
BBC LEARNING ENGHELENSH

The English We Speak

Wing it



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Neil and ...

Feifei

Hi everyone. I'm Feifei and I've just ...err... well...

Neil

Feifei is here with me... Feifei, what's going on?

Feifei

Yes, and today we are here, with you, dear learner of the wonderful English language...

Neil

What are you looking for?

Feifei

The script, Neil. I misplaced it somewhere...

Neil

Just wing it!

Feifei

Wing it? Wing, like a bird? Yes, the air is fresh and I flap my wings...

Neil

What are you doing? What are you doing?

Feifei

You told me to pretend I was a bird. Or to tell the story of a bird or... I know lots of bird jokes.

Neil

No, that's not it. In English 'to wing' something means to improvise. This informal expression is thought to come from the theatre and it refers to performances given by actors who had to learn their lines quickly while waiting in the wings.

Feifei

Ah! The wings are the space on each side of the stage, where actors wait before coming onto the stage. Sometimes someone gives them their lines from there as support.

Neil

That's right. Let's hear how this expression is used:

Examples

Mary spent all weekend partying instead of studying. When I asked her why she wasn't concerned about the exam, she told me she'd just wing it.

The minister is a great orator. He's never had a speech ready, he just wings it and people love it.

Neil

So a theatrical expression for you. Now Feifei, do you know lots of jokes about birds? Tell me one.

Feifei

Why did the little bird get in trouble at school?

Neil

Mmmm... no idea...

Feifei

Because he was caught tweeting during the test.

Neil

Yes, very funny...

Both

Bye.