

Pink

I got my nails done the day before my Microsoft interview and I was so giddy and excited at finding this shade of pink, so we took pictures.

The next day I was standing in front of the whiteboard, almost in tears because I couldn't figure out this problem, and I was taking too long to answer, and a stranger had laughed at me during lunch for not knowing that Richmond was in Vancouver, and my last interviewer had gently (not so gently, I'm not sure why I'm making excuses for him) reminded me that I was "competing against people from Stanford." I was staring at my pink nails and feeling the skirt that I had thrifted for the interview roll up against my thighs (I haven't worn it since), and realized that for all my effort to look the part, I wasn't smart enough for the part. And maybe I'd never be smart enough. I came home and we ordered Ezell's with the meal allowance (we forgot to tip :(sorry delivery man) and I cried myself to sleep. Those feelings of inadequacy have never really left. What does it mean to be a woman in tech anyways? Alone, mostly. A couple months later I was taking my first cs classes at UW, and spent every weekend in the labs, alone. One instance, I was walking back to my dorm when I was joined by my friend and her friend as they were also walking back from the cs building. I was mesmerized by her friend's hot pink yoga pants, and didn't have much to add to the conversation of cs professors and our schedules for next quarter. When I got back to my room, I cried bc I had convinced myself that pink didn't belong in cs, but I had living proof that it did.



Epilogue: spoiler alert, there was a happy ending. I had a wonderful summer at Microsoft, punctuated with lunch trips to the food trucks and mini photoshoots with our swag. One of my very best friends was a student from Stanford, and that interviewer taught us how to *actually* play ping pong. But that didn't make it hurt any less, and I still had a lot to overcome in order to feel like I belonged.