

(Feifei and Finn bump into each other at the supermarket)

Finn: Hello Feifei. I didn't know you shopped at this supermarket too.

Feifei: Hi Finn. Usually I don't. But it's close to the office and I have to rush home to welcome an important guest.

Finn: Who is it? Someone I know?

Feifei: No, it's my landlady. She's coming to collect some of her post and... well, I want to make her like me because next month, the contract on my flat is due to be renewed and she might want to increase the rent.

Finn: Yeah, I see what you mean. So you'd better butter her up then!

Feifei: Butter? Oh, yes. But I'm a pretty bad cook. If I baked a cake it would probably be horrible!

Finn: No. I don't mean butter for a cake. In English, when you say you'll 'butter someone up', you mean you'll be especially nice to them in the hope they'll do something good for you in return.

Feifei: Oh, I see. So I'll be nice to her and pay her compliments so that she likes me and keeps the rent low. I'll 'butter her up'! But isn't it a bit insincere?

Finn: Well, it can have a negative connotation, yes. Let's hear some examples of how to use 'to butter someone up' or 'to butter up someone', which is today's expression in The English We Speak.

Examples

Johnny: I was very impressed with your presentation, Mrs Beany. You are really intelligent and perceptive and...

Mrs Beany: Don't waste your time buttering me up, Johnny. I'm not raising your salary anytime soon.

The director was always ready to butter up Angelina Jolie. He knew she was looking for her next role and he wanted her in his movie.

Feifei: Oh, look. It's 6pm already. I'm very late. I might not be on time to meet my landlady and she'll be angry with me. She's a very busy woman.

Finn: Yeah, well, then you are in a jam!

Feifei: Jam?!

Finn: In English, when you say someone 'is in a jam', you mean they are in a difficult situation – but that's a different kind of jam!

Feifei: All these expressions about food!

Finn: I know. We have a huge appetite for food expressions. But let's leave some for another day. Bye!

Feifei: Bye!