

swe **NEXT**



Are you ever intimidated by working in a male-dominated field and how do you handle that?

Welcome to the SWEet Wisdom column! Each month we pose a question to an amazing group of women engineers in the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). They give you their best advice from their own experiences.

This month, we discuss today's reality that engineering and technology are male-dominated fields. (You can change that! #BeThatEngineer!) Being one of a few women in your physics class or lab group could be intimidating.

So how do you handle that? Read on for some advice. And then check out the video on the SWENext YouTube Channel for more advice on this topic!

Do you have a question for our engineers? We'd love to hear from you! Send your questions to swenext@swe.org. We'll answer you, and your question may become a future SWEet Wisdom column!

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As a recent Civil Engineering graduate working in the construction industry, it is very easy to become overwhelmed and to feel inexperienced from the combination of being the youngest and one of the only women working on a project. Contractors are often a group of older, experienced men, and it can be hard to forge a connection with them or make your voice heard.



Personally, I have found that self-confidence is a major key to help feel like the playing

field is even. For instance, if I know that I am having a difficult meeting that day, I take full, deep breaths and stand with feet shoulder width apart, making sure that I feel grounded, so that I can share my ideas with clarity and listen with an open mind. This usually leads to me being recognized as a calm and collected team player, which is always a plus!

If my self-confidence feels drained, I have also found that seeking out women's professional organizations like SWE, whether in college or the city that I live in, is extremely beneficial in reminding me that I am not alone, and that there are plenty of women in the field experiencing the same thing, and our numbers in engineering are only growing!

Savannah Smith

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I have never felt intimidated by any particular person or even a group. However, I did feel intimidated when I switched into engineering my freshman year of college. I was intimidated by the people who talked about how hard and physical engineers had to be to succeed.



My very first engineering class was an introductory class for Chemical Engineering. I had arrived to class 45 minutes early. Another female had also arrived early, and we began talking about classes and sororities and where we were from. It was that interaction that made me realize how I was going to be a successful engineer. While there might not have been many females in my classes, the few of us that were there were a group. We helped each other. We were a shoulder to cry on when things got tough.

Now that I am in a different environment with different people and different challenges, I have brought the same principle with me. Having a band of women that will do anything and everything for you is irreplaceable and together, intimidation is nothing but an afterthought.

Editor's note: That's why SWENext Clubs are so good in high school! [Learn more about clubs at SWENext Clubs 101.](#)

Kate Nolan

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I work in the aerospace industry, which has fewer women engineers than the US national average. I am



still acutely aware of being the only woman in the room in many meetings. If there are more than 10 people in the room, there's a chance that there may be another woman there!

I remind myself that I'm there for the same reason as everyone else – to produce a high-quality airplane – and that I 100% deserve my seat at the table and the right to voice my opinion and knowledge. I was also fortunate to spend the first few years of my career working closely with senior women engineers in my department, which strengthened my resolve to be in an industry where my gender places me in a minority.

[Watch more answers to this question on the SWENext YouTube Channel.](#)



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