
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

To take a shot/stab in the dark



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

Rob

Welcome to The English We Speak with me Rob and oh... oh... Feifei... Feifei, where are you?

Feifei

Hi... hi... over here...come quickly.

Rob

Oh... oh... what seems to be the problem?

Feifei

I think there's been a murder!

Rob

What?! Really – a murder, here? How can you be so sure?

Feifei

Well, last night I was speaking to my friend and we were talking about Jenny from our office...

Rob

Oh yes Jenny, I haven't seen her around for a while ... so?

Feifei

My friend said Jenny has probably met someone, got married and moved to Australia – but then she said something very strange, she said it was 'a stab in the dark'.

Rob

'A stab in the dark'? Ha - so you think she's been murdered?

Feifei

Well possibly – she hasn't been seen for a long time and then someone was stabbed – and in the dark – so she must have been murdered at night. Oh dear, I think we should call the police!

Rob

No, don't call them yet. That phrase isn't as bad as you think. There's not been a murder. When you say you are 'taking a stab in the dark' it means you don't really know the truth and you are just guessing.

Feifei

Really? Oh phew. That is good news.

Rob

Ok. Let's hear the phrase in action...

Examples

It might be a stab in the dark but I think my football team is in a good place to win the league this season.

I don't know how many people came to see the show, but I'll take a stab in the dark and say about 300.

John thought we could sell our old car for £500 – but really he was taking a stab in the dark!

Feifei

So the phrase 'to take a stab in the dark' does not involve stabbing people! But Rob, if we're not sure what did happen to Jenny, it's still a bit of mystery.

Rob

Well maybe she didn't move to Australia... maybe she just got a new job... but I'm just taking a shot in the dark.

Feifei

A shot in the dark! Now you're talking about her being shot in the dark?

Rob

No no no no - a shot - or a stab in the dark means the same thing – it means I'm guessing – I don't really know.

Feifei

Well guess no longer – look, here she comes!

Jenny

Hello you two.

Rob

Jenny!

Jenny

Why are you looking so worried – has someone died?!!

Rob

Bye!

Feifei

Bye bye!