

# Interview

Prof. Dr. Philipp Heretsch

Leibniz Universität Hannover



*What inspired you to do chemistry?*

I decided early on that I wanted to do chemistry at around an age of 7. My mother always used to buy me experimental kits because I was really into science. While I enjoyed all of them, it was always the chemistry kits that fascinated me most. Back in the days these kits really had everything inside of them and you could basically start a little lab with them. It is a shame that nowadays due to restrictions, they are usually not as exciting anymore.

*What inspired you to do natural product synthesis?*

It had to do with my first project I did in university. We synthesized alkaloids and steroids and from there on the topic stuck with me.

*Natural Product synthesis can be quite frustrating sometimes. When something doesn't work out, how do you deal with it?*

I think that failures are an important part of the research process. In natural product synthesis a lot of things can go wrong, but it is important to stay determined and try out any possible way to get a reaction to work out. It is also very important to properly celebrate when a project was successful.

*Apart from chemistry, what do you do in your free time?*

In my free time I usually do a lot of sports, especially weight training. Me and my wife also own a horse and she does a lot of showjumping. We also lately got into skiing, but I'm not that good at it yet.

*When you employ a new Ph.D., what are the things you are looking for?*

In natural product synthesis it is important to have a lot of determination and a high frustration tolerance. It's also important to have a lot of practical experience, be it in organic or in inorganic chemistry. The specific field is not so important, since having a broader spectrum of expertise can also help to make the next breakthrough.