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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The English We Speak

### Skew-whiff



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Feifei**

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

**Rob**

And I'm Rob.

**Feifei**

And I have to say Rob, you look fantastic! Big night, tonight, eh?

**Rob**

Well, I like to make an effort sometimes. It's not every night you get invited to a movie premiere.

**Feifei**

So handsome...

**Rob**

Do you like my bow tie?

**Feifei**

Oh yes. Just one thing...

**Rob**

What's that?

**Feifei**

It's a bit... skew-whiff.

**Rob**

Oh, really?

**Feifei**

Yes. It's not quite straight. Here.

**Rob**

Oh, thanks. That's better.

**Feifei**

Absolutely.

**Rob**

It's a good word, skew-whiff. We use it to describe things that aren't quite straight, or not quite as they should be.

**Feifei**

Like your tie. And your... hang on... your hair.

**Rob**

No, no, no – don't touch the hair. I spent ages getting it just right.

**Feifei**

Sorry. We can also use skew-whiff to describe things that don't go according to plan.

**Rob**

Now Feifei, I'm just off to check myself in the mirror. Let's play some examples while I'm gone.

**Examples**

A: There we go! One perfectly hung picture. What do you think?

B: Hmm, it's a little bit skew-whiff. Let me hang it straight.

This table is skew-whiff. One of the legs must be too short.

Our journey went a bit skew-whiff after we missed the train this morning.

I wanted to spend the whole weekend working on my dissertation, but everything went a bit skew-whiff when my friend arrived in the afternoon.

**Rob**

This is the English We Speak from BBC Learning English. We are talking about the word skew-whiff. OK, that's my bow tie looking perfect now, thanks Feifei.

**Feifei**

Great. There's one more thing.

**Rob**

Oh yes? What's that?

**Feifei**

Take some chewing gum. Your breath is fine, I think, but it's always good to have some, just in case.

**Rob**

Yes, you wouldn't want a whiff of bad breath at the premiere.

**Feifei**

Indeed, the word 'whiff' on its own means 'a sudden smell of something'. No danger of that happening now. Enjoy the show!

**Rob**

I will!

**Feifei and Rob**

Bye.