
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Come full circle



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, where we explain expressions used by fluent English speakers so that you can use them, too! I'm Feifei, and I'm joined by Georgie. How are you, Georgie?

Georgie

I'm very well, thank you Feifei. How are you?

Feifei

Very well, thank you. So, what's the phrase we're learning in this programme?

Georgie

We are learning 'come full circle'. Now, imagine you walk in a circle around a tree, for example. If you 'come full circle', you end in the same position that you started. And that's a very literal way of explaining 'come full circle', but it's mostly used metaphorically, isn't it?

Feifei

Yes. It means you return to a starting point, but not in a negative way. For example, imagine someone has a low-level position in a company and they decide to get a different job to gain experience. Then, they come back to the original company with a senior position. They've come full circle.

Georgie

Yes. Now, that person has returned to where they began, but with a new sense of growth and new perspective. It's quite a poetic way to describe how things in life don't always just end, they can loop back in a meaningful way.

Feifei

Or it can be about something simple like fashion trends. For example, double denim trends from the 90s are back in fashion – we've come full circle. Let's listen to more examples.

Examples

So, I used to go to a theatre when I was younger and I absolutely loved it. And last week I sang on that stage! So yeah, I really felt like I've come full circle.

Growing up's funny, isn't it? I think back to places that my parents used to take me, and now I take my kids there. It's like I've come full circle.

I had a best friend at school, but we fell out and we argued a lot. But we got back in touch and now we're best friends again. We've really come full circle.

Feifei

Now, we can also use the phrase 'full circle moment'. So, 'come full circle' is about the process, 'full circle moment' is about the event.

Georgie

Yes, so for example, I used to be really shy, and I hated public speaking, but the fact that I'm now on camera all the time and present programmes for my job is a real full circle moment – I've come back to public speaking with a new confidence.

Feifei

Good for you Georgie! You've come full circle. OK, let's recap. We learnt 'come full circle' which means to return to where you started, but in a positive way, with new meaning. Thanks for joining us.

Georgie

Goodbye.

Feifei

Bye!