
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Frogmarch



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

Rob

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob.

Helen

Hello, I'm Helen. This is the programme where we try to help you understand language often heard in English conversations.

Rob

Well, I went to a presentation this morning and I heard a word that made me laugh.

Helen

What is it?

Rob

See if you can guess, Helen. Let's play a word game. Are you ready?

Helen

Yes I am.

Rob

OK. Well, it's made up of two words and the first word is a cute little animal.

Helen

OK.

Rob

And if you kiss this animal, it may turn into a prince.

Helen

I know this one. If you kiss a frog, it turns into a prince. The first word is 'frog'.

Rob

Well done. The second word is the type of walk that soldiers do.

Helen

Easy - marching.

Rob

You got it. I heard the word 'frogmarch' this morning. And do you know what we call a lot of frogs together?

Helen

A school of frogs?

Rob

No.

Helen

A herd of frogs?

Rob

No, it's an 'army' of frogs. I just have this cartoon picture in my mind of an army of frogs all wearing boots and marching down the river.

Helen

Oh that's hilarious. But what does 'frogmarch' really mean? Surely it's not a way of marching.

Rob

No, 'to frogmarch' means to force someone who is unwilling to move forward or to walk somewhere, often by holding their arms tightly. Here are some examples.

INSERT

The drunken suspect was handcuffed by the police and frogmarched to the waiting police van.

In major sporting events, if you disrupt the game, you risk being frogmarched out of the stadium by security guards.

Helen

Ouch, that's pretty harsh, isn't it? So how did you hear it used?

Rob

The presenter told us that his lecture on social dynamics was a must for everyone and so we either all had to sign up voluntarily or he would frogmarch us there himself.

Helen

Oh, that's a threat.

Rob

Exactly, so of course we all signed up.

Helen

Very effective. The next time I want full attendance, I'll know exactly what to say.

Rob

Frogmarching someone? Well, make sure you have enough people to do the job. It usually takes at least two people to frogmarch one person. Bye bye.

Helen

Bye.