

- Li: Hi, I'm Li, and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm here today with Jen.
- Jennifer: <out of breath> Hi!
- Li: You look a little... flustered? Are you ok?
- Jennifer: I woke up late and had to run to the train station. There's only one train an hour. I ran all the way there and made it by the skin of my teeth, just as the doors were closing. Phew! Is there any coffee...?
- Li: Hang on... how did your teeth help you to run for the train?
- Jennifer: Sorry?
- Li: You said "I made it by the skin of my teeth." I've got to see this! Show me your teeth! When did they grow skin?
- Jennifer: There's no skin on my teeth. That would be disgusting. Yuck.
- Li: So what did you mean?
- Jennifer: If you do something 'by the skin of your teeth' it means that you did it by a narrow margin – so you *just* managed to do it, or almost failed.
- Li: So, if you got to the train by the skin of your teeth, it means that you nearly missed it?
- Jennifer: That's exactly right. Let's hear some more examples of the phrase in action:

Examples

*My brother's so lucky – he never does any revision for exams but always manages to pass by the skin of his teeth!*

*Hi, I'm stuck in a traffic jam – I might still make it to the presentation, but it'll be by the skin of my teeth.*

- Li: So when you just manage to do something, you can say you did it by the skin of your teeth?
- Jennifer: That's it.
- Li: That's a really funny phrase. I like it.

Jennifer: It's good to be able to get your teeth into English phrases like this.

Li: My teeth? What about my teeth?

Jennifer: It's just another phrase, silly. If you get your teeth into something, it means that you become really involved in it.

Li: Well in that case, I do love getting my teeth into a new phrase... Teeth... hang on... Oh no! I've just remembered, I have a dentist's appointment at twelve o'clock – it's ten to twelve now, I'll never make it!

Jennifer: You go, I'll finish the programme – if you run you might make it, but by the skin of your teeth!

Li: Thanks Jen – bye... <runs out of door>

Jennifer: Join us again for another edition of The English We Speak and visit our website, [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Bye!