
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Brass neck



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

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

Rob

Yes, it is. And hello I'm Rob.

Feifei

I don't know about you Rob, but I seem to have so much work to do at the moment.

Rob

Yeah, me too. We've got to meet that deadline by Friday.

Feifei

I guess we've all got lots to do – and that's why I was surprised that Phyllis has asked to take three days off work this week.

Rob

Three days? Are you sure? Maybe she's unwell?

Feifei

No, she's fine – I heard her say to the boss in a very loud voice 'I've got a great deal on a flight to Italy so I need to take the rest of the week off.'

Rob

What cheek – she's got a **brass neck**.

Feifei

A **brass neck**? Phyllis has a **brass neck**! Really – when did she get that – maybe she needs a holiday to recover from the operation?

Rob

No no no Feifei. Her neck isn't actually made of brass – I just mean she is confident but also a bit rude – she can do or say things that most of us would be too embarrassed to do or say.

Feifei

Yes, she just doesn't care what she says does she? So if someone is described as having a **brass neck**, it means they are confident and say or do what they want but doesn't understand their behaviour might be unacceptable to others.

Rob

Yes, she certainly doesn't worry about what other people think of her. A bit like people in these examples...

Examples

My ex-boyfriend's got a **brass neck**, coming round and asking me to do his washing!

The customer has a **brass neck** asking for a refund when it was obvious he had already worn the shoes.

She's got a **brass neck** telling the boss that he wasn't very good at his job – I would never say that!

Feifei

So having a **brass neck** means you are extremely confident about your own actions but you don't understand that your behaviour might be unacceptable to others. So it's not like us Rob?

Rob

Absolutely not. Although, I was wondering if you wouldn't mind writing the notes for the presentation we're doing? I've got to meet someone for lunch.

Feifei

Erm... ..

Rob

Come on Feifei, you love writing presentations.... Oh why are you looking so brassed off?

Feifei

Brassed off – you mean I'm looking annoyed and disappointed – maybe I'm looking brassed off because of your **brass neck**.

Rob

I'll take that as 'no' then. Oh well, at least you understand this English expression now!

Both

Bye!