
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

To be fair



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Welcome to The English We Speak: I'm Neil.

Feifei

And I'm Feifei.

Neil

You know what, Feifei, I just love living here in London. I mean, the culture, the parks, the restaurants – it's got everything.

Feifei

Yeah, it's not bad, though to be fair it's not the cheapest place to live.

Neil

You're right. Though most world capital cities are quite pricey to live in, to be fair.

Feifei

Actually, to be fair, I think there are a lot of reasons to move out of the big city – you know, more space, better air, fewer people, and... nature!

Neil

Feifei, I think we've given good arguments on both sides, to be fair! And I hope we've demonstrated today's phrase – which is: to be fair.

Feifei

It's a phrase you'll hear a lot especially in British English. It's used when you want to explain more than one side of an issue.

Neil

Let's listen to these examples:

Examples

We played well in the first half, but to be fair we were awful in the second half.

Now, Luke. We know that wasn't your best exam result, but to be fair you had very little time to prepare.

Neil

So – it's a phrase that we use to give balance in a discussion. And it comes just before or after making a point, or giving an opinion.

Feifei

But these days, especially in spoken English, people sometimes just use it when giving an opinion – whether or not it's really about fairness.

Neil

Yes, for example: To be fair, The Beatles were the best band of all time.

Feifei

I think Italian food is the finest there is, to be fair.

Neil

So be careful when listening out for this phrase – sometimes it's just a 'filler' phrase, something people say a lot with no real meaning. It might not always mean what you expect it to!

Feifei

To be fair, that's why we make these programmes – to help people understand real English.

Neil

And they are some of the best English learning materials available, to be fair.

Feifei

Though, to be fair, other programmes are available!

Neil

Bye for now.

Feifei

Bye.