
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Eke out



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Jiaying

Welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Jiaying.

Neil

...and hello, I'm Neil. Jiaying, there's a bit of problem.

Jiaying

Oh no, what's wrong?

Neil

We've almost run out of teabags – there's just one left! What are we going to do?

Jiaying

Don't panic, Neil. We're just going to have to eke out the last one and share the teabag.

Neil

'Eat out'?

Jiaying

Eke!

Neil

Are you OK? Have you seen a mouse?

Jiaying

No, Neil. 'Eke' – to 'eke out' means to make the supply of something last a bit longer, by using it carefully. It's what you do when you only have a small quantity of something, and you want it to last as long as possible.

Neil

Like our last teabag. I'm not sure if eking out this last teabag will make the tea taste very good.

Jiaying

Well, go and find out while we eke out some examples...

Examples

Because of the storm, we had to eke out food supplies before we could get to the shops again.

Our crops have failed this year so we can hardly eke out a living.

I've lost my job, so I need to eke out what savings I have to survive.

Jiaying

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're hearing about the phrasal verb 'to eke out' which means to make the limited supply of something last a bit longer, by using it carefully. So, Neil, how is the tea?

Neil

Like dishwater.

Jiaying

Oh dear, I think you need to go to the shop and buy some more.

Neil

Do I have to? Couldn't we just eke out this script for a little longer?

Jiaying

Sure. Bye.

Neil

Bye.