
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Stab in the back



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

Harry

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak! Harry with you here today, and joining me is Feifei.

Feifei

Hello everybody! And the expression we are going to look at in this programme is 'stab in the back'. So Harry, how are you?

Harry

[Distracted] What? Oh, not bad. Well... no, fine. Nothing.

Feifei

What? You're not telling me something. What's the matter? Has something happened?

Harry

No, not really. I'm just annoyed with Jim. I don't really want to talk about it.

Feifei

But I thought you were friends.

Harry

Well, we were friends, until I discovered he stabbed me in the back...

Feifei

Stabbed you in the back?!

Harry

Yes, exactly! He had a meeting with the boss, and right there, he stabbed me in the back! In front of everyone! I'm really annoyed.

Feifei

But, surely you're more than annoyed! I mean, if he stabbed you in the back – don't you need an ambulance at least? I mean, it's lucky he didn't kill you. What did he stab you with? A knife?

Harry

Ah, no. He stabbed me in the back with his words. There was no actual violence.

Feifei

He stabbed you with words?

Harry

Yes. To stab someone in the back means to betray someone. He knew that I wanted to handle the new video project, and he said he'd help me get it. But in the meeting he told the boss that I didn't have enough experience to do a project like that.

Feifei

Ah, so stab in the back means he did something bad to you even though you thought you were friends.

Here are some more examples of 'stab in the back'.

INSERT

A lot of young people think you have to stab people in the back to get ahead in business, but you don't.

She told me she was in love with me, but then she stabbed me in the back and went out with Dave.

I wouldn't trust Laura if I were you. She's nice to your face, but then she stabs you in the back.

Feifei

So, you're not happy with Jim. But personally I'm just relieved. It could have been a lot worse. I mean, you're not actually hurt. Remember sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you.

Harry

Well, that's an expression for another programme!

Feifei

You're right. Today's expression is to stab someone in the back. Not a very nice thing to do.

Harry

Join us again soon on The English We Speak.