
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

It takes two to tango



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ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

(Tango music playing) Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, I'm Neil and joining me is Feifei...

Feifei

Hi there. In this programme we've got an expression that means two people are involved in a tricky situation and both must accept blame and responsibility. Neil, what on earth are you doing?

Neil

Dancing! (Tango music playing)

Feifei

Yes, I can see that but... on your own. You look pretty ridiculous if you don't mind my saying.

Neil

Well, Feifei, that's because it takes two to tango!

Feifei

Yes it does take two to tango – and that is our expression for this programme.

Neil

But the meaning's not as simple as you might think. Let's listen to some examples and then explain a little more.

Examples

The ref should have sent both players off. I know Smith kicked Cooper but it takes two to tango.

Everyone blames Charlie for their break up but Lizzy was just as bad. It takes two to tango.

They should arrest the dodgy agent as well as the manager. After all it takes two to tango.

Neil

So, as you can see, 'It takes two to tango' is used to talk about bad or difficult situations.

Feifei

Yes, it's used to say that two people – not just one – are responsible for that bad situation.

Neil

(Tango music playing) So, Feifei, won't you join me for this dance?

Feifei

You're not exactly a great dancer, Neil. Though, I have to admit, I'm pretty terrible too.

Neil

Who cares?! It takes two to tango!

Feifei

Argh! You stepped on my toes!

Neil

Sorry!

Both

Bye!