

Researchers find confidence is key to women's spatial skills

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Boosting a woman's confidence makes her better at spatial tasks, University of Warwick scientists have found, suggesting skills such as parking and map-reading could come more easily if a woman is feeling good about herself.

Previous studies have established that women are slower and less accurate than men on a range of spatial tasks.

But new research carried out at the University of Warwick reveals that confidence levels play a key role in women's ability to perform spatial tasks.

University of Warwick psychology researcher Dr Zachary Estes, working with Dr Sydney Felker from the University of Georgia Health Center, looked at women's ability to perform a standard 3D [mental rotation](#) task, while at the same time manipulating their confidence levels.

They found that when they made women feel more confident about themselves, their ability to perform the task improved.

The research paper, Confidence Mediates the Sex Difference in Mental Rotation Performance, is published in the journal [Archives of Sexual Behavior](#).

Dr Zachary Estes said: "Prior research shows that women tend to do

poorly on tasks that require spatial awareness.

"That's borne out in the common [jokes](#) we always hear about men being better at parking and map reading than women.

"But we wanted to see why that was so we manipulated people's confidence in our experiments with spatial tasks, and it does seem that [confidence](#) is a key factor in how well women perform at this kind of task.

"Our research suggests that by making a woman feel better about herself, she'll become better at spatial tasks – which in the real world means tasks such as parking the car or reading a map.

"So a little bit of confidence-boosting may go a long way when it comes to reversing the car into a tight [parking](#) spot."

The researchers tested spatial ability through a series of four computer-based experiments on a total of 545 students at a university in the US.

Provided by University of Warwick

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