

# 22 The future in the past

There are a number of constructions in English that can be used to describe thoughts about the future that someone had at some point in the past.

See also:

Past continuous 10

Infinitives and participles 51

## 22.1 THE FUTURE IN THE PAST USING "WAS GOING TO"

The future in the past is used to look back on an earlier prediction. Where "going to" is used to talk about the future from the present, "was / were going to" is used to talk about a past view of it.



EARLIER

NOW

This traffic is awful! I think I'm going to be late for work.

I thought I was going to be late, but I'm right on time.

### HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT

"WAS / WERE"

"GOING TO"

BASE FORM

REST OF SENTENCE

I was going to be late.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

I was going to start a new book today, but I didn't have time.



Delia was going to buy a new dress, but she couldn't find one.



Mike was going to have a party, but nobody could come.



We were going to buy a new dog, but we decided to wait.



They were going to go home, but they went dancing instead.



Sorry, I interrupted. Were you going to say something?



## 22.2 THE FUTURE IN THE PAST USING "WOULD"

Where "will" is used to talk about a future event from the present, "would" is used to talk about a past view of it.



EARLIER

NOW

I think I **will** finish the gardening today. It shouldn't take too long.

I thought I **would** finish today, but there is still a lot left to do.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

I always knew she **would** be successful.



I was told that my car **would** be fixed by now.



Did you ever think you **would** become a doctor?



I don't know where Hilda is. I thought **she'd** be here by 8pm.



## 22.3 THE FUTURE IN THE PAST USING THE PAST CONTINUOUS

The past continuous is used to talk about an arranged future event from a time in the past.



MONDAY MORNING



MONDAY AFTERNOON



NOW

Jenny **was** extremely **nervous** on Monday morning. She **was taking** her driving test that afternoon.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

They **were planning** to go to the beach tomorrow, but the weather's terrible.



Michelle had been cleaning all day. Her sister **was arriving** that evening.



Hugo had to go to bed early because he **was flying** early the following morning.

