
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Jack-of-all-trades



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Neil

And hello, I'm Neil. Today Feifei, I'm going to teach you a piece of authentic English that describes me. Any guesses what it might be?

Feifei

Hmmm... 'Lazy-bones'?

Neil

Ha! No, one that describes my many talents.

Feifei

Err... 'Full of yourself'?

Neil

No Feifei – think about my skills – all the things I do in the office, for example.

Feifei

Sorry Neil – I have no idea.

Neil

It's **jack-of-all-trades**.

Feifei

But your name's not Jack!

Neil

It doesn't have to be for this phrase. A **jack-of-all-trades** is someone who can do many kinds of jobs – you could say they're multi-skilled.

Feifei

Ok. Yes, I know this phrase but it just doesn't describe you!

Neil

Look, let me tell you what I can do, while we hear some more examples. OK?

Examples

If you need any work doing to your house, get my Dad round – he's a **jack-of-all-trades!**

Jane's got a great business – she runs a cafe where she makes and sells cakes, she does the marketing and her own accounting – she really is a **jack-of-all-trades.**

Feifei

So that's **jack-of-all-trades** – a phrase that describes someone – a man or a woman - who can do many different types of work. We could call them 'an all-rounder'. But sorry Neil – making the tea and presenting the English We Speak does not make you a **jack-of-all-trades.**

Neil

So you think I am a jack-of-some-trades? Don't forget: I wrote this script, I can edit, I can make coffee as well as tea.

Feifei

But some people say '**jack-of-all-trades, master of none**' – which means you can do many things but you're not an expert in any of them! A real **jack-of-all-trades** can do many different jobs – all to a good standard.

Neil

Well... Right, well I'm off.

Feifei

Where are you going?

Neil

To find this guy Jack – to see if he really exists.

Feifei

Oh dear. Bye!

Neil

Bye.