
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Moonshot



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Roy

And I'm Roy! 10, 9, 8, 7...

Feifei

What are you doing? And why are you dressed like an astronaut?

Roy

I'm practising my countdown for when we head to the Moon. 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. We have lift off!

Feifei

Please stop! In this programme we're teaching the expression 'moonshot', which refers to an ambitious project carried out without any expectation of short-term profitability. It does not mean we're going to the Moon! Where did you get that a spacesuit from?

Roy

I found it... in my garden. That definition of 'moonshot' makes more sense. Now I understand why people have been talking about a moonshot vaccine.

Feifei

Exactly! An experimental vaccine to fight Covid-19! You're really learning!

Roy

Well, while I take this spacesuit off, let's have some examples...

Examples

We're investing in a moonshot vaccine to help fight the virus.

I'm not sure if their new driverless EV will ever come to market. It's a bit of a moonshot.

The project is a moonshot. It might not help the company in the short-term.

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English, and we're talking about the expression 'moonshot' which refers to a project that is experimental and doesn't necessarily have any short-term financial benefits.

Roy

Yes – so the most common reference recently has been the moonshot vaccines or moonshot testing to fight Covid-19. The phrase has a lot in common with 'shoot for the moon' - the idea of aiming for an ambitious target.

Feifei

That's right – that's some real moonshot thinking right there! You always have some ambitious ideas – like the time you wanted everyone to dress up like squirrels and run around Hyde Park.

Roy

Thanks Feifei! That was for charity. I always like to shoot for the Moon with my ideas.

Feifei

You certainly do! But Roy, you look a bit down. What's wrong?

Roy

It's sad that we're not going to the Moon. I once made my own spaceship out of a packet of crisps, a tennis ball and some duct tape. Sadly, it didn't work – it was a bit of a moonshot.

Feifei

I wish you were going to the Moon – it would certainly be quieter in the office. Bye Roy.

Roy

Bye.