

Understanding Future Tense to avoid common mistakes

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In grammar, a future tense is a verb form that generally marks the event described by the verb as not having happened yet, but expected to happen in the future. Let us quickly look at the four basic future tenses and some examples to understand them better.

Simple Future Tense: used for an action that will occur in the future. It is used to talk about things we cannot control and expresses the future as a fact (e.g. we will know our results next month), something we believe will happen (e.g. we will eat dinner by 9 PM) or if you decide to do something while speaking (e.g. It's raining, I will take an umbrella)


Future Continuous Tense: used for an ongoing action that will occur in the future – structure being 'will' + 'be' + present participle of the verb (-ing) (E.g. I will be watching the match tonight on TV)

Future Perfect Tense: used to describe an action that will be completed in the future. Such sentences are formed by 'will' + 'have' + 'past participle of the verb'. (e.g. I will have left by the time you arrive at 9)

Future Perfect Continuous Tense: used for an action that is continuous and will be completed at some point in future. It is formed using 'will/shall' + 'have' + 'been' + 'the past participle of the verb (-ing)' (e.g. Tomorrow at this time, I will have been swimming at the beach for four hours already) This tense is not very common.



FUTURE tenses



| SIMPLE | CONTINUOUS | PERFECT | PERFECT CONTINUOUS |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>a. Predictions about future with verbs like think, believe, expect, etc.</p> <p>b. On-the-spot decisions</p> <p>c. Promises, threats, warnings, requests, hopes, offers</p> <p>d. Actions/events/situations which will definitely happen in the future</p> | <p>a. Action which will be in progress at a stated time in the future</p> <p>b. Action which will definitely happen in the future as the result of a routine or arrangement</p> <p>c. When we ask politely about someone's plans for the near future (why we want to know is if our wishes fit in with their plans)</p> | <p>a. Action that will be finished before a stated future time</p> | <p>a. Emphasis on the duration of an action up to a certain time in the future</p> |
| <p>I, you, he, she we, they, it } WILL DO</p> <p><i>tomorrow, soon, the day after tomorrow, next week/month/year, in two weeks/months</i></p> | <p>I, You, we, they } WILL BE DOING He, she, it }</p> | <p>I, You, we, they } WILL HAVE DONE He, she, it }</p> <p><i>before, by, till by then, by the time, until</i></p> | <p>I, You, We, they } WILL HAVE BE DOING He, she, it }</p> <p><i>by ... for</i></p> |

Although this seems quite simple, there are quite a few common mistakes made by the general populace, especially when it comes to the usage of future tense. The most common mistakes made and their corrected versions are depicted below:

A. Missing out on 'am/is/are' when using the 'going to' form.

Wrong: "I going to play the match tomorrow."

Right: "I am going to play the match tomorrow."

B. Missing out on 'to' whence using the 'going to' form.

Wrong: "She is going that movie again."

Right: "She is going to watch/see that movie again."

C. Using the '-ing' form of the verb instead of the base form with 'going to' or 'will.'

Wrong: "He will winning the match."

Wrong: "He is going to winning the match."

Right: "He will win the match."

D. Adding 'to' when using 'will.'

Wrong: "They will to be sorry."

Right: "They will be sorry."

To avoid falling in this rut, we would also recommend that you have a look at this cheat sheet (below) that aptly gives us further insights to ensure that we use future tense correctly in our future [communications](#).

| Future Simple (Will) is used for: | Be going to is used for: | Future Continuous is used: | Future Perfect is used for: |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">on-the-spot decisions. <i>It's cold in here. I'll turn on the heating.</i>hopes, fears, threats, offers, promises, warnings, predictions, requests, comments, etc. Esp. with: expect, hope, believe, I'm sure, I'm afraid, probably, etc. <i>I hope he'll like his birthday present.</i>actions or predictions which we think may (not) happen in the future. <i>She'll probably win.</i>actions which we cannot control but which will definitely happen. <i>The baby will be born in the new year.</i>things we are not yet sure about or we haven't decided to do yet. <i>Maybe I'll buy a car.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">actions intended to be performed in the near future. <i>I'm going to buy some new clothes next week.</i>planned actions or intentions. <i>Now that she's rich, she's going to travel round the world.</i>predictions based on what we can see or what we know, especially when there is evidence. <i>Look at the clouds! It's going to rain.</i>things we are sure about or we have already decided to do in the near future. <i>We are going to offer the job to Ann. (It has been decided.)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">for actions which will be in progress at a stated future time. <i>I'll be skiing in the Alps this time next week.</i>for actions which will definitely happen in the future as a result of a routine or arrangement (instead of Present Continuous). <i>I'll be playing golf on Friday. (I play golf every Friday - it's part of my routine)</i>when we ask politely about people's arrangements to see if they can do sth for us or because we want to offer to do sth for them. <i>Will you be driving into town this afternoon? Can you give me a lift?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">an action which will be finished before a stated future time. <i>They will have finished building their house by May.</i> <p>NOTE: by or not until/until are used with Future Perfect. Until/until are normally only used with Future Perfect in negative sentences. <i>She will have written it by next week. (NOT: till/until)</i> <i>She won't have graduated until May. (NOT: by-May)</i></p> |
| NOTE: Shall is used with I/we in questions, suggestions, offers or when asking for advice. <i>Shall we play tennis?</i> | Present Simple with future meaning timetables/programmes <i>The boat leaves at 8 o'clock in the morning.</i> | Present Continuous with future meaning fixed arrangement in the near future <i>I'm having dinner with Jane this evening. (It's a date.)</i> | Future Perfect Continuous is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">emphasise the duration of an action up to a certain time in the future. <i>By this time next month he will have been studying piano for 2 years.</i> |

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