
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

To clean up your act



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello welcome to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob.

Feifei

Oh hello...I'm Feifei.

Rob

Err Feifei, what are you doing?

Feifei

Cleaning... this place is so dirty... in fact Rob, have you got any soap I could borrow?

Rob

Feifei, this isn't like you. You don't normally take cleaning so seriously.

Feifei

Well, I'm cleaning up because my boss told me to. He said I've got to 'clean up my act'.

Rob

Oh Feifei, you can put down that cloth – he didn't literally mean do the cleaning. He wants you to improve your behaviour or your performance. Have you not been working very hard?

Feifei

Who me? I always work hard... although I have had a lot of things to do at home... and I did make a few mistakes last week... and when I get stressed I start to shout at people...

Rob

Oh yes, I did hear you. Well I'm sure I can help you clean up your act – if you're sure you know what that means?

Feifei

Yes. Apparently I need to improve my behaviour! Let's hear some more examples of the phrase in action...

Examples

I used to drink a lot of alcohol but when I got ill, I decided to clean up my act and now I only drink cola!

He turned up late for work every day looking a real mess, so they told him to clean up his act or face losing his job.

Feifei

Cleaning up *my act* means I have to work harder... so it's got nothing to do with cleaning or acting Rob?

Rob

No – acting here means behaviour – although your acting on this programme is excellent! So come on then, when are you going to start cleaning up your act?

Feifei

Right now. I've decided to clean up my act and start work earlier and always get you to check my work so there are no mistakes! So Rob, would you mind checking this script for *The English We Speak*?

Rob

Sure. Let's have a look... perfect! You can tell the boss you've started with a clean slate.

Feifei

A clean slate - what does *that* mean?

Rob

I'll tell you another time. Oops, I've knocked my coffee over...

Feifei

Oh dear Rob. It looks like you've got to clean up the studio. Do you need this cloth?

Rob

Thanks!