
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

A thing



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Feifei

Where's... your beard?

Neil

I, uh, shaved it off. I fancied a change. Beards are such a thing these days.

Feifei

Yup, ever since beards became a thing, I've found them a bit boring.

Neil

'A thing'. Of course, we know what the word 'thing' normally means, but what does 'a thing' mean here?

Feifei

Our phrase for today means 'a trend' or 'something recognisable in popular culture'. If beards are 'a thing', it means they've become fashionable: lots of people have them.

Neil

Yes. Cats on the internet – they're a thing.

Feifei

Oh, fidget spinners. They're definitely a thing.

Neil

Fidget spinners?

Feifei

Yes, those little metal or plastic toys that you spin on your finger. Know them?

Neil

Oh, those things that kids everywhere are playing with.

Feifei

Not just kids. Anyway. What else is a thing? Listen to these examples.

Examples

Using funny GIFs in your message is such a thing.

You know parkour: the sport of running and jumping across buildings? Why is that such a thing?

Organic powdered food. Since when has that been a thing?

Feifei

A well-known use of this phrase was after American personality Kim Kardashian posted a picture of herself pregnant, with the words "pregnancy lips".

Neil

It's not a term that many people had heard of, and prompted responses like this: "Pregnancy lips? Is that even a thing?"

Feifei

Yes, when someone refers to a trend you haven't heard of, or that you doubt exists, feel free to respond with 'is that even a thing?'

Neil

But there's little doubt the phrase 'a thing' is itself 'a thing' – it's now been included in major dictionaries.

Feifei

There we are. A thing. No plans to grow the beard back, then?

Neil

Only when being clean-shaven becomes too much of a thing!

Feifei and Neil

Bye.