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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The English We Speak

### To make a monkey out of someone

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white text on a teal background.

*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Li**

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Li...

**Rob**

And hello, I'm Rob

**Li**

Sorry, I didn't hear that.

**Rob**

If I just take this head off... can you hear me better now? Hello!

**Li**

That's better but why are you wearing a life-size monkey costume Rob?

**Rob**

Well my friend said I should wear it to his son's birthday party this morning – his son loves monkeys and it would make his birthday really special if he saw one!

**Li**

Well, that's very kind of you Rob – and how did the party go?

**Rob**

Well that's the problem. As you can see, I dressed up like a monkey, travelled across London on the bus and there was no party!

**Li**

Ha ha – no party! It looks like your friend has been 'making a monkey out of you'!

**Rob**

Making a monkey out of me? Yes, that's a very good phrase. You mean he's trying to make me look foolish or to humiliate me.

**Li**

He's certainly done that!

Let's hear some examples of the phrase in action...

**Examples**

Mary made a monkey out of me by telling me to ask her best friend out on a date – she said no!

My boyfriend's always making a monkey out of himself by getting drunk at parties.

Sid made a monkey out of Paul by telling him to wear a suit to the party – everyone else was wearing jeans!

**Li**

So 'making a monkey out of someone' is not a nice thing to do. You can also say 'making a fool out of someone'. So Rob, you're angry because he's made a fool out of you?

**Rob**

Yes that's right! This phrase doesn't just apply to people who dress up like monkeys. It can apply to any situation where someone has been made to look foolish or ridiculous – like me.

But Li, this phrase compares someone to a monkey because monkeys look like they are fooling around. Isn't that right?

**Li**

No. In the Chinese culture, a monkey is seen as a clever animal and is often compared to a clever person.

**Rob**

Oh really? Well, in that case I might wear this monkey costume for a little bit longer. How does it make me look? Clever, smart?

**Li**

Quite smart and quite handsome too.

**Rob**

Oh thank you very much!

**Li**

Bye.

**Rob**

Bye.