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The English We Speak

To cut a long story short



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob...

Feifei

And hello, I'm Feifei. We're here to teach you a real English phrase. Rob, if you don't mind me saying, you look a bit... rough.

Rob

Rough? Well you would be, if you'd had the night I've just had.

Feifei

Oh yes? What happened?

Rob

Well, I went out for dinner with Neil, then we went to the pub and then I lost my wallet and... to cut a long story short... I got home at two o'clock this morning.

Feifei

Oh dear. But why 'cut the long story short'? I want to hear the whole story.

Rob

No, you don't – it would take too long and we haven't got time – and anyway, it's not that interesting – that's why I'm just telling you the most important parts of the story.

Feifei

Right, so 'to cut a long story short' means to tell only the main or important parts of a story – not all the details. Hmm, that's a shame Rob because I'm sure you had lots more to tell me.

Rob

Really? Well we've got to keep this programme short so shall we move on and hear some examples of this phrase in action....

Examples

So I spoke to the boss and to cut a long story short, I'm getting a promotion!

There was a technical problem with our plane which they couldn't fix so to cut a long story short, we had to wait for another flight and we arrived a day late.

I met Geeta last year and to cut a long story short, we getting married tomorrow!

Feifei

So 'to cut – or make - a long story short' means to tell only the important parts about something that has happened and leaving out all the details. So Rob, you're telling me you went out with Neil, lost your wallet and got home very very late?

Rob

Yes, that's about it. Not very exciting – but the details are boring – that's why my long story is short. Why do keep asking?

Feifei

Well actually Rob, it sounds like a tall story a tall story - a story or fact that is difficult to believe.

Rob

Oh really, why do you say that?

Feifei

Well I spoke to Neil this morning and he said you didn't go for dinner last night. You went straight to the pub, then another and another pub. And you left your wallet there so you had no money to get home and had to walk.

Rob

Ah well... that's the long story. Did you really want all the details?

Feifei

Oh yes. Never cut a long story short if it's a good one!

Rob

If you say so Feifei. Bye.

Feifei

Bye.