worked in various hospitality management positions before taking up a role in hospitality recruitment. I continued in this role for some time before moving to work with people who faced additional barriers to employment. I ended my time in employability leading a team designing national employability programmes, which led me to where I am now at MGS developing skills programmes for those working in the Heritage sector.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, leadership

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My role involves engaging with various organisations, actively listening to their needs, and developing and planning skills programmes in response that satisfy their requirements.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked a full summer picking fruit in Perthshire, and loved it.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Base your choices around your interests and what you are passionate about. What I would say is more important than subject choices is to develop skills including your communication, confidence, and transferable skills as these skills will serve you for longer and be more valuable in life.

Sharon E Sørensen

Wee Spark
Animator/Illustrator
Creative Arts Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Art, English, Maths, Technical Drawing (now comes under Design and Manufacture/Graphic Communication), French, Geography, Chemistry.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

My art education is clearly very important and something that I use every day. English is also very important in helping me to write scripts, develop characters and story outlines, and to write pitches and funding applications. Maths was never my strong point in school, but I use it in a practical sense every day for things like budgeting. It is also important in an artistic way in working out animation timing, rhythms of musical scores (Soundtracks), and even alongside Technical Drawing for working out page placements and safe printing areas in illustration.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I first attended a Further Education college to hone my art skills and build a portfolio, and also to spend some time working out what I wanted to get out of a career in art. I then went onto study a degree in Visual Communication at Edinburgh College of Art. I have since worked in a freelance capacity in both Edinburgh and London, filling any gaps in employment with a variety of teaching film, illustration, and photography positions. I continue to balance teaching and making to this day and love both aspects of my job.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

My days are very variable. Some days, I am looking for my next client or job, and am concentrating on updating and sharing my portfolio and show-reel links. Other days I have paperwork to do, like budgets and schedules. Most days, I am writing and drawing.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Networking, problem-solving, communication, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Breeding racehorses.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose the things that you enjoy or that excite you the most. They're more likely to lead onto discovering more things that you enjoy, that you maybe weren't aware even existed. Remember that university isn't for everyone, there are lots of people working successfully in my industry who have never been to university. Take our time and be open to trying new things. It's not a race.

Gayanne Potter

Gayanne Potter Voice Over Artist Ltd.
Voice Over Artist
Media/Creative Industries



Gayanne Potter
Voice Over Artist

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Drama, Maths, Science.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English and Drama have been key to both my creativity and my ability to have good communication by both verbal and written means.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

BA in Dramatic Studies at Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, creativity

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I have to work to a fast turnaround schedule and be ready to adapt to the requests of each project at very little notice. I have to deliver these on time and also maintain and establish good contacts and working relationships to encourage return custom.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Acting in a video about a prawn shelling machine while waiting for my next acting role.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose things that you enjoy rather than what you feel you must study. You can make changes later in life. Work hard and get good grades, but also see learning as more than just qualifications. When I told my high school I wanted to be a voice actor, they had no idea what to do with me! And here I am. A higher in Chemistry simply showed that I can listen, study, and learn, which allowed me to meet the criteria for a degree subject that has NOTHING to do with Chemistry. You are not the sum of your grades.

Sally Chalmers

Historic Environment Scotland
Learning Officer
Heritage Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

I studied drama, computing, history, psychology and sciences.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Drama gave me confidence in presenting to large groups and taught me how to craft and tell stories. Computing gave me confidence with technology, which has become even more important during the pandemic. History taught me about the past and how to critically analyse sources to find the stories they tell. Psychology taught me about people and how they think and learn, which contributes to how I teach them. I took science subjects like chemistry and biology, because I was interested in how the world worked. They helped me to think more about how sites can contribute to learning in other subjects - for example, we now have a whole forensics activity that looks at skeletons found on our sites.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I didn't get into the university I wanted, so I decided to take a gap year. I worked as a waitress, volunteered in a museum, and reapplied to universities, this time getting in to study history. During university, I volunteered as Front of House Staff for a museum, which eventually became a paid role. Through volunteering, I was able to find out more about different roles in the museum and decided that I enjoyed working in heritage. I then got a paid year-long traineeship as an archive assistant, where I developed learning materials. After my traineeship, I joined the learning team at Historic Environment Scotland, first as a learning assistant at Edinburgh Castle and progressing to my current role as a Learning Officer.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, Communication, Organisation, Adaptability, Creativity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I have to be creative as some people can see old buildings as boring. It's my job to think up creative ways to get people excited about the historic environment and the stories it tells. In order to tell these stories well, I have got to have excellent communication skills. I also use communication and teamwork skills as I work as part of a large team and often work with freelancers and volunteers.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Edinburgh Trams Information Officer - I stood on a model tram in Leith and answered questions about the tram project.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick subjects which make you curious and excited, every subject has transferable skills that will help you find a job or in further education, so focus on what interests you and makes you want to learn more.

Jessica Morris

The City of Edinburgh Council
Buildings Standards Surveyor
Construction Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, English, Physics, Biology, Computing, Product Design.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

By covering a good range of subjects in school, I have been able to meet the entry requirements for both of the career paths I have taken, despite them being completely different. English skills are an essential foundation for any job, and I am able to communicate with people in a professional manner, as well as being able to understand technical information and produce written reports. Maths, Computing, Biology, and Physics have all helped me in my career with the ability to analyse information and problem solve.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I was accepted onto a three year Merchant Navy training programme. Similar to an apprenticeship, I spent time at University studying the theoretical side of Marine Engineering, and time on-board Merchant Navy ships getting on-the-job training. I spent a few years at Sea as a Marine Engineer once I qualified before I decided that I wanted a more regular job where I wasn't away for long periods of time. I applied for a four year Graduate Apprenticeship in Construction, where I work for the Council four days a week as a Building Standards Surveyor and spend one day a week studying at University. I have one year left before I get my degree! Both of these career pathways allowed me to study towards a qualification at the same time as working in the industry which really helped my development.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Good communication is required in any job. In my role, I must be able to effectively convey information to different people and adjust my language depending on who I am speaking to. The ability to network has proven to be the most useful skill for me, as building good relationships with people has presented so many great opportunities, and it makes my job much easier when I have people I can go to for help. Every job requires some level of organisation, time management, and adaptability. There are different aspects to my job with changing levels of complexity or urgency, so I have to be able to assess my workload and prioritise tasks to make sure all my work is completed on time.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I was an Engineering Officer on-board a Rescue Ship in the North Sea!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Think about what subjects you're really good at or really enjoy doing and use that as a starting point. Spend some time researching jobs you think you'd like to do and the different pathways that are available, as this can give a good indication of the sort of subjects you'll need. If you're unsure of what you want to do just yet, think about taking a broad range of core subjects (maths, English, sciences, languages) as these tend to form the entry requirements for most career paths and helps to keep your options open.

Darius Wilson

Morrison Construction
Graduate Quantity Surveyor
Construction Sector



Morrison 
Construction

Which subjects did you take at school?

My grades at school weren't that great, but they gave me a solid base to work from. The subjects that I chose were: Maths, English, Accounts and Finance, Music, History, French, Home Economics, and Physics.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

The two key subjects that have assisted in my career are: Maths, which even at a basic level has helped me to develop the skills needed to complete the QS University course, and Accounts & Finance, which was probably the subject that really sparked my interest in Quantity Surveying. It was the first subject that I excelled in, and a lot of areas of the subject are relevant to my current role as a QS.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I left school in 2007 and worked as a Labourer, a Chef, and then as a Debt Collector. I wanted to further my education and prove to myself that I was intelligent enough to go to university and achieve something. I studied the NC Built Environment and then the HND in Quantity Surveying before going to study a BSc (hons) in Quantity Surveying.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, organisation, time management, resilience, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I integrate all of these skills into my everyday tasks as a Graduate Quantity Surveyor. One example would be in our re-measurement of works when paying our subcontractors. We must ensure that we are paying them what they are owed and promptly, we therefore implement numerous skills to ensure this is achieved.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Chef.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick subjects you will enjoy and excel at, don't feel pressured to pick subjects you won't enjoy just because your friends are doing them. Do some research into the sort of jobs you feel that you would enjoy doing and find out what sort of subjects are needed for these roles. Most of all, remember to speak with your parents and teachers for their advice.

Cameron Hanratty

Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick
Apprentice Electrician
Construction Sector



Balfour Beatty

Which subjects did you take at school?

Design and Manufacturing (Advanced Higher), English (Higher), Physical Education (Higher), Maths (National 5), Physics (National 5).

How have these subjects helped in your career?

The subjects that I studied when I was in school have helped me in my career by giving me the understanding of how to read and understand the theory behind the work I produce, with Maths and Physics have given me the understanding to work out my cable calculations, and the theory behind them. My Design and Manufacturing qualification has helped me to have a better understanding of how to read and follow a wiring diagram.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I had the opportunity to study abroad on a scholarship in Football and to study Civil Engineering. However, I felt that it wasn't going to be the right choice for me at the time, and so I decided to undertake an apprenticeship as I felt it would offer me more opportunities in my future career.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, communication, organisation.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I use these skills in my day-to-day work by carrying out different activities which require me to measure and mark out the layout for the electrical containment being installed onsite. These skills also help me to understand circuits and how they are wired correctly.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Helping and assisting teaching Scuba diving (volunteering).

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Choose the subjects that you find the most enjoyable because it will not feel like work when you are having to study for exams, or write up papers or assignments. This also includes learning new material within the subject areas, as if you enjoy it enough you will be more dedicated to learn about the subject. Also, try to keep your subject range wide as it could help you in the future when looking for employment, allowing you to go into a broader field of work opportunities.

Lesley McMillan

The City of Edinburgh Council
Interior Designer
Interior Architecture & Design Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Art & Design, Craft & Design and Technical Drawing.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Communication skills are needed to engage with different stakeholders in design and present proposals. The range of design I am involved with is diverse, including graphics for presentations, decoration and signage concepts, designing bespoke fittings, fixtures, and furniture, through to preparing detailed architectural drawings for construction.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I left school after completing my Highers in 5th year and did an art course at Edinburgh College to prepare my Art & Design portfolio. I then studied an Honours Degree at Edinburgh Napier University in Interior Architecture.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, creativity, leadership.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My role requires lots of project management and team working skills in order to deliver projects on time and budget. The projects I work on that I find the most fun and creative are interior spaces for children.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

The interior architecture & design of a crematorium.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Think about the subjects that you enjoy and the types of jobs that they might be applicable. Don't be afraid to reach out to people doing a role you might like to pursue to find out more and ask for their advice.

Hannah Offer

AECOM
Engineer
Civil Engineering Sector



AECOM

Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, English, Physics, Biology, Modern Studies.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I use the fundamentals of Maths and English every day. My other subjects helped develop my critical thinking and problem solving, and Physics was a requirement for my degree course. My job is also strongly related to Geography, but I never took that at school!

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I studied Civil Engineering at University before entering a graduate programme with the company I still work at. In university I was most interested in the modules about water and the environment, which directed my career path and the team I chose to work with.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, team work, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, creativity, leadership, curiosity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

My job involves working with several different teams, clients, and the public. Good communication, teamwork, leadership, organisation, and time management all make projects run more smoothly. Critical thinking and problem solving is key to my job, but this also involves creativity and adaptability as we want to develop the best solutions to infrastructure challenges. My part time jobs in bars and restaurants taught me so many skills and have made me more confident in my career.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked in a nightclub which taught me a lot about people!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Think about things that interest you in everyday life, such as the environment, climate change, design, renewable energy, improving cycling infrastructure, nature conservation. All these topics have many jobs connected to them. Now think about subjects that involve these interests or that could help you into those careers. You don't need to have a full life plan but following your interests and considering potential careers can help you get there.

Laura Findlay

Screen Education Edinburgh
Project Manager
Third Sector



SCREEN
EDUCATION
EDINBURGH

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, History, Religious Studies.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English has been the main subject that has helped my career. I studied Journalism at college and then English at university, which allowed me to progress to publishing, teaching English and Film, and working in research, as well as co-ordinating creative projects, which are all important skills for the job I have now.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I studied Journalism at college and then went on to study English at university. I pursued postgraduate study after my degree, gaining a PhD by studying part-time.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Communication, organisation, creativity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Planning and organisational skills are a big part of my job as they allow me to think ahead and manage priorities for programmes as well as staff. My knowledge of film has helped greatly due to the work that we do as a film education charity, and communication skills, both written and verbal, are also vital for running meetings, public speaking, partnership working, and reporting.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Editing comics as part of my time at Dundee University. Not too unusual but definitely lots of fun!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Select subjects that you enjoy. Try not to worry too much about the future, as most people have lots of different jobs and career paths in their lifetime - I certainly have and it's meant that I've picked up a range of experience in different fields along the way. This has allowed me to work in jobs in the creative field, which I love!

Sharon Jones

KIC Dance Company
Artistic Director
Creative Sector

Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths, English, French, Spanish, Biology, Chemistry, Art, Drama, Office/Information studies and Physical Education.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

The sciences gave me a good understanding of the physiological and anatomical effects of dance/exercise on the human body. Office skills helped with the administrative tasks that are imperative to running your own business. A good foundation of English and Maths are needed and used in all aspects of work/life. Art, Drama, & PE allowed me to explore the creative part of me and also gain many life skills.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Science and Dance were my favourite subjects and still are! I left school to study Biological Sciences through an initiative run by the University of Edinburgh where I did a three year training course with them. During this time, I worked at King's Buildings Mon - Fri, rotating in blocks around all biological departments whilst studying on day release, firstly at Stevenson College, where I did my HNC in Biological Sciences, before moving on to Edinburgh Napier University to do BSc. Following my three year course, I secured a permanent job in Microbiology for the Biology Teaching Organisation at Edinburgh University. During this time, I continued to teach dance in the evenings/weekends. I attended a teaching course at Telford College Edinburgh and also in Lancaster at Ludus Dance Education Centre focussing on Dance in Education and Communities. From here I worked with a team in education.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, creativity, leadership.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

As well as running our own studios, we also teach in many nurseries, schools and social work/community settings. This takes great planning, organisation, and communication. Our team coordinate lesson planning across levels and share resources and information, so strong relationships, networking, and problem solving are key. A huge part of our work is creativity, from planning and preparation, to the delivery to our students. Every environment needs leaders to initiate but a good leader also learns from their team, students and others who they work with.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

There are many! Feeding the locust in the insect room some acheta crickets!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Keep them fairly open, don't put all your eggs in one basket. Choose subjects that interest you, it's so much easier to learn. Dream big! You're allowed to! You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Lindsay Robinson

Anderson Strathern LLP
Associate
Legal Sector

Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, Science.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

You need to be an effective communicator as a solicitor, so English is essential. You will also, inevitably in my role, have to deal with maths (as most people still sue for money). Science has also helped me in my career, as some of the disputes that I have dealt with have been very technical in nature and, having studied Science, this has helped me to understand a client's problem better.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Waitress, Receptionist, Sales Ledger Clerk, Recruitment Consultant, Paralegal. In terms of higher education, I did A Levels, an Honours Degree, a Postgraduate Degree and then a Legal Diploma.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Teamwork, communication, organisation.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Every day, I have to prioritise my work load (and sometimes re-prioritise, if something urgent comes in) which means that I have to be super organised, and be able to communicate effectively with the team I am, in so that we can all work together to cover the work required.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Riding Instructor at a Jewish Summer Camp.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Do what you enjoy, Maths, English and Science are important, but if your passion in life is Art or History, you should make sure that you study those subjects. You will find studying easier if you enjoy the subject.

Douglas Watt

Stewart Investors
Senior Manager Investment Communications
Finance Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

At school, I focused on the Sciences - Chemistry, Physics, and Biology - as well as Maths and English.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

My knowledge of maths and science has been useful in the financial world for interpreting data and numbers, while English has been vital for communicating clearly.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Despite studying sciences at school, I took a degree in history, followed by a post-graduate degree also in history. After this, I worked as an equity analyst, researching companies and economies, before switching into investment writing, which involves writing about the financial world in clear English.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Communication, Time Management, Adaptability.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I have to produce a number of pieces of written copy each day, including client reports, marketing flyers, website copy, and articles. Managing the time spent on each is important, especially as they may all have different deadlines.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked as a guide in the Camera Obscura in Edinburgh, which was great fun!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

My advice would be to not worry too much about the subject choices as you can always change direction later as I did. I would concentrate on the subjects you enjoy the most, as these are the ones you are likely to continue to be motivated towards and do your best in. Also, maybe chose one or two subjects that are a bit different if you can, as you never know where these might lead you!

Drew Long

Anderson Strathern
Solicitor
Legal Sector

Which subjects did you take at school?

None - I took an alternative path studying a pre-entry course at Strathclyde University. This gave entry to the faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (including Law). The course had no academic entry requirement and was one evening per week. I studied English, Sociology and Law.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

They gave the relevant skills and knowledge to allow me to earn a place on the LLB (law degree).

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I attended college to study music. After this, I trained as a croupier (casino dealer) and worked on cruise ships for a number of years, all over the world. I came back to Scotland and decided to return to education, which led me to study law. After my degree, I trained as a prosecutor, before moving to my current firm to practice employment law.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

In preparing cases for litigation, it is important to be organised and manage time well as there are often multiple competing deadlines. I am often faced with resistance from the opposing side and have to be resilient in the face of challenges. Most of all, I have a professional duty to be honest and to maintain integrity at all times.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

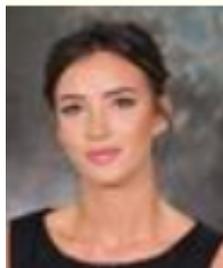
Art Auctioneer.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Having solid grades in fundamental subjects like English, Maths, and the Sciences will open doors. Beyond that, don't be too prescriptive with yourself. You'll find it easier to study things you have an interest in. If you have a career in mind, pick subjects that relate and lead in to that. Don't put too much pressure on yourself. There are lots of different paths in life and you have time to pursue more than one.

Cassandra Mackay

Baillie Gifford
Compliance Analyst
Investment Management Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

I took a variety of subjects at Higher/Advanced Higher level including religious studies, Spanish, business management, and modern studies.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I feel that these subjects have given me a more rounded education. Languages are always helpful as you never know when these could be called upon. Business Management gave me the knowledge of a number of theoretical models (such as Maslow) which are discussed even today. I think it is probably more the research skills of studying these subjects that has helped me be innovative in projects in my career today.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I originally applied to university in 5th year as I had the grades, however, I changed my mind regarding my field of study, so I took a gap year and worked. I then went to university to study Business Management and feel that having this job (I worked at Tesco) helped kick start my CV and made me more appealing to employers. During university, I undertook 2 placements, and I think having these even short placements listed on my CV has helped me to get to the firm I work for today.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem solving, adaptability.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

As Compliance has a reach across the whole business, in order to implement a new regulatory rule for example, it is important to know which Teams you need to assert assistance and have the rapport to do so.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

The most unusual was making sandwiches - and I wasn't good at it!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

I would say pick subjects that you enjoy, as you are more likely to want to excel at them if you are interested in the subject matter.

Laura Henderson

Forestry and Land Scotland
Learning and Development Officer
Forestry Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

Biology, chemistry, geography, environmental science.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

I gained analytical skills, and the desire to research and find answers to questions. I am also able to apply the knowledge I gained to better understand forestry, which allows me to support the organisation.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I completed a zoology degree and then trained to be a science teacher. This led me to support young apprentices and onto working with adults in a learning and development role.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, communication, adaptability, creativity, curiosity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I design and deliver training courses to support people in the organisation. I also support the delivery of training by helping to organise specialist courses for the variety of roles we have in forestry!

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I worked on a cruise ship managing the adventurous activities, including a climbing wall and a zip line that were on the ship.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick the subjects that interest you, it's much easier to succeed when you have a passion for what you're doing. Remember that it's not just what you'll learn, but the skills you'll gain.

Patryja Malcharczyk

Mercat Tours
Visitor Services Advisor
Tourism Sector



Mercat Tours

Which subjects did you take at school?

Biology, Chemistry, English Literature and PE.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

As a Visitor Services Assistant, I use the knowledge that I learnt from university every day. HR and operations management prepared me to work in a busy environment in an office filled with people. It also helped me to polish my soft skills like communication and team working skills. Because of marketing, I know now how to make the best impression on the customers and upsell our products.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school in Poland, I came to Scotland to first learn English language in college and then to study International Hospitality and Tourism Management. One of the modules required me to do 6 months long placement, which introduced me to a company that I am still working 2 years later!

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, teamwork, communication, time management, resilience, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I use many skills in my day to day work interchangeably in different situations. In my role, it is important to communicate easily with both customers and my colleagues, to show empathy, and to be flexible. Dealing with difficult customers or situations, overcoming technical obstacles, and working from home are only a few situations I might be facing. That's why all of above skills are accompanied with confidence and patience to provide the best customer service.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

A line worker in a meat factory.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Don't be afraid of trying to learn new things, try to pick subjects that interest you the most, not the ones that are just the easiest. Then, try to think how this subject could potentially help you in your future career and do your own research because the choices are not always obvious. Be hungry for knowledge.

Markus Offer

Museums Galleries Scotland
Skills Development Manager
Culture and Heritage Sector



Which subjects did you take at school?

English, Maths, German, Philosophy, Modern Studies, Classical Studies, P.E., History.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

English benefitted me in learning how to write effectively and Philosophy got me to think about things in a different way and question different practice. Both of those subjects were also good for my communication skills. Mostly what benefitted me in my career was learning in the variety of different jobs that I had after leaving school. The subjects I chose at school were purely based on my interest at the time.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

After leaving school, I went to University and ended up doing Sociology for 4 years. I went to University largely as I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and it did help me understand different ways of thinking and working with different people, which is invaluable to me now. I worked in retail while I did my degree and met lots of new people. I also worked in a bar, in advertising, employment advice, vocational learning, and then in project management and skills development. From each of these roles, I found out more about the world of work and developed well-rounded experience from a variety of sectors, which enabled me to learn and engage effectively with anyone.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, organisation, time management, adaptability, resilience, creativity, leadership, curiosity, integrity.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

I use effective communication and teamwork on a daily basis. A big part of my job is project management, so being organised and working with others is key to this.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

I tested contactless payment cards during the day and worked in a nightclub at night for a while.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick subjects you like learning about and that will help you understand what you enjoy. Transferable skills are incredibly important and you get these from any subject.

John Thomson

CoDE Pod Hostels
Facilities Operations Manager
Hospitality Sector

Which subjects did you take at school?

Maths , English.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

Maths always helps as it gives you the tools to work out problems. I joined the RAF from school, and this also help me understand people and how to get the best out of them.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

Royal Air Force – I then worked for the University of Edinburgh, where I did a qualification in Facilities Management.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Problem-solving, team work, communication, organisation, adaptability, leadership.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

Leading a team and adapting to issues that arise. No day is the same and you need to pre-empt issues before they happen.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Airborne sniper within the Ministry of Defence.

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Set targets that you want to achieve and have confidence in yourself. If it is not hard work, it's not worth doing.

Ben Scheelings

CoDE Pod Hostels
Revenue Manager
Hospitality Sector

Which subjects did you take at school?

Information Engineering.

How have these subjects helped in your career?

As a revenue manager, you are required to be a data analyst to make pricing decisions.

What pathway have you followed since leaving school?

I started as an IT student and then chose to go in the direction of information engineer.

What important transferable skills do you use every day?

Networking, communication, time management, adaptability.

How do you use these skills in your day to day work?

As a revenue manager, you have to stay on top what is happening in the market. You could lose valuable revenue if you can't react swiftly to new demand drivers. So, you have to constantly adept to market demand, as well as to new technology available to us to map the market. Networking is an important part of the role to get your product to the right target market.

What's the most unusual job you have ever had?

Baking pizza in a wood fire stove in fairgrounds around Queensland, Australia. Some days, we'd make 400+ pizzas, while the outside temperature was more than 30 degrees and the oven was a mere 350 degrees!

What advice would you give to a young person making subject choices?

Pick the subjects that naturally interest you or make you curious to find out more. Personally I was always fascinated about using data to answer questions. This led me to the subjects that I chose and to my current career.