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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The English We Speak

### A leopard can't change its spots



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

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**Feifei**

Hello, I'm Feifei and this is The English We Speak. Joining me is Rob.

**Rob**

Hello everyone.

**Feifei**

Did you enjoy Jane and Tim's wedding yesterday?

**Rob**

Yes, it was good wasn't it – especially the party afterwards – all that dancing and drinking.

**Feifei**

I did notice! I'm really happy for them but I do hope that Jane will help Tim change his bad habits – Tim used to be messy, forgetful and always late for everything!

**Rob**

I don't think he'll change – a leopard doesn't change his spots.

**Feifei**

A leopard doesn't change its spots? I think I know that Rob, but what has a leopard got to do with Tim?

**Rob**

Quite a lot Feifei. The phrase – a leopard doesn't change its spots OR a leopard can't change its spots – means he won't change. He will always be the same person and his bad habits are here to stay.

**Feifei**

Oh I see. So his bad habits will never change – they will always stay the same. So Rob, you are comparing a leopard, who can never change its spotty appearance, with someone who will never change the way they behave?

**Rob**

You've got it. Let's hear some examples of how people use the phrase...

### **Examples**

I told Karen she had to study more if she wants to pass her exams but a leopard can't change its spots – she won't do it.

Freddie promised he wouldn't get into trouble at school but I don't believe him – a leopard can't change its spots.

### **Feifei**

A leopard can't change its spots – and someone can't change their habits. So Rob, you don't think Jane will be able to change Tim?

### **Rob**

No – he's stubborn – maybe he's going to have to change Jane – she is very neat and tidy and always turns up on time – maybe *he* could teach *her* to relax more – chill out.

### **Feifei**

Hmmm – I don't know if she would change either. Rob, could we say a tiger never changes its stripes?

### **Rob**

Ha ha – yes we could say that – and it would mean the same thing – in that she won't change. Oh dear, I'm not sure if their marriage is going to last!

### **Feifei**

No.... or maybe it will. You know what they say? Opposites attract!

### **Rob**

Yes they do Feifei, you're right. Bye for now.

### **Feifei**

Goodbye.