
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Step into the shoes



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, where we explain phrases used by fluent English speakers so that you can use them too. I'm Feifei.

Phil

And I'm Phil. I hear congratulations are in order. You got a promotion!

Feifei

I did! The boss is retiring, so I get to step into his shoes.

Phil

Now, before I ask you "but will they fit?" or "why do you want his shoes?" – it doesn't mean that, does it?

Feifei

No, no, of course not! We'll learn that expression in this programme – 'step into the shoes' of someone. It means to take on someone's role and their responsibilities.

Phil

It's often connected with the idea of readiness. If you're ready to step into those shoes, then it means that you have the right preparation to take on that responsibility.

Feifei

Yes. You'll also often hear it used when we want to say that someone will be hard to replace. For example, 'it's going be difficult to find someone who can step into the boss's shoes'.

Phil

Well, before you step into the boss's shoes, let's hear some other people using this expression.

Examples

The team's captain was injured so a young academy player stepped into his shoes.

My mum always hosts Christmas dinner but she's decided she doesn't want to this year so I'm going to step into her shoes and do it myself.

One of my colleagues had a baby so I stepped into her shoes and did her job while she was away.

Feifei

We've been learning the expression 'step into someone's shoes' to mean 'take on responsibilities of someone'.

Phil

There's another shoe expression that sounds a bit similar but has a different meaning, so make sure you don't get confused. If you 'put yourself in someone else's shoes', it means you try to see something from their perspective.

Feifei

Now, if you're planning to step into someone's shoes, improving your English can help you get ready. Make sure you're here next time, to learn a new English expression!

Phil

Bye!

Feifei

Bye bye!