Feifei
So, tonight’s the night, Neil. How do you feel?

Neil
A bit nervous, but mostly excited. I’ve been practising my speech all morning.

Feifei
Just go out there, smile, and don’t forget: mind your Ps and Qs!

Neil
Eh? I know how to spell, Feifei.

Feifei
You know what I mean!

Neil
Don’t worry! I won’t offend anyone.

Feifei
Mind your Ps and Qs is our phrase on The English We Speak. If someone tells you to mind your Ps and Qs, they’re telling you to be polite in a social situation, and to be careful about what you say or do.

Neil
Feifei, I’m always on my best behaviour. Now, let me practise my speech.

Feifei
And I’ll play some examples.

Examples
Gang, Gang, Gang! How many times have I told you to mind your Ps and Qs when you’re with your grandparents? Grandma doesn’t like that kind of language!

Last week’s meeting with our new clients was super frustrating. But I had to mind my Ps and Qs. As they say, the customer is always right!
Lan always says the first thing that comes into her head. I just hope she minds her Ps and Qs at lunch today.

**Feifei**
You’re listening to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. In this programme we are looking at the expression ‘mind your Ps and Qs’. So Neil, finished practising your speech?

**Neil**
Not yet. I’ve been distracted by today’s phrase. I’ve been looking it up online.

**Feifei**
And?

**Neil**
Nobody agrees where it comes from. There are so many theories. One is that printers back in the 19th Century used to get confused between the small letters p and q.

**Feifei**
They do look similar! So they had to mind their Ps and Qs. Makes sense.

**Neil**
And there’s another about bartenders in 17th Century England. They used to serve beer in measures called pints and quarts. Pints with a ‘P’ and quarts with a ‘Q’. When a customer was drinking too much…

**Feifei**
… They told them to mind their pints and quarts? Their Ps and Qs. Yes, makes sense too.

**Neil**
And there’s another…

**Feifei**
Neil?

**Neil**
Yes?

**Feifei**
Your speech is in one hour. Shouldn’t you be practising?

**Neil**
Oh! So it is.

**Feifei**
And… Mind your Ps and Qs!
Neil
OK. Bye.

Feifei
Bye.