

# future: revise the basics: will, going to or present progressive?

**future in the present** We generally use **present** forms (present progressive or *am/are/is going to*) when we can **see the future in the present**: we already see things coming or starting. We prefer *will* (the most common form) when we are simply giving information about the future, with no special reason for using present forms. Compare:

- *I'm seeing Janet on Tuesday.* (the arrangement exists now.)  
*I wonder if she'll recognise me.* (not talking about the present)
- *We're going to get a new car.* (The decision already exists.)  
*I hope it will be better than the old one.* (not talking about the present)

**plans** *Be going to* and the **present progressive** can both be used to talk about plans. We use the **present progressive** mostly when the **time** and/or **place** are **fixed**. Compare:

*I'm going to take a holiday some time soon.*    *Joe's spending next week in France.*  
*Emma's going to study biology.*    *Phil's starting work on Monday.*

## 1 Rewrite the sentences, putting in expressions from the box and using the present progressive. (Different answers are possible.)

for tomorrow's concert    from March 1st    next month    next week  
next year    on Saturday    on Tuesday    this evening    tomorrow morning

- ▶ I'm going to play tennis with Andy.  
*I'm playing tennis with Andy on Saturday.*
- 1 We're going to see Sarah.  
.....
- 2 I'm going to start fencing lessons.  
.....
- 3 We're going to meet the accountants.  
.....
- 4 I'm going to get the car serviced.  
.....
- 5 They're going to close the road for repairs.  
.....
- 6 Everybody's going to get a free ticket.  
.....
- 7 The air traffic controllers are going to strike.  
.....
- 8 All the train companies are going to put their prices up.  
.....

**decisions** We prefer *be going to* and the **present progressive** for decisions and plans (see above) that exist **in the present** – they have already been made. We prefer *will* to announce decisions **as we make them**. Compare:

'We've got a lot of bills to pay.' 'I know. *I'm going to do them all on Monday.*'  
'The plumber's bill has just come in.' 'OK, *I'll pay it.*'

### Put in I'll or I'm going to.

- ▶ I've decided. *I'm going to* ..... take a week off.
- 1 'Is Alice coming round?' 'Wait a minute. .... phone and ask her.'
  - 2 'I've left my money at home.' 'Again? OK. .... pay.'
  - 3 'Do you want to go for a walk?' 'No, .... get some work done.'
  - 4 'I've got a headache.' '..... get you an aspirin.'
  - 5 ..... sell this car – it's giving me nothing but trouble.
  - 6 Can you answer the phone if it rings? ..... have a shower.
  - 7 ..... change my job soon.
  - 8 'There's the doorbell.' '..... go.'

**predictions: what we expect** We prefer *going to* when we can already **see the future in the present**: we can see things coming or starting, or they are already **planned**. We prefer *will* to say what we **think or believe** about the future. Compare:

*Careful!* The meat's **going to** burn. (I can see it now.)

Don't ask Pete to cook the steak – he'll **burn** it. (I'm sure, because I know him.)

We don't use the present progressive to predict events which are outside our control.

It's *going to* rain soon. BUT NOT ~~It's raining soon.~~

### Circle the best form.

- ▶ Claire is going to / will have a baby.
- 1 Perhaps I'm going to / I'll see you at the weekend.
  - 2 Look at the sky: it's going to / it will snow.
  - 3 Look out – we're going to / we'll hit that car!
  - 4 Ask John – he's probably going to / he'll probably know the answer.
  - 5 You'd better put a coat on, or you're going to / you'll get cold.
  - 6 If you press this key, the computer is going to / will shut down.
  - 7 You can see from Barbara's face that there's going to / there'll be trouble.
  - 8 It's no use telling Andy about your problems; he's going to / he'll tell everybody else.

**simple present** We sometimes use the **simple present** to talk about the future; for instance when we talk about **timetables**, routines and schedules.

The meeting **starts** at ten o'clock. What time **does** the train **arrive** in Paris?

My plane **leaves** from Heathrow.

We can also use the **simple present** to give and ask for **instructions**.

'Where do I **get** an application form?' 'You **go** to the main office on the second floor.'

In other cases we **don't** use the **simple present** in simple sentences to talk about the **future**.

Emma's **coming** round later. (NOT ~~Emma comes~~ ...) I'll **write** – I promise.

There's the phone. I'll **answer** it. (NOT ... ~~I answer~~)

For the simple present with a future meaning after *if, when* etc, see pages 204 and 232.

### Choose the best tense.

- ▶ The film ends / will end at midnight.
- ▶ I phone / will phone you soon.
- 1 I **start** / will start dieting after Christmas.
  - 2 Rob **comes** / is coming round after 7.00.
  - 3 Do you / Will you post my letters?
  - 4 I **have** / will have a French class at 9.00 tomorrow.
  - 5 The train isn't direct – you **change** / will change at Manchester.
  - 6 My final exam **is** / will be in May.
  - 7 What time **does** / will the concert start?
  - 8 I **play** / am playing hockey tomorrow.

# more about the present progressive, *going to* and *will*

**spoken and written English** *Be going to* and the **present progressive** are particularly common in **spoken** English, as ways of talking about the future. This is because conversation is often about future events that we can **see coming**, so present forms are natural. In written English, these forms are less often used. **Will** is extremely common in **writing**, because written language tends to deal with less immediate future events, when we do not see the future in the present. **Will** is also preferred when giving information about **impersonal**, fixed arrangements – for example official itineraries. Compare:

*We're meeting Sandra at 6.00.*

*The President will arrive at the airport at 14.00. He will meet ...*

**pronunciation of *going to*.** In informal speech, *going to* is often pronounced as /gʌnə/. This is often shown in writing as *gonna*.

## 1 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the letters of the boxed expressions into the text.

A it will be B there will be C will be introduced D will be presented  
E will be welcomed F will cast off G will cover H will play I you will be

**O**n a wildlife cruise with Wildlife Worldwide, <sup>1...</sup> on a small vessel (the vessels we work with generally accommodate between 20 and 128 passengers), just enough to be able to meet new people and get to know them over the course of the trip, and to be able to recognise and greet all of the other passengers onboard. Not so many that every time you see a face <sup>2...</sup> be a new one!

On a wildlife cruise the vessels have been specially adapted and refitted to accommodate guests, since many of them were actually research vessels in a former life. On a wildlife cruise, <sup>3...</sup> illustrated talks

and presentations throughout the journey. These <sup>4...</sup> a whole range of topics from birds and mammals, to geography, history and astronomy, and they <sup>5...</sup> by the onboard guides and experts who <sup>6...</sup> such an important role in making your trip a special one.

To begin with you <sup>7...</sup> aboard with a glass of champagne and a bite to eat. The crew <sup>8...</sup> the boat, and once you are under way you <sup>9...</sup> to the captain and his crew. Departures are generally late afternoon/early evening. Passengers are free to visit the ship's bridge any time of the day or night.

It is fascinating seeing how the ship's course is plotted, and to observe the monitors of depth, wind speed and wave height! (Adapted from *Oceans Worldwide website*.)



## 2 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the letters of the boxed expressions into the text.

A going to be happy B going to be there C going to see D It's going to be  
E there are going to be F we're catching G we're leaving

Well, <sup>1...</sup> tomorrow, Sandra. <sup>2...</sup> amazing! It's quite a small boat – about 50 passengers, so we'll soon get to know everybody. And <sup>3...</sup> half a dozen experts on this and that giving lectures in the evenings, and going ashore with us and answering our stupid questions when we land. Tony Soper's <sup>4...</sup>, believe it or not, so the bird-watchers are <sup>5...</sup> ! And there's a terrific woman called Ingrid Visser who's red-hot on killer whales. I can't remember the others, but I know there's a marine mammal expert, and an astronomer. And we're definitely <sup>6...</sup> whales – lots and lots of whales, they've promised! Can't wait!

Well, must go and pack – <sup>7...</sup> a very early flight. Looking forward to seeing you in July. Prepare yourselves for a long photo evening!

Love from both to both

Jane

**shall and will** In modern English *I/we will* and *I/we shall* can generally be used with no difference of meaning. *Will* is more common, and *shall* is dying out. (In any case, the commonest forms in speech are the contractions *I'll* and *we'll*.)

**shall in questions** In older English, *shall* was used to talk about **obligation** (rather like *should*). This meaning still survives in **first-person questions**, where *shall* is used to **ask for instructions or suggestions, or offer services**.

What time **shall** we come round? **Shall** I take your coat?

Compare the use of *will* to ask for information:

What time **will** we get into London?

**legal language** Legal documents, such as contracts, often use *shall* to express obligation.

The hirer **shall be** responsible for maintenance of the vehicle. (from a car-hire contract)

### 3 Put in *shall* or *will*.

- 1 Where ..... we go on holiday this year?
- 2 Where ..... I be this time next year?
- 3 Sending out the invitations ..... be Jim's responsibility.
- 4 The tenant ..... be wholly responsible for all decoration and repairs.
- 5 ..... I put the kettle on?
- 6 What time ..... I need to be at the airport?
- 7 What ..... I cook for supper?
- 8 How soon ..... we hear about the application?

For other (non-future) uses of *will*, see pages 65 and 72.

The Hirer shall, during the period of the hiring, be responsible for: supervision of the premises, the fabric and the contents; their care, safety from damage however slight or change of any sort; and the behaviour of all persons using the premises whatever their capacity, including proper supervision of car parking arrangements. The Hirer shall make good or pay for all damage (including accidental damage) to the premises or to the fixtures, fittings or contents and for loss of contents. The Hirer shall not use the premises for any purpose other than that described in the Hiring Agreement and shall not allow the premises to be used for any unlawful purpose or in any unlawful way nor

## NOTES

**different forms possible** The differences between the three main structures used to talk about the future are not always very clear-cut. *Will* and present forms (especially *going to*) are often both possible in the same situation, when 'present' ideas like intention or fixed arrangement are a part of the meaning but not very important. The choice of structure will depend on which part of the meaning we want to emphasise. In the following examples all of the different forms would be correct, with no important difference of meaning.

- What will you do next year?  
What are you doing next year?  
What are you going to do next year?
- All the family will be there.  
All the family are going to be there.
- If your mother comes, you'll have to help with the cooking.  
If your mother comes, you're going to have to help with the cooking.
- You won't believe this.  
You're not going to believe this.

# be + infinitive: I am to ... etc

**official plans etc** We often say that something **is to happen** when we talk about **official plans** and fixed arrangements.

*The Prime Minister **is to visit** British soldiers in Antarctica.*  
*Our firm **is to merge** with Universal Export.*

**pre-conditions** The structure is common in **if-clauses**, where the main clause expresses a **pre-condition** – something that must happen first if something else **is to happen**.

*We'd better hurry if we're **to get** there by lunchtime.*  
*You'll need to start working if you're **to pass** your exam.*

**orders** The structure can also be used (for example by parents) to give orders.

*You're **to do** your homework before you go to bed.*  
*Tell Jenny she's **not to be** back late.*

**1** Here are some (mostly) real spoken or written sentences. Use the **be + infinitive structure** to complete them with verbs from the box. Use a dictionary if necessary.

assemble bloom continue deliver follow get through inspect plan report tidy up

- 1 Professor Loach ..... eight lectures on classical mythology next term.
- 2 On his arrival at the airport, the general ..... a guard of honour.
- 3 If we ..... providing care for homeless children, we need your support today.
- 4 Young soldiers quickly learn that a good breakfast is vital if they ..... another demanding day.
- 5 Any new diet has to be simple if you ..... it for any length of time.
- 6 You have to know where you're going if you ..... the best way of getting there!
- 7 The chrysanthemums must be planted right away if they ..... for Christmas.
- 8 The children ..... their room before they watch TV.
- 9 In case of fire, all staff ..... in the front courtyard.
- 10 All visitors ..... to the reception desk.

For the past form of this structure (*I was to ... etc*), see page 37.  
For passive uses (e.g. *to be taken three times a day*), see page 103.

**2** Imagine you are a parent who is going out for the evening, leaving two teenagers alone in the house. Write three instructions beginning 'You're to' and three beginning 'You're not to'.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

# future progressive

We use the future progressive (*will be ...ing*) to say that something will be **in progress at a certain time in the future**.

*This time next Tuesday I'll be lying on the beach.*

*You won't be able to park here tomorrow; they'll be mending the road.*

1 What will you be doing at ten o'clock tomorrow morning (or some other time, if you prefer)?

.....

2 Write three things that you will certainly not be doing at ten o'clock tomorrow morning (or some other time, if you prefer).

.....

.....

.....

**polite enquiries** A common use of the future progressive is to ask politely 'What have you already decided?' Compare:

*Will you write to Oliver?* (request or order)

*Are you going to write to Oliver?* (perhaps pressing for a decision)

*Will you be writing to Oliver?* (just asking about plans)

3 Make future progressive questions to ask somebody politely:

▶ when they are planning to go shopping. *When will you be going shopping?* .....

1 when they intend to pay the rent.

.....

2 who they plan to invite.

.....

3 how soon they intend to come back.

.....

4 when they plan to go home.

.....

5 where they are planning to stay.

.....

6 what time they are planning to have breakfast.

.....

7 what they plan to study at university.

.....

8 whether they expect to use the car.

.....

## Will you be watching the leaders' TV debate?

The first ever prime ministerial TV debate in a UK general election campaign will take place on Thursday.

### Will you be watching?

"I'll be watching. I want to see how professional liars work."

"Yes, I shall be watching and it will be an interesting test of the party leaders."

"I will be watching until the end of the first question. When none of them have answered simply, openly and honestly, along with millions of other viewers I will switch off and then go to the pub."

(postings from a website discussion before a British general election)

# more practice

## 1 Correct the mistakes or write 'Correct'.

- ▶ Penguins aren't flying. *don't fly* .....
- ▶ Nobody's listening to me. *Correct* .....
- 1 'What do you write?' 'A report for the Managing Director' .....
- 2 I'm thinking this is the wrong address. ....
- 3 Why is that man jumping up and down? .....
- 4 Iron is melting at 1536°. ....
- 5 How do your tai-chi lessons go? .....
- 6 We're seeing a lot of Peter and Susan just now. ....
- 7 He's always criticising! .....
- 8 It's saying in today's paper that the pilots are going on strike. ....
- 9 'Is it going to snow?' 'I'm doubting it.' .....
- 10 Julie's not feeling very well today. ....
- 11 This cheese is tasting funny. ....
- 12 I'm not working next Friday. ....
- 13 We should leave now if we're to catch the train. ....
- 14 Will you be seeing Edward when you're in Glasgow? .....
- 15 This time tomorrow I'm lying on the beach. ....
- 16 Do you know what time the film starts? .....
- 17 Next July we have been together for five years. ....
- 18 I'll never be knowing what he thinks of me. ....
- 19 Sorry I'm late – the train I was going to catch was cancelled. ....
- 20 They showed me the room where I would have stayed. I said it was OK. ....

## 2 Choose the correct form of the cartoon caption.



'I'm sorry, *he doesn't see / he's not seeing* anyone today.'

## 3 Write four predictions for next week. (You can use *will* or *going to*.)

Check them at the end of the week to see how many were right.

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 4 Write two things that you are certainly going to do one day, and two things that you are certainly never going to do.

.....

.....

.....

.....

**5 DO IT YOURSELF.** Which of these rules are wrong?

- 1 We use *will* especially when we can see the future in the present.
- 2 *Going to* is often pronounced 'gonna'.
- 3 The future perfect progressive is very common in conversation.
- 4 *Shall* is not used in modern English.
- 5 We don't normally use the present progressive for fixed future arrangements.

Rules ..... are wrong.

**6 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT.** Put in simple present or present progressive forms of the verbs in the box.

arrive decide fall find give go out hide live light lose sing start  
stay tell try work write

**Puccini's opera La Bohème: what happens in Act 1**

It is a bitterly cold winter in 19th-century Paris. Marcello, a painter, and Rodolfo, a writer,  
 1..... to keep warm. Their musician friend Schaunard 2..... with  
 food, firewood, wine, cigars, and money: he 3..... lessons to an eccentric Englishman  
 and has just been paid. They 4..... to eat, but then 5..... to  
 go out and spend the money at a café. Rodolfo 6..... behind for a moment to  
 finish an article that he 7..... While he 8....., there is a  
 knock at the door. It is Mimi, who 9..... in another room in the building.  
 Her candle has blown out, and she has no matches. Rodolfo 10..... it for her.  
 Then Mimi 11..... her key. Both candles 12..... Rodolfo  
 13..... her key but 14..... it. They 15..... each  
 other their life stories in two songs; while they 16..... they 17.....  
 in love.

**7 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT.** Put in the verbs from the boxes.

helped read started taken will have been will have tidied

**School Holidays**

By ten o'clock this morning my children  
 1..... off school for 67  
 hours. During that time they  
 2..... their rooms,  
 3..... several books,  
 4..... our elderly neighbour  
 with his garden, 5.....

a box of unwanted toys to charity and  
 6..... their holiday diaries.  
 Later in the week they will visit the Science  
 Museum, go on a nature trail and have  
 a dental check-up. They will go to bed at  
 8.30pm on the dot and watch only half an  
 hour of BBC4 a day.

broken up cleaned up given up have spent hidden spent unloaded will have baked

Yeah, right. This is the more likely scenario:  
 I 7..... several batches  
 of cupcakes, 8..... the  
 dishwasher 20 times, 9.....  
 almost three hours looking for tiny lost bits  
 of Lego, and 10..... trying to  
 interest my eldest in reading a book. I will  
 have 11..... several paint-  
 related disasters, 12.....

fight, and 13..... the  
 remote control. Like millions of other  
 parents, I will also 14.....  
 an unbelievable sum of money on plastic  
 rubbish in a museum shop. And there are  
 several more weeks of this to look forward  
 to. School holidays!  
 (Sarah Vine, *The Times*, adapted)