
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Out for the count



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Neil and joining me today is Li.

Li

Hello everyone. The expression that Neil and I will talk about today is "out for the count".

Neil

This expression comes from the sport of boxing and describes a boxer who has been knocked unconscious who can't stand up within a count of ten seconds. The boxer is said to be "out for the count" and loses the match. But the expression can also be used in another way...

Li

Oh, how?

Neil

Well, I had a really active weekend. I went hiking in Wales with my wife and our two children.

Li

Hiking in Wales, that sounds like hard work.

Neil

Well not to my kids. They loved it, they were racing each other, running up and down the hills...then we went to the zoo where they had more fun.

Li

So you had a nice day out then?

Neil

Definitely. The evening was even nicer for us, me and my wife as there was no reading of bedtime stories and no computer games. By 7 o'clock, the kids were in bed, and the next thing we knew, they were out for the count!

Li

Oh I think I've got it. Do you mean they were so tired from all the exercise that they fell asleep immediately their heads touched the pillows?

Neil

Yes, that's right. Let's hear some examples how this expression is used:

Examples

Jack had so much to drink last night that when he got home he was out for the count.

There was some trouble outside my house last night but I didn't hear it: I was so tired I was out for the count.

Li

Oh, how I wish I could fall asleep quickly – but I often have to take a sleeping pill.

Neil

That's not good. You should try doing some exercise to make you tired: how about jogging?

Li

Oh no, it's boring, it's too monotonous.

Neil

Well, how about something relaxing like yoga?

Li

Yoga, no, I'm not very flexible, I never have been.

Neil

Well, what about boxing? It's exciting and you could be knocked unconscious - out for the count!

Li

Very funny!

Neil

Anyway you have learned a good expression and it's time to say goodbye.

Li

Bye!