

# Air Hockey to Robotics

**For James, Technology at school was the springboard to tertiary study and a career full of interest and promise.**

In schools today, Technology is taught to all students, to develop a broad technological literacy essential in all kinds of work, university study and a successful life. And for those wanting a career in one of the wide range of technology areas, it provides the ideal foundation to fulfil those dreams.

**A**spiring robotics engineer 21-year-old James Steel has always had an interest in technology. From Years 11 to 13, he studied the subject at Wellington College with great success.

For his final Year 13 Technology project, James designed and constructed an air hockey table for the staff room of his co-workers at the local New World Supermarket.

Technology provides opportunities for interaction with business and industry so students gain professional and practical experience. In James' case, he received advice and inspiration from industrial design students from Victoria University's School of Design, who visited throughout the year as class mentors.

That year, James was a finalist in the prestigious Royal Society of New Zealand national Realise the Dream competition, which celebrates the work of students who

have achieved excellence in research and technological practice.

For James, Technology education equipped him with skills he needed for his current study for a Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronics at the University of Canterbury.

"I am studying to be an engineer, so the skills I learned in Technology – such as problem solving, analytical skills, planning/project management and research – are all skills that I use, and will continue to use throughout my career," says James.

"I enjoyed the freedom Technology gave me to explore ideas and see where they would lead," says James. "I also really enjoyed the chance to apply some of the things I was learning in other classes to real situations – practical applications of both Mathematics and Physics in many cases."

"Technology forces me to think through the processes. In other subjects I know the process at each step, whereas in Technology I have to think: 'If I do this, will it affect what I do later?'"

As James is majoring in Mechatronics he already has his calling mapped out. "I am hoping to get into Robotics, particularly in the area of Human Robotics – I really want to work on making robotic prosthetic limbs, or an engineering project that will really help people."

James is currently in his last year of his degree and has recently received a summer scholarship with the University of Canterbury to work on a research project which focuses on medical engineering.

James is an excellent example of a student who, through Technology, is an engaged and productive contributor to New Zealand – its present and its future. But he is only one of many.

Students throughout the country are learning the exciting and innovative possibilities that Technology education opens up for them, both within the classroom and for their future lives. Technology is an approved subject for university entrance and can lead to a huge range of varied and rewarding roles and career paths.

To find out more about how Technology education can benefit your child and the wide range of Technology subjects available at school, please visit [www.techlink.org.nz](http://www.techlink.org.nz).



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