
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

A wild card



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Rob and joining me today is Feifei.

Feifei

Hello everyone. Hey, what about that new guy who's started in the office?

Rob

Brian?

Feifei

Yes, he's very funny – always telling jokes – and yesterday he started juggling with three oranges – he was very good.

Rob

Hmm, he might be funny but I haven't seen him do much work – I think he's a bit of a wild card.

Feifei

A wild card? You mean he's like a playing card – a heart, a spade or maybe a diamond?

Rob

No, no, although the expression does come from playing cards – here, it means he is unpredictable: he's someone we don't know much about so we're not sure how he's going to behave in the future.

Feifei

Oh do you think so? Well yes Rob, Brian is unpredictable!

Rob

Let's hear some more examples of this phrase...

Examples

We're taking a gamble, she's a wild card, but let's hope she delivers what she promises.

Jack is too much of a wild card to get a place on our team.

The wild card in this competition is Chelsea: nobody really knows which way the score will go.

Rob

Right, have you got that? A wild card can describe someone who is unpredictable or they behave in an unexpected way. But although Brian is a wild card, I wish he'd settle down and do some work instead of joking around all the time.

Feifei

Oh do you wish you were a bit like him?

Rob

Not at all – anyway what kind of card would you call me?

Feifei

You're my favourite card – you're an ace!

Rob

Ace! Gosh thanks Feifei, you're such a card!

Feifei

See you next time.

Both

Bye!