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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The English We Speak

### By the book

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.

*This is not a word-for-word transcript.*

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#### 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, and I'm joined by Georgie. Hi Georgie, are you ready to begin?

#### Georgie

Yes, I am... but actually Feifei, I was thinking about switching up the format of this programme a bit – try something a little different... What do you think?

#### Feifei

Mmm. I'm not sure about that, Georgie. We have to do things 'by the book' around here. We can't just make up last-minute changes whenever we like...

#### Georgie

OK, I suppose that makes sense. Well, you just said we do things 'by the book' and that's the phrase we're looking at in this programme. Can you explain what you meant by 'we do things by the book', Feifei?

#### Feifei

Yes! I mean that we follow the rules exactly, without improvising. So, to remember it, maybe imagine a book of rules that you follow, but it doesn't have to be a physical book of rules. Let's hear some examples from our BBC Learning English colleagues.

#### Examples

I know when some people are cooking, they just, like, throw any old ingredients in there and make it up as they go along, but I like to do it by the book and follow the recipe.

I do everything by the book and it does make it slower, which can be a bit annoying, but, yeah, got to follow the rules.

Our accountant is very thorough. He does everything by the book, so I trust his judgement.

**Georgie**

So, to use this phrase, you need an action first. Most commonly, you'll hear it with the verb 'do' - 'do something by the book', or 'do things by the book'.

**Feifei**

Yes, but we can use other verbs too, for example, 'We need to complete the paperwork by the book to make sure it's all correct'.

**Georgie**

OK, let's recap. We've learnt do something 'by the book' which means to follow the rules exactly, without improvising.

**Feifei**

And remember to check out our website: [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com) for more resources to help you improve your English. Thanks for joining us.

**Georgie**

Bye!