
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

To cut your teeth



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello I'm Feifei and this is The English We Speak. With me today is Rob...

Rob

Hello everyone.

Feifei

Rob, are you OK – you look in pain?

Rob

I am – I've just been to the dentist. Ouch.

Feifei

Hmm, not my favourite place – but I guess you had to go to research today's piece of authentic English?

Rob

Excuse me?

Feifei

Well today's expression is 'to cut your teeth' - and dentists look at teeth?

Rob

Sorry Feifei, that's one tooth-related expression that doesn't need a dentist. When you 'cut your teeth' you get your first experience doing something in a particular job.

Feifei

Oh really. So it's like work experience?

Rob

That's one way of learning a new skill which you might use later in your job. I cut my teeth in radio production by working in local radio....

Feifei

... and you're still cutting your teeth now Rob?!

Rob

Ha ha, let's hear some examples of this phrase shall we?

Examples

Dan cut his teeth on a local newspaper before landing a job on a national daily.

He cut his teeth running the junior football club before becoming a professional referee.

Feifei

So 'to cut your teeth' means to acquire initial practice or experience in a particular job or activity. We could say it's where you get your basic skills.

Rob

Correct – so where do you think you cut your teeth for this job Feifei?

Feifei

I cut my media teeth at university.

Rob

Ouch!

Feifei

Sorry, what did I say?

Rob

No it's not you – it's this filling I had done – that's why I went to the dentist. He really was rough.

Feifei

Rob, I think you should go home and rest.

Rob

Maybe!

Both

Bye!