
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Give someone the runaround



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Rob

And I'm Rob. Hello.

Feifei

Hey, Rob, how is your application to run in the marathon going?

Rob

Not great. I fill in a form and then I'm told to fill in another one.

Feifei

Have you tried phoning someone?

Rob

Yes. And they won't give me a straight answer. They just keep **giving me the runaround**.

Feifei

Well, that makes sense. If you're going to run in a marathon, you've got to run around.

Rob

No, Feifei. **Giving someone the runaround** does not involve any exercise. If you **give someone the runaround**, it means you 'behave in an unhelpful way' – possibly sending someone from one place to another to get help. If you are **given the runaround**, it can be very frustrating.

Feifei

I'm sure it is. I know lots of situations where I've been **given the runaround**.

Rob

Well, there's one place where you won't be **given the runaround**. It's here, with some helpful examples of this phrase.

Examples

When I called the bank to ask for a loan, they just **gave me the runaround**.

She went to the hospital to get the results of her test, but she just **got the runaround**.
Now she's going to make a formal complaint.

When I complained about the bill, I was told to speak to the boss. But he wasn't there! I think I'm just being **given the runaround**.

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're finding out about the phrase '**to give someone the runaround**', which means 'to deliberately behave in an unhelpful way'. And, Rob, you've been **given the runaround**.

Rob

I have. All I want to do is get a place in the marathon. But nobody seems to want to help me.

Feifei

Could it be that you're so unfit, they just don't want to give you a place?

Rob

I don't think so. I've been training for weeks!

Feifei

Well, I managed to get a place straight away with no runaround.

Rob

What? You're running the marathon too? Why didn't you tell me? Right, I'm going to phone them again and demand a place.

Feifei

And don't be **given the runaround** this time, Rob!

Rob

I won't. See you at the start line!

Feifei

Bye.