
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Rat race



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak with me, Feifei...

Rob

...and me, Rob.

Feifei

So, Rob, I have a very simple question for you.

Rob

Yep?

Feifei

Why have you got enormous whiskers glued to the side of your face, and why are you wearing a running vest?

Rob

Well Feifei, it's a new year – and according to our Chinese friends, it's the 'Year of the Rat'. New Year, new resolutions – so I've decided to join the rat race!

Feifei

You've decided to join the rat race? You mean to get really competitive at work and concentrate on promotions and pay rises at the expense of your free time?

Rob

That's right.

Feifei

But why?

Rob

Money!

Feifei

Right, well let's hear some examples of this expression before a little more explanation.

Examples

I'm going to quit the rat race. I earn all this money but I never have enough time to spend it! It's just work, work, work!

People complain about the rat race, but if you earn enough, you can retire at 50!

Nieves decided to quit the rat race after she had a serious health scare. She realised that the money wasn't worth the stress.

Feifei

You're listening to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. In this programme, we're looking at the expression 'rat race'. It's used to describe a way of life in which people work very hard for a lot of money.

Rob

But there's no free time and it's very, very competitive. You heard in the examples, we often hear the word 'quit' used with 'rat race'. Quit the rat race.

Feifei

But you, Rob, have decided to join it. You do know that you don't have to look like a rat to join the rat race? And you certainly don't have to wear a racing vest.

Rob

Just trying to make things clear for our audience, Feifei!

Feifei

I do quite like those whiskers, though.

Rob

(Squeaks)

Feifei

Bye!

Rob

Bye bye!