
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Up your game

This is not a word-for-word transcript

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white capital letters, all on a teal background.

Neil

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

Feifei

And I'm Feifei.

Neil

Actually, Feifei, can you help me with something?

Feifei

Go on.

Neil

There's this girl I like. I want to ask her for coffee. But I don't want to seem too serious or creepy or anything. Just friendly.

Feifei

And you're writing her a message? OK.

Neil

I just can't find the words.

Feifei

Easy. Stick a couple of emojis on there. Much less formal!

Neil

You mean, like, a smiley face?

Feifei

Yeah, but those are so last year.

Neil

Maybe a love heart?

Feifei

Seriously? That's a bit too much. You need to up your emoji game!

Neil

My emoji game... like an emoji of a video game... or a football?

Feifei

No. The phrase 'to raise your game', or 'to up your game', means to improve.

Neil

Yes, it's a good phrase. Feifei, you're not working hard enough, you need to up your game!

Feifei

That's not true... but good use of 'up your game'. The phrase has now developed a bit. We often add what we're trying to improve before the word 'game'.

Neil

Like this:

Examples

I never finish novels. I need to up my reading game.

I badly need to work on my interview game before my big interview next week.

You could do with a bit more exercise, mate. You should raise your running game!

Feifei

Great. Hope those examples help. Any progress with that text message?

Neil

Here goes: "Lucy. Please have a coffee with me tomorrow." And then some coffee emojis.

Feifei

Well, it's direct! But I still think we need to up your emoji game. Actually, and your texting game. Oh, and your dating game... We've got a lot of work to do!

Neil

Oh, ok. Well I already sent the message. Let's hope it works! And she's replied already.

Feifei

No way, what did she say?

Neil

"Neil. I thought you'd never ask! I'd love to have coffee. 3pm?" And then a couple of big smiley emojis.

Feifei

Wow, congratulations. Maybe it's me who needs to up my game.

Neil

Looks like it!

Neil+ Feifei

Bye.