

# SECTION 4

## The future

### 1 WAYS OF REFERRING TO THE FUTURE

The following table summarises the different structures we use to talk about the future.

Form	Example	Meaning
will	<i>I'll just go and get my coat.</i>	= an immediate decision about what you are going to do
will	<i>You'll be sick if you eat more chocolate.</i>	= a general prediction
be going to	<i>I'm going to stop in a minute.</i>	= a personal intention
be going to	<i>Look out! We're going to hit the car in front.</i>	= a prediction after looking at what is happening now
Present Continuous	<i>We're going to the café. Won't you join us?</i>	= fixed plans / arrangements
Present Simple	<i>The coach leaves in ten minutes.</i>	= an unalterable arrangement or fact
will + Continuous	<i>Don't phone too early because I'll be putting the baby to bed.</i>	= an action that will be in progress some time in the future
will + Continuous	<i>We'll be working on this until the end of the year.</i>	= an activity that will be happening during a period in the future
will + Continuous	<i>I'll give your letter to him – I'll be seeing him later.</i>	= an action that will happen because it is regular or decided
will + Perfect	<i>We'll have driven over five hundred miles by the time we get there.</i>	= an event that will be finished before a specified time in the future
will + Perfect Continuous	<i>We'll have been living here for ten years next May.</i>	= a state of affairs in progress for a period up to a specified time in the future
be + to-infinitive	<i>He is to be given an award. You're to stay here until you've apologised.</i>	= an official arrangement or order

- We use *shall* with *I* or *we* with the same meaning as *will*. However, it is becoming increasingly formal – its most common current use is in polite offers or to ask advice (see Unit 3, Section 1.1):  
*Shall I open the door for you? What shall we do now?*

### 2 WILL IN TIME CLAUSES AND IF-CLAUSES

We omit *will* in time clauses after *when*, *as soon as*, *until*, *before*, etc:

*I'm not going to speak to her until she's apologised.*

However, with conditional clauses (after *if*, *unless*, *providing*, etc.) we can use *will*, but only:

- when we want emphasis and *will* makes an intention or promise stronger:  
*If you will insist on the best, then you must expect to pay more for it.*
- in polite requests – *will* means 'be willing to':  
*If you'll hold these bags for me, I can open the door.*

- We use *would* instead of *will* in reported speech and conditionals:  
*They promised they would work on it all weekend.  
Harry asked me if I would help him out.*

### 3 COMMON PHRASES

*I'm (just) about to go out.* (= in a very short time)  
*We were on the point of leaving when the bell rang.*  
*We're due to meet in half an hour.*

### ? check

Match the examples with the meanings in the table.


- Are you going to the match tomorrow?
- Are you going to go out this evening or not?
- My driving licence expires in 2030.
- I've had enough. I'll finish this tomorrow.
- We'll be sending you more details in the post.


## Practice


**1** Tick (✓) the most appropriate of the underlined words.


- She looks very pale. I think she'll / she's going to faint.
- I'll / I'm going to do that for you, if you like.
- I'll be / I'm going to be a rocket scientist when I grow up.
- 'Somebody's at the door.' 'I'll / I'm going to see who it is.'
- I need to be home early today so I leave / am leaving at 4.00.
- We'll be in plenty of time providing the traffic is not / will not be too bad.
- She asked if I would / will be so kind as to give her a lift.
- What sort of job do you think you will do / will be doing in a few years time?
- By the time you get back, all the food will have gone / will go.
- The two Prime Ministers are to / shall discuss the current economic crisis.


**2** Fill each of the numbered gaps in this passage with one suitable word.


 'Remember that by the terms of the contract you are due (1) to leave before midday,' the voice said.


 'Yes. Yes, I know. I was ..... (2) about to pack when you rang.'


 'Midday,' the voice repeated.


 'I know. As I said, I was on the ..... (3) of leaving – packing, then leaving.'


 'That is ..... (4) you want to pay for another week,' the voice continued.

 'No. No, I'll ..... (5) out by twelve,' I stammered.

 'It does say very clearly on your door that all guests are ..... (6) vacate their rooms by midday,' the voice went on, quite unnecessarily, I thought.

 'Look. I've told you,' I shouted, 'I'll have ..... (7) before the clock strikes twelve! I'm ..... (8) in less than fifteen minutes. The flies, ants and cockroaches will soon ..... (9) partying in a punctually vacated apartment. Have no fear.'

 'Kindly remember that the new occupants ..... (10) in at ...'

 'I know! Midday!' I screamed, and threw down the phone.

**3** Fill each of the gaps in the following sentences with a suitable word or phrase.

Example: I was just about to have a cup of coffee when Sue called.

- He was ..... resigning when the news of his promotion came through.
- Our builder told me he ..... best to get the materials as soon as he could.
- I think we'd better leave this restaurant as soon ..... the bill.
- If that little boy carries on like that, he ..... accident before long.
- By the time I qualify, I ..... law for six years.
- Our company is ..... over by a multi-national.

**4** A word is missing from most of the numbered pairs of lines in the passage. Mark the place with a line /, and write the missing word on the right. If a pair of lines does not need a word added, put a tick (✓). The first two have been done for you.

Despite all the lessons we have learned from history, ..... ✓  
it is difficult to conceive what people are likely / be doing ..... to.

- a hundred years / now. During this century, so many changes have ..... ✓
- taken place that any idea as to what new invention is about become ..... ✓
- an integral part of our lives has become more of a guessing game ..... ✓
- than ever. For a start, in ten years' time, today's ..... ✓
- innovations will probably have out of date. ....
- There's little doubt that many of our habitual, taken-for-granted ..... ✓
- activities such as shopping and going to school will disappeared by ..... ✓
- the year 2100, largely due to the growth of electronic media. But what ..... ✓
- we have little idea about is how this affect our personal relationships. ....
- Or rather, not ours as this will be long after we left this earth. What ..... ✓
- concerns us is how our great-great-grandchildren / be living. ....
- Will people still talking to each other face to face, or ..... ✓
- only via computers? Will they still be able to find a friendly shoulder ..... ✓
- to cry on when they feeling low? In the long run, who knows? ....