
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Fight tooth and nail



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello, this The English We Speak. I'm Feifei...

Rob

...and hello, I'm Rob.

Feifei

You're looking a bit angry, Rob.

Rob

Yes, I am. I'm really angry. I've just heard some bad news.

Feifei

Oh no. What's happened?

Rob

It's the cafe I go to. They've decided to become a vegan cafe – no more meat. Where am I going to buy my bacon sandwich from now?!

Feifei

There could be worse things to get angry about.

Rob

Really? I don't think so. I'm going to fight tooth and nail to get them to change their mind.

Feifei

Ooo, that sounds painful – protesting with your teeth and nails.

Rob

Of course not, Feifei. When you fight tooth and nail for something, you use a lot of effort and determination to get something you want. You can also do it to stop something happening too.

Feifei

But it's an odd phrase, Rob?

Rob

Yes, it's a very old English phrase, and basically means to use everything you have available to get the outcome you want.

Feifei

Even your teeth and nails?! Well, let's hear some examples of people fighting tooth and nail...

Examples

We're going to fight tooth and nail to stop them building a new motorway going right past our house.

After fighting tooth and nail, I finally managed to get the pay rise I felt I deserved.

My football team needs to fight tooth and nail to stay in the top division. They have to win today's match!

Feifei

You're listening to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English, and we're talking about the phrase 'to fight tooth and nail', which means to you use all your effort and determination to get something you want or to stop something from happening. And Rob, that's what you're going to do to stop your favourite cafe from serving vegan food.

Rob

Not exactly – they can sell vegan food, but I want them to carry on selling bacon sandwiches – I love them. That's what I'm fighting tooth and nail for.

Feifei

Yes I know. Well it can't be a vegan cafe if it sells bacon.

Rob

Right, well I'm going to organise a petition to get bacon back – do you want to sign it?

Feifei

No I don't – but Rob, have you seen this leaflet I was given? It says '50 percent off all vegan food this week'. And guess what? It's at your favourite cafe.

Rob

50 percent discount you say – hmmm, maybe I should try some vegan food.

Feifei

Yes, try a beetroot hummus sandwich – far healthier and less fattening Rob.

Rob

Thanks! I will. Bye.

Feifei
Goodbye.