

Strays – Know-it-all

Have you ever met a **know-it-all**? Maybe you know one right now. So, exactly what *is* a know-it-all, and is it ok to be one? If somebody really does *know it all*, is it wrong to label the person that way? The fact is that men are more likely than women to be know-it-alls because of their naturally competitive nature.

In most American contexts, **know-it-all** or KIA is a derogatory term for a person who seems to understand quite a bit about a subject, pretends to possess superior knowledge on it, and then attempts to broadcast that pretense to a wide audience. The attitude that often accompanies this disposition is *arrogance*, an artificial inflation of self-importance, often shown by dismissing input and opinions from others. In other words, being around a person like that is often unpleasant.

How to handle a know-it-all

A know-it-all can be found at club meetings, activities, and on the radio. You can often recognize their behavior by dismissive and argumentative responses. They're more interested in hearing themselves than listening to you. According to some [online psychology texts](#), know-it-alls are not necessarily narcissists, but often have narcissistic tendencies; they **need to be right**. Many don't even realize they're treating others the way they do, and the cure in that case is to gently confront the person with their behavior.

Many KIAs tend to interrupt a point, dominate conversations, or make baseless claims. These prompts might help return the discussion to the topic:

- *How can you be so sure?*
- *Hold that thought. I'd like to give my point of view.*
- *Could you share the data that led you to that conclusion?*
- *How else could we look at this issue?*
- *I'd like to finish my point before we continue.*
- *I feel my expertise is undervalued when I'm constantly being interrupted.*

Also, do not get angry. If they feel that you're trying to outsmart them, they tend to argue harder. Pick your battles; let minor issues go. Focus on the topic at hand, not on *changing the person*.

Subject matter expert

At this point in this seemingly unimportant topic, it's



probably best to clarify one thought. A person who truly does possess knowledge, experience, and maybe even a little wisdom about a subject is somebody we call a **subject matter expert**, or SME. Fortunately, most SMEs are not know-it-alls. The truly knowledgeable person feels secure in his or her background, and does not rely on false pride to compensate for any lacking knowledge or skill. More often than not, the SME will acknowledge that he or she does not know the answer to a question, and is willing to entertain new thoughts and opinions on the matter.

Ok, maybe you're a person who truly **does** know everything about a subject. The rest of us congratulate you, and hope that you're willing to share your vast knowledge with us less-knowledgeable folks. If you're one of them, you're in a unique position to lead by an example of humility and vulnerability. Your willingness to help the rest of us will be rewarded by others following your example.

Your own role

You're likely not a know-it-all, yet you're just as likely not an SME either. As you upgrade your license, gain knowledge and valuable experience, and begin mentoring ([elmering](#)) more and more newer hams, you'll likely start feeling more confident in your new knowledge. But that's when the danger starts; you can turn your new-found confidence into arrogance and pride, or you can dedicate yourself to maintaining humility, staying ready to learn new ideas and consider concepts that are new to you. It's your choice.