
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

No great shakes



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello, I'm Rob...

Feifei

... and I'm Feifei and this The English We Speak.

Rob

Now Feifei, did you try out that new cafe on the way to work today?

Feifei

Yes, I did – I was really impressed – the new cafe has a great range of food and friendly staff. So have you tried it Rob?

Rob

Yeah, I've been there twice now – but, well, it's **no great shakes**.

Feifei

No great shakes?! That's the best thing about it, they sell amazing banana milkshakes...
mmmm

Rob

No, no, no. I wasn't talking about the shakes – I was referring to the cafe generally – there's nowhere to sit, the queues are long, and they didn't put enough froth on my skinny cappuccino – so it's **no great shakes** – in other words, it's not very good.

Feifei

Oh so **no great shakes** is an expression that means it's not very good. So you're not impressed?

Rob

I'm afraid not. And **no great shakes** also means 'ordinary' which describes this cafe. Let's hear some more examples of this phrase in action...

Examples

My sister puts on a good dinner party but she's **no great shakes** when it comes to cooking!

That new singer has a great voice but he's **no great shakes** at playing the guitar.

The film sequel is **no great shakes** compared with the first one – there was no story and the special effects were awful!

Feifei

So that's the expression **no great shakes** which means not very good or not very impressive. But Rob, maybe if you *did* try the banana milkshake it might change your opinion about the cafe? Look, I've got one here...

Rob

Mmmm, thanks, yeah... It's not bad, actually. This is a great shake. OK, well, perhaps I'll give it a second chance...

Feifei

Where are you going?

Rob

To buy a milkshake!

Feifei

You do know they cost four pounds?

Rob

What? Four pounds! Yes well, as I was saying, that cafe really is **no great shakes**.

Feifei

If you say so Rob. Bye.

Rob

Bye.