
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Give us a bell



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello, I'm Rob...

Feifei

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

Rob

So Feifei, what are you doing this weekend?

Feifei

I thought I'd do some sightseeing in London – I never get time to see my home city, so that's what I'm going to do.

Rob

Good idea. You mean the Tower of London, St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey...

Feifei

...yes and especially Big Ben. I've always wanted to stand underneath and hear the clock strike 12.

Rob

Do you know what, I might do the same thing. When you're there, give us a bell and I'll come and meet you.

Feifei

'Give us a bell'? There is no way I can give you a bell – do you know how heavy it is?

Rob

Errr, I don't want a bell from the clock tower. I just meant, give me a call – on your phone. Give us a bell!

Feifei

Why didn't you just say that!

Rob

'A bell' originates from the days when phones had a bell that rang when someone called it. So when I say 'a bell', I mean 'a call'. So will you 'give us a bell'?

Feifei

Let me just think about that, while we hear some more examples...

Examples

When you get there, give us a bell and tell us what it's like.

Just give us a bell and I'll tell you how to get here.

After our blind date, she told me to give her a bell but every time I call it her phone diverts to voicemail.

Feifei

That's give me – or give us – a bell, meaning phone me! But Rob, you said give US a call – are you going to be with someone else?

Rob

No. In informal English we tend to say 'us' even when there's just one of us – just me. But of course 'us' can mean more than one person.

Feifei

Right. But this weekend you want *me* to call *you* because you'll be on your own and you've got nothing else to do – so you want to spend the day sightseeing with *me*?

Rob

Yes. Just give us a bell and I'll be there.

Feifei

Hmmm, well sorry I can't – I haven't got your number.

Rob

Well, I could give *you* a bell – what's your number again?

[DOORBELL]

Feifei

Ah, saved by the bell – sorry, got to go, maybe next time. See ya.

Rob

Oh. Bye