

23 Future overview

23.1 THE FUTURE

The **present simple** can be used to talk about events that are timetabled or scheduled to take place in the future.

The train **arrives** at 10pm.

The **present continuous** can be used to talk about future arrangements and plans.

I'm **traveling** to Paris by train later this evening.



The **simple future** is the most common form used to refer to an event in the future.

It { **will**
is going to } rain tomorrow.

The **future continuous** describes an event that will be in progress at a given time in the future. The event will start before the stated time and may continue after it.

It { **will**
is going to } **be** raining all weekend.



23.2 "GOING TO" AND "WILL"

English uses both "going to" and "will" to talk about the future. They can sometimes have a very similar meaning, but there are certain situations where they mean different things.

"**Will**" is used to make predictions that aren't based on present evidence.

This is a prediction without firm evidence.

I think Number 2 **will** win.



"**Going to**" is used when there is evidence in the present moment to support a prediction.

Look, Number 2 is **going to** win.



English uses different constructions to talk about the future. These are mostly formed with the auxiliary verb "will" or a form of "be" with "going to."

See also:

The future with "going to" 17

The future with "will" 18

The **future perfect** is used to predict when an action or event will be finished. This tense looks back from an imagined time in the future.

They **will have** built the skyscraper by next year.

The **future perfect continuous** is used to predict the eventual duration of an activity. This tense looks back from the endpoint of the action.

By July, they **will have been working** on it for a year.



The **future in the past** describes thoughts about the future that someone had at some point in the past. There are three ways to form this construction.

The traffic was terrible, so I knew I **was going to** be late.

"Am going to" becomes "was going to."

"Will" becomes "would."

I thought I **would** finish the gardening by the end of the day.

I was nervous on Sunday night. I **was starting** a new job the next day.

"Am starting" becomes "was starting."

"Will" is used when a decision is made at the time of speaking.

I know! I'll **buy** Jo a surfboard for her birthday.

This decision was not planned in advance.



"Going to" is used when talking about a decision that has already been made.

I'm **going to** buy her a surfboard that I saw last week.

This decision has already been planned.

