
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Excuse me



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak with me, Feifei...

Rob

...and me, Rob. Now excuse me Feifei, I just need to reach over and get a tissue before I....
SNEEZE! Oh excuse me!

Feifei

Are you getting a cold?

Rob

Oh excuse me, I've just got to get this. *Hi mum, I've told you not to call me at work. I'll call you tonight. OK? Bye. Sorry about that.*

Feifei

...Rob, are you going to do any work?

Rob

Excuse me! I am working very hard to explain today's piece of authentic English.

Feifei

Excuse me? Say that again.

Rob

Yes – that's it – our phrase today is two words with many different meanings – 'excuse me'.

Feifei

I see – so when you sneeze or make a rude noise you can apologise by saying 'excuse me!'

Rob

Exactly. And when I wanted you to move so that I could reach for the tissues, I said 'excuse me' to politely ask you to move so that I could reach them. A bit like this...

Example

Excuse me, could you move down the bus please so that I can get on. Thanks!

Feifei

And what about that phone call?

Rob

Ah yes, I said 'excuse me' as a polite way of apologising for the interruption.

Feifei

So you were being polite and then you were being rude when you said 'excuse me!'

Rob

I was expressing shock and disbelief that you thought I wasn't working. A bit like this...

Example

Excuse me! How can you say I don't do any housework – I cleaned the bathroom yesterday.

Rob

And then you said 'excuse me?' because you didn't understand what I said earlier – as usual – and you wanted me to repeat it.

Feifei

Excuse me! That's not fair. Any other uses?

Rob

Yes. Here's another one...

Example

Excuse me, do you know the way to the railway station?

Feifei

OK, that's 'excuse me' to get someone's attention. Well Rob, now I've got *your* attention, you'll have to 'excuse me' because I've got to go.

Rob

A very good use of 'excuse me' Feifei – politely saying you have to go. So, can you think of any more...? Feifei? Feifei? Oh she really has gone.

Rob

Bye.