BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Onto something

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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

Becca
And I'm Becca.

Feifei
Becca, you look very excited today. What's going on?

Becca
Well, I think I've finally figured out how to improve my video edits. I might be onto something!

Feifei
Oh, that sounds interesting, but what do you mean by 'onto something'?

Becca
If you're onto something, it means you think you've discovered an important idea or clue about it. Maybe you noticed something other people haven't noticed yet.

Feifei
I see. So, for example, if detectives find a new clue, they might say 'We're on to something.' And it's usually a positive expression?

Becca
Yes. It suggests progress or a good idea. Maybe not a complete answer yet, but you're moving in the right direction.

Feifei
OK. Let's hear some more examples of this expression 'onto something'.

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Examples
Ah, so you think it's the foxes that are eating the rubbish? I think you're onto something.

I hadn't thought of doing it like that. But you know what? I think you're onto something.

She's tried putting rhubarb in the tart. Everyone else thinks it's a weird idea, but I think she's onto something.

Feifei
Becca, what else do we need to know about 'onto something'?

Becca
Don't confuse 'onto something' with 'into something' because they mean very different things.

Feifei
Oh really?

Becca
Yes. If you're 'into something', it usually means you enjoy it or are interested in it.

Feifei
Good to know. I think we're onto something with this programme. And that's it for this, the English we speak. Join us next time to learn more useful English expressions and phrases. Goodbye!

Becca
Bye!

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