
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Not half

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white capital letters, all on a teal background.

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Feifei.

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Feifei

And today we're teaching a British slang expression – or maybe just half an expression!

Neil

The phrase is **not half**. Two simple words – but you need to know what they mean when used together.

Feifei

Let's try it out first and see if you can work out what it means. For example, Neil, you really enjoyed that pizza, didn't you?

Neil

Not half! I love pizza. And Feifei, you love playing darts, don't you?

Feifei

Darts, **not half!** I play every night. So – what does **not half** mean? It means 'very much' in these answers. When I replied "**not half**" I meant: 'Yes, very much.' I really like darts.

Neil

And do you?

Feifei

What?

Neil

Like darts?

Feifei

Erm, that's not the point. I'm trying to give an example.

Neil

For the record, I do love pizza.

Examples

A: That party was awesome!

B: **Not half**, mate. The music was incredible.

A: **Not half** is a useful phrase, huh?

B: **Not half**.

Feifei

Ahh, that was a funny example. Now, before we go – let's teach a variation of this phrase.

Neil

In this version, we have **not half** followed by an adjective. For example: I just got back from Singapore. It's **not half** expensive.

Feifei

So – that means it's very expensive! **Not half** expensive. Similarly, if I were to say: "Your new haircut's **not half** nice, Neil!"

Neil

You would be saying my haircut is very nice. Was that just another example?

Feifei

Oh no, I meant it.

Neil

Too kind.

Feifei

Er, thanks! So there we are – **not half** meaning 'very much'.

Neil

And **not half** with an adjective.

Feifei

See you next time.

Neil

Bye...