
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Dead



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak – I'm Neil and this is Feifei. Feifei? Feifei!

Feifei

Huh? Oh sorry, Neil! I had a really late night last night so I'm dead tired today!

Neil

You're dead tired, Feifei? Are you dying? That's awful! What have you got? Is it contagious?

Feifei

Oh, Neil, don't be silly! I'm not sick or contagious or dying! I'm just really tired!

Neil

That's a relief! But, you said you were 'dead' tired. But you're not dying?

Feifei

Oh really, Neil – I think you're more tired than I am! I said 'dead' tired because I'm really tired.

Neil

So we can use 'dead' to mean 'really' or 'very'?

Feifei

That's right – if you want to emphasise an adjective, you can use 'dead' to make it stronger.

Neil

Well that's dead confusing – perhaps we should take a look at some examples.

Examples

Is it lunch time yet? I'm dead hungry!

The man sat next to me on the train this morning kept falling asleep on my shoulder – it was dead annoying!

I was dead happy when I passed my driving test!

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're talking about a different use of the word 'dead'. Normally it means the opposite of the adjective 'alive' but native English-speakers, particularly people in the north of England, often use it before an adjective to emphasise what they are saying. Could you tell us a time when you were dead happy, Neil?

Neil

Well, when I woke up this morning and found I had another hour until my alarm went off! I was dead thrilled!

Feifei

Not quite, Neil! You were dead happy, but not dead thrilled! You can't use 'dead' with extreme adjectives.

Neil

Oh OK, so you can say 'dead cold' but not 'dead freezing' Or 'dead good' but not 'dead fantastic'.

Feifei

That was a dead good explanation, Neil! I see you have woken up a bit now, but I'm still dead tired.

Neil

Well how about you make us both a coffee while I finish the programme – it's your turn to make the coffees!

Feifei

Err, no, Neil – I always make the coffee! I'll go make a coffee for me, not you, while you finish the programme!

Neil

Uh oh. I'd best go and make the coffees - she's dead sensitive when she hasn't had enough sleep! Well, bye everyone, see you next time!