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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The English We Speak

### Throw in the towel



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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.

**Neil**

And I'm Neil. Hey, do you know what, Feifei? I've had enough!

**Feifei**

You've had enough? Enough of what?

**Neil**

Trying to do all my washing.

**Feifei**

Really? Is it that hard?

**Neil**

It is. I just can't keep up with all the clothes I have to wash, dry and iron. It doesn't matter how much washing I do, I keep running out of clean clothes.

**Feifei**

Yes I can see! Haven't you been wearing that shirt all week? So, what are you going to do?

**Neil**

I don't know. I think I'll just **throw in the towel**.

**Feifei**

Washing just one towel won't help – you can't wear that to work.

**Neil**

That's not what I meant. '**To throw in the towel**' is a saying that means 'to admit defeat'. The phrase comes from boxing. If a boxer is being hit too much, and is losing the fight, sometimes his coach will throw a towel into the boxing ring to signal the fight is over. He's been defeated.

**Feifei**

Got it! So, it means you've given up. You can't do it. And for you, it means no clean clothes! Let's hear some more examples of this phrase, shall we?

### Examples

I've tried my best but this job is just too hard – I'm afraid I'm going to have to **throw in the towel** and quit.

I know the race is tough, but **don't throw in the towel**, keep going and you might actually win!

I've been trying to learn Korean for years but I'm not making any progress so I guess it's time to **throw in the towel**.

### Feifei

This is The English We Speak, and Neil's mentioned he's '**throwing in the towel**' which means he's 'admitting defeat' – giving up on doing his washing. You can't cope can you Neil?

### Neil

I have tried. There's just much to do.

### Feifei

Maybe you've got too many clothes. But if you're not going to wash them, what are you going to wear?

### Neil

I've still got my nightclub gear I used to wear as a student – will that do?

### Feifei

I think you'd be better off just wearing a towel, Neil!

### Neil

Thanks for the fashion advice. I think my best option is just to take everything to the launderette.

### Feifei

Good idea. See you.

### Neil

Bye!