
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Put a sock in it!

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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Welcome to The English We Speak with me Rob – and today I've come round to Helen's house because she said she needed some help... *(Doorbell and door opens)*

Helen

Oh hi Rob. Thanks for coming round. *(She shuts the door)*

Rob

That's OK, no problem. Now, how can I help?

Helen

I need you to fix my toaster please. You know me, I love my toast but since yesterday, every time I try to make some, black smoke keeps coming out of it.

Rob

Hmm, black smoke? That doesn't sound good. OK, let's have a look at it. *(He fiddles with the toaster)* Err, Helen?

Helen

Yes?

Rob

There's a sock in it – that's very dangerous - no wonder you're getting black smoke when you try to make toast!

Helen

Rob, I put the sock in there.

Rob

You put the sock in there - why did you do that?

Helen

Well, my friend came round for breakfast yesterday, and I was telling her all about my fantastic holiday... the great weather, the good food and the... handsome men...

Rob

So?

Helen

Well, I was making us both toast when she said "Helen, put a sock in it!"

Rob

Ah! I don't think she actually meant put a sock in the toaster – when people say that, it means 'be quiet'!

Helen

How rude! 'Put a sock in it' isn't a very polite thing to say Rob!

Rob

It's not. It's an impolite way of saying 'stop talking'! It can also mean, keep the noise down. Your friend must have been annoyed by your non-stop chatter if she said that! Let's hear some more examples of this phrase in action...

Examples

Put a sock in it! We're trying to do some work here!

Oh, put a sock in it! I've already said I'm going to do the washing-up later.

My Dad was telling me how I should work harder at school so I told him to 'put a sock in it!'

Helen

So the phrase 'to put a sock in it' really means 'be quiet' or 'shut up'. But Rob, I don't talk that much, it's just I like to tell people about my holidays, my cooking, my boyfriends...

Rob

Err, Helen...

Helen

Yes?

Rob

Can you put a sock in it please?! In fact, use this... dirty sock from your toaster!

Helen

But where should I put it?

Rob

Well, figuratively speaking, the phrase means put a sock in your mouth to stop you talking – so try that!

Helen

Oh thanks. (*Toaster pops up*) Actually, now my toaster is working, I'm going to have socks on toast!

Rob

(*Sniffing the sock*) Well, by the smell of this sock, it's going to be cheese on toast.

Both

Bye!