

2a

the future

We can use different ways to express the future in English. The choice depends on the situation. Here are the main forms and their uses (see also 6b):

form	meaning / use	example
Future Simple with will + base form	• decisions made at the moment of speaking • predictions, often with <i>I believe, expect, hope, think</i>, etc. • offers or willingness	OK, I'll see you this evening at eight. ~~X All right. I'm going to see you at eight.~~ ✓ All right, I'll see you at eight. <i>I think it will be a difficult game.</i> <i>I'll give you a lift if you like.</i> <i>All right. I'll water the plants.</i> <i>Will you do me a favour?</i> <i>I'll love you forever.</i> <i>I won't speak to you ever again!</i> <i>Christmas day will fall on Tuesday this year.</i>
be going to + base form	• intentions, plans • something in the future is because of something in the present • predictions, especially when there is evidence	<i>I'm going to phone him tomorrow.</i> ~~X Look. It will rain.~~ ✓ Look. It's going to rain. <i>That building is going to collapse soon.</i>
shall + base form	• suggestions • offers (with <i>I</i> or <i>we</i>) • asking for advice	<i>Shall we go for a walk?</i> <i>Shall I help you with those bags?</i> <i>What shall I say if she calls?</i>
Future Continuous will be + -ing	• activities planned to a future time	<i>We'll be waiting outside the station.</i>
Present Continuous be + -ing	• arrangements, routines	<i>I'll be going by bus as usual.</i>
be + to -infinitive	• arrangements, often with <i>tonight, at eight, this weekend</i>, etc. • official arrangements, especially when announced	<i>I'm having my hair cut today.</i> <i>The President is to visit Brussels next week.</i>
Present Simple	• firm plans or timetables, especially after <i>when, as soon as, until</i>, etc.	<i>The boat leaves the island on Friday.</i> <i>I'll phone you when I arrive.</i>
would + base form	• reporting predictions in the past, often with <i>I believed, hoped</i>, etc.	<i>I thought it would be a difficult game.</i>

be going to, Present Continuous, Present Simple

Present Continuous or be going to?

We often use the Present Continuous to talk about the near future rather than the distant future:

I'm taking the kids to the cinema this evening.

I'm getting up at 6.30 tomorrow.

- We can use *be going to* or the Present Continuous for more distant events:
We're going to sail / 're sailing round the world next year.
- To talk about plans, we can use the Present Continuous or *be going to* in the same future situations, sometimes with a slight change of emphasis (To ask about plans or arrangements we use the Future Continuous. See 2c):
I'm going to see my psychiatrist tomorrow. (= I intend to see my psychiatrist tomorrow)
I'm seeing my psychiatrist tomorrow. (= I have already arranged to see my psychiatrist tomorrow)
- If there is no plan or arrangement, we can only use *be going to*. This use is prediction, especially when there is evidence. The Present Continuous is not possible:
Those dark clouds mean we are going to have a storm.
~~*X You're getting a headache if you don't turn the volume down.*~~
✓ You're going to get a headache if you don't turn the volume down.

Present Continuous or Present Simple?

In future use, the Present Simple always suggests a fixed timetable. The Present Continuous can suggest the possibility of change:

~~*X The sun is rising at six tomorrow.*~~

✓ The sun rises at six tomorrow.

I'm seeing him at six o'clock. (= my plan)

I see him at six o'clock. (= my fixed schedule)

- We often use the Present Continuous for personal arrangements, and the Present Simple for when an official or a committee makes the arrangements:
I'm seeing Mikis at the weekend. (= my arrangement)
I leave for London tomorrow. (= my boss says so)

be going to or will?

We use *be going to* to talk about something we know will happen because of information in the present (see also 3b):

The sky's grey – I think it's going to rain.

It's eight o'clock – you're going to be late again.

- We use *will* to talk about something we believe will happen:
Don't carry that heavy box – you will hurt your back.
- We also use *will* to indicate a sudden decision:
Leave the washing up – I'll do it later.
- We can use *going to* if we decided earlier:
I told you that I'm going to wash up.



2c

Future Continuous and Future Perfect

Future Continuous

The Future Continuous (*will be -ing*) can refer to temporary activities during a future period:



This time next week, she'll be flying to New York.
(= she has planned to fly to New York then)

- The Future Continuous often refers to a routine or to things which will happen in the normal course of events. It emphasises that no new arrangement is necessary:

I can give you a lift to the station. It's no trouble for me – I'll be going that way anyway.

- We use the Future Continuous to ask about someone's plan or arrangement:

Will you be using the library this afternoon?

When will the President be arriving because I must organise the reception?

Future Continuous or Future Simple?

We use the Future Simple (*will + infinitive* without *to*) to indicate a personal decision at the moment of speaking:

OK, I'll see you this evening.

- In the Future Continuous, the activity has already been decided:

~~X This time tomorrow I will lie on the beach.~~

✓ *This time tomorrow I'll be lying on the beach.*

We'll be staying here until next weekend.

I'll be driving to Madrid next week so I can give you a lift if you like.

- The Future Simple in questions can sound less polite than the Future Continuous. Compare:
Will you drive me to the airport?
Will you be driving me to the airport? (= more polite)

Future Perfect

We use the Future Perfect (*will have -ed*) to talk about something that will finish at a time in the future.



I'll have finished this assignment by Saturday.

Today is Tuesday. Rosie says she **will have finished** her assignments by Saturday. (= Rosie will finish at any time up to Saturday, but not later)

~~X When I finish this book it means I will read all of her books.~~

✓ *When I finish this book it means I will have read all of her books.*