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The English We Speak

Up to my eyes in

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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 as well. I'm Feifei, and I'm here with Beth, who's looking a bit stressed. Are you OK?

Beth

Hi Feifei. Sorry, my in-laws are coming this weekend and I've been up to my eyes in housework. And now I've come to work and I'm up to my eyes in emails. I haven't even had lunch!

Feifei

Oh no! You poor thing. It's not good to be up to your eyes in housework or emails, although 'up to your eyes in' is a useful phrase. It means you are very busy – completely surrounded by something that takes a long time or is stressful.

Beth

Yes. It means you've got so much to do that it's too much for you – it's overwhelming. We can use 'up to your eyes in' for work, chores, problems or anything that you are extremely busy with.

Feifei

I know. I'm up to my eyes in holiday preparation. There is so much to do and pack.

Beth

But holidays are always fun.

Feifei

That's true. It will be worth it. Let's hear some more examples of 'up to your eyes in'.

Examples

My washing machine is broken at the moment, so I'm up to my eyes in laundry.

I've got so many exams coming up – maths, English, history. I'm up to my eyes in revision.

I need to organise to catch up with all my friends. I've been so bad at replying to messages recently – I'm just up to my eyes in it.

Beth

So, if you're 'up to your eyes in' something, you're extremely busy with something that's stressful or time-consuming.

Feifei

We follow the phrase with a noun, so you could say 'I'm up to eyes in housework' or I could say 'I'm up to my eyes in holiday preparation'.

Beth

That's right. And it's quite a visual phrase. Imagine Feifei piling up all the family's clothes for holiday, all the way from the floor to her eyes. Feifei, that is a lot to do!

Feifei

I know. Right, I think we need to go. We have too much to do! We'll be back next time with another useful English phrase. See you soon!

Beth

Bye!