
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

To fall at the first hurdle



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Rob

... and hello I'm Rob. So what's this I hear about your new business idea Feifei?

Feifei

Yes, I'm going to make and sell cakes.

Rob

Hmm, are you sure Feifei?

Feifei

Yes I'm sure. Look I've already made this batch of muffins.

Rob

Err, are they supposed to be black? Cooking isn't really your speciality is it?

Feifei

Cooking isn't my speciality! Rob, just you watch, I'm going to be a millionaire selling my homemade cakes.

Rob

I'm sorry to say Feifei but I think you're going to fall at the first hurdle.

Feifei

Don't be stupid Rob, I'm not going to be jumping any hurdles – we're not talking about sport – just cooking.

Rob

No Feifei – I mean you're going to fail right at the start of what you're trying to do.

Feifei

Thanks Rob! So you think by cooking these 'black' muffins means I have already failed?

Rob

Well they are burnt. Let's hear some examples of other people who have fallen at the first hurdle....

Examples

Plans to construct a new motorway will fall at the first hurdle if they can't buy the farmland to build it on.

His dream of marrying Julie fell at the first hurdle when he discovered she was already married.

Feifei

'To fall at the first hurdle' means to fail near the beginning of something. Ah but Rob, why don't you actually taste one of these muffins before you call me a failure?

Rob

OK here goes. Mmm, not bad Feifei. They're not burnt...

Feifei

... no, it's actually a layer of crunchy toffee. I can cook Rob!

Rob

OK, I'm sorry for doubting you... but you're going to have to sell lots of muffins if you want to be a millionaire.

Feifei

I know. Perhaps I'll just sell these ones first and see how I get on.

Rob

Good idea. Just make sure you don't fall at the *final* hurdle!

Feifei

You mean fail near the *end* of what I'm trying to do?

Rob

Exactly.

Feifei

I won't – as long as you don't keep eating my cakes. Hands off!

Both

Bye!