
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

About



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Feifei

In this programme, we're talking about... 'about'!

Neil

About 'about'?

Feifei

About 'about'!

Neil

This is getting silly! We are indeed talking about the word 'about' – but not as it's usually used.

Feifei

Indeed. Let's demonstrate. Is Mark about today?

Neil

Yes, I saw him this morning.

Feifei

So – when I asked: "Is Mark about today?" I wasn't asking if Mark was somehow related to the concept of 'today' I just meant 'Is Mark here'?

Neil

'About' means 'here', or 'somewhere near here'.

Feifei

Mark's about. Mark's near here. By the way, who's Mark?

Neil

No idea. But I know he's near here!

Feifei

Well, that's reassuring. Time for some more examples about 'about'.

Examples

Hi, is Sue about? Just need to give her some files.

Will you be about this evening? I want to ask a big favour.

There's no one about. It's a bit scary.

Don't talk like that. There are children about.

Feifei

There we are. 'About' meaning in or close to an area.

Neil

You know, there's another word that behaves like this.

Feifei

You're talking about... 'around'!

Neil

Indeed. We could ask: "Is Mark around?"

Feifei

And we know the answer to that: you saw him this morning.

Neil

Except... you didn't really see him did you? Because Mark doesn't exist...

Mark

Hi – I'm Mark.

Neil

Ah, Mark!

Feifei

We were just talking *about* you!

Neil

We were just talking about 'about'.

Feifei
And 'around'.

Neil, Feifei, Mark
Bye.