
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Zhuzh



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Jiaying

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

Neil

...and hello, it's me, Neil. So, Jiaying, what do you think?

Jiaying

What do I think of what?

Neil

My outfit. I'm off to a party soon, so I thought I'd dress up a bit.

Jiaying

Err, Neil, if you don't mind me saying, you need to 'zhuzh' up your outfit.

Neil

Excuse me? Did you just sneeze?

Jiaying

No, Neil. I said 'zhuzh'.

Neil

Bless you.

Jiaying

No! 'Zhuzh'. This verb is an informal word to mean 'make something more interesting or attractive by changing it slightly'. It's often followed by the word 'up'. So, I'm just saying your outfit needs a slight improvement – if you really want to make an impression!

Neil

Oh really! Shall we see if we can zhuzh up these examples first?

Examples

I've tried to zhuzh up my living room with some bright yellow cushions.

Try zhuzhing up your suit with a coloured tie.

She zhuzhed up her cooking by adding a bit of chilli powder.

Jiaying

You're listening to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English, and I'm trying to explain the word 'zhuzh' to Neil!

Neil

You sneezed again!

Jiaying

No, I didn't! When you 'zhuzh up' something, you make something more interesting or attractive by changing it slightly. So, Neil, how about a coloured shirt to zhuzh things up?

Neil

No thanks, I prefer to wear black.

Jiaying

Come on, Neil, how about some fancy shoes?

Neil

Black ones are fine. To be honest, I don't have anything fancy to wear.

Jiaying

Oh dear – it looks like you need to zhuzh up your wardrobe, Neil.

Neil

No need – this is a horror-themed party, so just black will be fine.

Jiaying

If you say so, Neil. Bye.

Neil

Bye.