

ENGLISH GRAMMAR MADE CLEAR

Future Forms

Will, going to, the present continuous, the present simple and more: how to talk about the future naturally.

I'll call you back

I'm going to quit

I'm meeting her at 3

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"Sound as capable in English as you are in your own language."

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How do we talk about the future?

English doesn't have one future tense. It has several **future forms**. The one you choose depends on **how you see the event**: a decision you're making now, a plan, a fixed arrangement, a timetable or a prediction. The right choice makes you sound natural and shows how certain you are.

WILL

will + verb

Instant decisions, offers, promises and opinions about the future.

I'll help you.
It'll be fine.

GOING TO

be going to + verb

Plans and intentions; predictions based on evidence.

I'm going to learn Spanish.
It's going to rain.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

be + -ing

Fixed arrangements with other people, usually with a time and place.

I'm meeting the client at 3.

PRESENT SIMPLE

verb (+ s)

Timetables and schedules.

The train leaves at 8:15.

Three classic mistakes

- | | |
|---|---|
| ✗ I ~~will meet~~ the client tomorrow at 10. | ✓ I'm meeting the client tomorrow at 10. |
| ✗ The phone's ringing. I'm ~~going to answer~~ it. | ✓ The phone's ringing. I'll answer it. |
| ✗ I'll call you when I ~~will arrive~~ . | ✓ I'll call you when I arrive . |

Why is it so tricky to master?

- 1 There are several forms with similar meanings**, and often more than one is correct. The difference is in how you see the event.
- 2 When did you decide?** Deciding right now → *will*. Decided before → *going to*.
- 3 Plan or arrangement?** *Going to* = your intention. The present continuous = it's arranged with other people (it's in your diary).
- 4 No will after time words.** After *when, as soon as, before, after, until, if*, use a present tense: *as soon as I land*.
- 5 Your language may use the present.** *Te llamo mañana* → *I'll call you tomorrow*, not *I call you tomorrow*.

The rules side by side

will & going to decisions, plans, predictions

- 1 **will: decisions made now**
I'm cold. I'll close the window.
- 2 **will: offers, promises, requests**
I'll send it today, I promise. Will you help me?
- 3 **will: predictions based on opinion**
often with *I think, probably, I'm sure*
I think prices will rise.
- 4 **will: future facts**
The office will be closed on Monday.
- 5 **going to: plans and intentions**
We're going to open an office in Porto.
- 6 **going to: predictions from evidence**
Look at the queue! We're going to be late.

Present tenses arrangements & timetables

- 1 **Present continuous: arrangements**
I'm having lunch with Sarah on Friday.
- 2 **Present continuous: usually with a time or date**
We're flying to Berlin next Tuesday.
- 3 **Present continuous: not for predictions**
~~It's raining tomorrow.~~ → It's going to rain tomorrow.
- 4 **Present simple: timetables**
The conference starts at 9.
- 5 **Present simple: after time words**
when, as soon as, before, after, until
I'll call you as soon as I land.
- 6 **Present simple: official programs**
The course runs from May to July.

More future forms B2+

Future continuous · will be + -ing
in progress at a future time
This time tomorrow I'll be flying to Tokyo.

Future perfect · will have + pp
completed before a future time
By Friday, we'll have finished the report.

be about to + verb
the very near future
Hurry up! The train is about to leave.

Which future form?

The same idea can take different future forms. Ask yourself: **when did I decide?** Is it **arranged?** Is there **evidence?**

Same idea, different forms

Decisions

will **DECIDING NOW**
"This one's cheaper." "OK, I'll buy it."

going to **DECIDED BEFORE**
I'm going to buy a new laptop this month.

Plans

going to **INTENTION**
I'm going to see Tom this week. (not arranged yet)

pres. cont. **ARRANGED**
I'm seeing Tom on Friday at 2. (in my diary)

Predictions

will **OPINION**
I think it'll rain later.

going to **EVIDENCE**
Look at those clouds! It's going to rain.

Schedules

pres. simple **TIMETABLE**
The meeting starts at 10. (official)

pres. cont. **OUR PLAN**
We're starting the meeting at 10.

How sure are you?

talking about probability

100%	will definitely · I'm sure... will · is certain to
80%	will probably · is likely to · I expect...
50%	may · might · could · there's a chance that...
20%	probably won't · is unlikely to · I doubt...
0%	definitely won't · there's no chance that...

Word order

- *will* **probably** / *will* **definitely**: We'll probably finish on time.
- **probably** *won't* / **definitely** *won't*: They probably won't agree.

Useful at work

I'll get back to you. · *I'm meeting the client on Monday.* · *We're going to launch in May.* · *The webinar starts at 4 p.m. CET.*

Exercises

1**Will or going to?**

Circle the correct option.

1. "The printer's not working." "Don't worry, I fix it."
2. We hire two new people next year. It's in the budget.
3. Look at these figures. We miss our target.
4. "I've got a headache." "Wait, I you some water."
5. I promise I be late again.
6. I a party on Saturday. I've already invited everyone.
7. "Can someone take notes?" "I do it."

2**Present continuous, present simple or will?**

Circle the correct option.

1. I the new supplier on Thursday at 11.
2. The train to Madrid at 7:45 every morning.
3. I'll call you as soon as I to the hotel.
4. What this weekend?
5. The conference at 9 a.m. tomorrow, according to the program.
6. We can't come on Saturday. We my parents.
7. Don't call me at 3. I a meeting with the board.

Exercises

3

Choose the best future form

Complete with the best future form of the verb in brackets.

1. "Tea or coffee?" "I _____ (have) coffee, please."
2. My flight _____ (land) at 6:30 p.m.
3. She _____ (start) her new job next Monday. She signed the contract yesterday.
4. It's 8:55 and he's still at home. He _____ (be) late for work.
5. Before you _____ (leave), please turn off the lights.
6. This time next week, I _____ (lie) on a beach in Greece.
7. By the end of the year, we _____ (open) three new stores.
8. Hurry up! The meeting _____ (about / start)!

4

How sure are you?

Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals.

1. I'm sure the client will accept. **DEFINITELY**
The client _____
2. It's possible that the price will go up. **MIGHT**
The price _____
3. I don't think they'll finish on time. **PROBABLY**
They _____
4. There's a good chance we'll win the contract. **LIKELY**
We _____

Exercises

5

Find the mistake

Some sentences are correct. Tick (✓) the correct ones and rewrite the others correctly.

1. I will see the dentist tomorrow at 4.

☐

2. I'll call you when I will get home.

☐

3. Look! That glass is going to fall.

☐

4. "These boxes are heavy." "I'm going to help you."

☐

5. She won't probably come to the meeting.

☐

6

Complete the email

Complete with the best future form of the verbs in brackets.

Hi Mark,

Thanks for your email. I'm afraid I can't meet on Tuesday because I ¹ _____ (fly) to Munich for a conference. The conference ² _____ (finish) on Wednesday afternoon, and my flight home ³ _____ (leave) at 7 p.m. I think I ⁴ _____ (be) quite tired on Thursday, so how about Friday morning? I ⁵ _____ (send) you an invitation now. Also, we ⁶ _____ (launch) the new website in May (it's all planned), so I'm sure I ⁷ _____ (need) your help with the content!

Best, Julia

7

Your turn

Complete the sentences about yourself.

1. Next weekend, I'm ...

2. This year, I'm going to ...

3. In ten years, I think I'll ...

Answer key

1 Will or going to?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. 'll | 2. 're going to |
| 3. 're going to | 4. 'll get |
| 5. won't | 6. 'm going to have |
| 7. 'll | |

2 Present continuous, present simple or will?

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. 'm meeting | 2. leaves |
| 3. get | 4. are you doing |
| 5. starts | 6. 're visiting |
| 7. 'm having | |

3 Choose the best future form

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 'll have | 2. lands | 3. 's starting | 4. 's going to be |
| 5. leave | 6. 'll be lying | 7. 'll have opened | 8. is about to start |

4 How sure are you?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The client will definitely accept . | 2. The price might go up . |
| 3. They probably won't finish on time. | 4. We're likely to win the contract. |

5 Find the mistake

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. I'm seeing the dentist tomorrow at 4. | 2. I'll call you when I get home. |
| 3. ✓ Correct | 4. "These boxes are heavy." "I'll help you." |
| 5. She probably won't come to the meeting. | |

6 Complete the email

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. 'm flying | 2. finishes |
| 3. leaves | 4. 'll be |
| 5. 'll send | 6. 're going to launch / 're launching |
| 7. 'll need | |

7 Your turn

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Next weekend, I'm visiting my parents. | 2. This year, I'm going to run a half marathon. |
| 3. In ten years, I think I'll be living by the sea. | |

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