

Explanations

Future time

We can refer to the future in English by using *will*, *be going to* or by using present tenses. Sometimes we can use different forms and there is little difference between them, other times there is a difference.

will

■ Form

The *will* future is formed with the infinitive without *to*. The negatives of *will* is *won't*. *Will* is usually shortened in speech and informal writing to 'll. Some speakers use *shall* to refer to the future in formal situations with *I* and *we*. However this use is becoming very rare. In modern English *shall* is used for suggestions only:

Shall I open the window?

■ Meaning

We use *will* to talk generally about future beliefs, opinions, hopes and predictions. There is usually a time expression. We can add *perhaps*, *probably* or *definitely* to show how certain or uncertain we are about our predictions.

*In the next century, most people **will probably** live in big cities.*

***Perhaps it'll** rain tomorrow.*

*United **will definitely** win tonight.*

Notice that *probably* comes after *will* but before *won't*.

*She'll **probably** come with us tonight.*

*She **probably won't** come with us tonight.*

be going to

■ Form

The *be going to* future is formed with the verb *be* + *going* + the infinitive.

*Jean **is going to learn** to drive.*

*Tim and Ann **are going to travel** abroad next year.*

■ Meaning

We use *going to* for plans and intentions. The plan may be in the near future, or more distant.

*I'm **going to do** lots of work this evening.*

*After I finish University I'm **going to travel** all over Europe by InterRail.*

We also use *going to* for predictions. We use *going to* when there is some evidence in the present situation, for example we can see something.

*Look out! Those books **are going to fall**!*

Present
continuous

- Form
See Grammar 2 for the form of the present continuous.
I'm meeting my mother for lunch at one.
- Meaning
We use the present continuous to talk about things we have arranged to do, in particular social arrangements and appointments. There is nearly always a time expression.
A: *Are you doing anything on Friday evening?*
B: *Not really. Why?*
A: *I'm having a party. Would you like to come?*

Problems

- *will* or *going to*?
Will and *going to* are both used for predictions, and on most occasions either is possible.
I think it's going to/it'll probably rain tomorrow.
However if there is strong evidence in the present situation, then *going to* is usually used:
I think it's going to rain this afternoon.
(looking up at black clouds in the sky)
- *going to* or present continuous?
Going to and the present continuous are both used for plans and arrangements, and on most occasions either is possible.
I'm going to have/I'm having a party on Friday.
However, *going to* can suggest that the details are not yet finalized – it's still just a plan. Whereas the present continuous can suggest that the arrangement is more fixed, with a time and a place.
Jean is going to have another driving lesson soon.
(a plan, with no specific time)
Jean is having her driving lesson this afternoon.
(it's fixed, in her diary)
- other meanings of *will*
Will has other meanings, for example spontaneous decisions that come into our head at the moment of speaking, promises etc.
Is that the phone ringing? I'll answer it. (a spontaneous decision)
I'll do the best that I can to help you. (a promise)
- *be*
With *be* we use *will* or *going to*, not the present continuous.
I'll be back on Friday.
I'm going to be back on Friday.

→ SEE ALSO

Grammar 2: Present time 1
Grammar 9: Future 2

Practice

1 Underline the correct sentence, 1 or 2, in each mini-dialogue.

- a) A: Can you come dancing tomorrow night?
 B: 1 Sorry, I'll play basketball.
 2 Sorry, I'm playing basketball.
- b) A: What are your plans for the summer?
 B: 1 I'll spend a month in the mountains.
 2 I'm going to spend a month in the mountains.
- c) A: What do you think about the weather?
 B: 1 It'll probably rain tomorrow.
 2 It's raining tomorrow.
- d) A: What about tomorrow at about 5.30?
 B: 1 OK, I'll see you then.
 2 OK, I'm seeing you then.
- e) A: Mary is buying a dog next week.
 B: 1 Really? What is she calling it?
 2 Really? What is she going to call it?
- f) A: It would be nice to see you next week.
 B: 1 Are you doing anything on Wednesday?
 2 Will you do anything on Wednesday?

2 Put each verb in brackets into a form of *will*, *going to* or present continuous. More than one answer may be possible.

- a) Have you heard the news? Harry (join) is joining/is going to join the Army!
- b) Sorry to keep you waiting. I (not be) long.
- c) According to the weather forecast, it (snow) tomorrow.
- d) I'm sorry I can't meet you tonight. I (go out) with my parents.
- e) Careful! You (knock) that jug off the table!
- f) In fifty years' time, most people (probably ride) bicycles to work.
- g) Our teacher (give) us a test tomorrow.
- h) I (go) to Manchester at the end of next week.
- i) Look out! You (hit) that tree!
- j) I think our team (probably win)

3 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence.

- a) My party is on Thursday.
I *'m having a party*..... on Thursday.
- b) Tomorrow's weather forecast is for rain.
It's tomorrow.
- c) I predict a victory for our team.
I think win.
- d) Tomorrow I'll be absent, Mrs Jones.
I here tomorrow, Mrs Jones.
- e) Terry intends to finish painting the kitchen this evening.
Terry painting the kitchen this evening.
- f) Meet me outside the station at 5.30.
I outside the station at 5.30.
- g) What's our arrangement for lunch?
Where for lunch?
- h) Everyone expects lots of tourism in this country next summer.
Everyone thinks a large number of tourists this country next summer.

4 Underline the sentences which are incorrect. Rewrite them. If the sentence is correct, put a tick (✓).

- a) I go swimming next Saturday. Would you like to come?
I'm going swimming next Saturday. Would you like to come?
- b) What are you going to discuss at the next meeting?
.....
- c) The boat is turning over! I think it will sink!
.....
- d) Sue is going to lend me her roller-skates.
.....
- e) The weather forecast says it's definitely sunny tomorrow.
.....
- f) There is a lot to do. Is anyone going to help you?
.....
- g) Sorry, I'm not seeing you tomorrow. I have to go to London.
.....
- h) Bye for now. I see you later this evening.
.....

5 Rewrite each sentence so that it contains *will* or *going to*.

a) I plan to study engineering in France.

I'm going to study engineering in France.

b) I've arranged a party for next Friday.

.....

c) We've got an appointment at the doctor's, so we can't come.

.....

d) Kelly is likely to get the job.

.....

e) Martin's wife is pregnant again.

.....

f) Sarah doesn't plan to get married yet.

.....

g) There's a possibility of snow tomorrow.

.....

h) I predict a score of 3-0.

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