

BBC Learning English

How to ...

respond to someone's good news



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SIG

William: Hello and welcome to *How to...* your weekly instruction manual for saying and doing things in English.

TAG

My name's William Kremer. Let's start today's programme with a piece of good news: I'm getting married next month!

So what's the best way for you to respond to something like that? Well, English speakers are lucky to have a word that they can use whenever something really good happens to another person...

Example

Elena: Congratulations!

William: Congratulations! If you're writing a card or a letter you might want to say what you are congratulating your friend about. To do this you can say...

Example

Elena: Congratulations on your engagement!

William: Or you can say...

Example

Elena: Congratulations on getting married!

William: But there are lots of things we can say to people who have some good news other than ‘congratulations’. I’m going to invite a colleague from BBC Learning English into the studio, and I’m going to tell him my good news – about me getting married next month, and let’s see what words he uses when he responds.

STING

William: And Matt has just come into the studio – hello Matt.

Matt: Hello William.

William: Now the reason I have called you into the studio today is because I have some good news.

Matt: Ah excellent – I like good news.

William: I am going to be getting married next month...

Matt: Oh congratulations, that’s fantastic news! Are you excited?

William: I am very excited, yes! Erm and er.. yeah... so...

Matt: Are you getting married in a church?

William: No, we’re not getting married in a church – but er, no, we’re doing the modern thing -

Matt: You’re doing the modern thing rather than the traditional...

William: Yes, that’s right.

Matt: Very good.

William: That’s my news.

Matt: That’s splendid news. I also have some very exciting news...

William: You don’t! Do you also..?

Matt: I... I also have some exciting news.

William: What’s your news?

Matt: In one month’s time, my wife is having a baby boy – our first child.

William: Is she?!

Matt: Yes, she is.

William: Wow, I didn't know that! When did you... well, you must have found out a long time ago...

Matt: I found out a long time ago, but we've been keeping it quiet.

William: Oooh, well congratulations! Do you know if it's a boy or a girl?

Matt: I said it was a boy.

William: Oh yes! Good point... OK Matt, that's all I wanted to tell you.

Matt: Ah, fantastic – well, good luck.

William: Good luck to you too. Bye bye.

OK, Matt's left the studio now. Don't worry if you didn't catch all of that conversation – but let's listen back now to a few interesting bits.

MUSIC

William: Did you notice that after I told Matt my good news, he asked me some questions?

Example

Matt: ... Are you excited? Are you getting married in a church?

William: Matt is interested in my wedding. In general, when people tell you something new, something exciting – a very good way to respond is to ask lots and lots of questions!

What other language did Matt use?

Example

Matt: Oh congratulations, that's fantastic news!

William: This is a very common and a very easy way to respond to some good news. Simply describe the news as ‘fantastic’ or ‘great’ or brilliant – or use any other very positive word...

Example

Matt: Oh congratulations, that’s fantastic news!... That’s splendid news – I also have some very exciting news...

William: But you don’t need to say, ‘That’s fantastic news’. When we’re talking, we can often use these very positive words like ‘fantastic’ or ‘splendid’ by themselves...

Example

Matt: Ah, fantastic, well, good luck...

William: We can also use the words ‘how’ and ‘what’ by saying ‘how splendid’ or ‘what splendid news’ but you don’t hear these phrases very often nowadays – they’re quite old-fashioned.

One other thing to mention is that good news often involves surprise. Listen again to me being surprised by Matt’s good news:

Example

William: In one month’s time, my wife is having a baby boy – our first child.

William: Is she?!

Matt: Yes, she is.

William: Wow, I didn’t know that! When did you... well, you must have found out a long time ago...

'Wow' - W-O-W - is a word that we use when we are really surprised by something – and pleased!

END MUSIC

William: Well, some interesting language there. I just want to play you a couple of other phrases that you might find useful – here's the first one:

Example

Elena: I'm really pleased to hear that.

William: I'm really pleased to hear that. And here's another phrase –

Example

Elena: I'm really happy for you.

William: I'm really happy for you. These two phrases are a little bit more formal, so you're not so likely to hear them. But they are very useful for when you're writing to congratulate someone – maybe in a card.

END SIG

You can listen again to the dialogue from this programme, and practise today's language point, on the How To webpage on BBC Learning English dot com.
Goodbye!