

30 Expressing future meaning

A Warm-up

- 1 Complete this coursebook activity.

Complete the following sentences in any way that is true for you.

- a Once this lesson has finished ...
- b The moment I get home today ...
- c When I have enough money ...
- d As soon as I have some free time ...
- e When I'm next on holiday ...
- f This time next year ...
- g In five years' time ...
- h By the time I retire ...

Compare your sentences with a partner's.

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- 2 Work in groups. Read the sentences you have all written and answer the questions.

- 1 What grammar structures can you identify?
- 2 Did you all use the same structures to finish the sentences?
- 3 If your answer to 2 was 'no', how did the choice of structure affect the meaning?

B Future forms

- 1 Study this grammar explanation from the coursebook used in A1 and identify the grammar structures you used in the warm-up activity.

Language reference: future forms

Will ('ll), (be) going to, present continuous

These are the three most common forms for talking about the future.

- 1 *Will ('ll)* – predictions/decisions reacting to circumstances such as offers, promises and requests.
It'll be worth a fortune in a few years' time.
I'll give you my photograph now if you like.
- 2 *(be) going to* – intentions/predictions based on present evidence.
I'm going to concentrate on my musical career.
Look at those clouds. It's going to pour down.
- 3 The present continuous – plans/arrangements
I'm moving to London next month.

Present simple

You can use this form to talk about fixed future events: timetables, routines, schedules.

My A-levels start next week.
The plane leaves at 15:40.

Might & may

If you want to speculate about a future possibility you can use *might* or *may*.

We might have to get a part-time job.

- 2 Decide whether the explanations match your own use of these structures.
- 3 Work in pairs. Discuss in what order and at what levels you would expect these structures to be first introduced. Consider factors such as:
 - usefulness
 - frequency
 - difficulty – of form and of concept

C Learner problems

- 1 Read these sentences that learners wrote in response to the warm-up activity above. Identify and correct the errors they have made in using the different future forms.
 - a The moment I get home today I going to play a computer game. Then to eat a sandwich.
 - b Once this lesson has finished I meet my friend because we go to the cinema. After maybe we take a coffee in any café.
 - c Once this lesson has finished I'll go to my house. I'll read the newspaper and prepare a nice dinner. I won't watch TV.
 - d When I have enough money ... I never will have enough money! But if I will, I will visit many countries.
 - e When I'm next on holiday I am spending a good time with my family.
 - f This time next year I will study for my final examination. I think my life won't be much different.
 - g In five years' time may be I am going to have a better job. I'll like to start my own business.
 - h By the time I retire I hope I will save enough money for buy a nice house by Black Sea.
- 2 Work in pairs. Discuss how you would explain the corrections to the learners.
- 3 Read the following sentences. Decide what problems of pronunciation you would expect learners to have in producing them.
 - a The children won't go to bed.
 - b What'll you do if it rains?
 - c Where shall we go?

Future continuous

You use this tense to talk about something happening around a certain time in the future.

*In five years' time I'll be staying in posh hotels.
This time next week I'll be trekking in Nepal.*

Future perfect

You use the future perfect to talk about something completed by a certain time in the future.

*By this time next year, we'll have had a record in the charts.
The builder will have finished the kitchen walls by the end of the week.*

Verb structures after if, when, as soon as ...

When it is clear from the main clause that the sentence is about the future you don't use a future form in the subordinate clause.

*When I leave school, I'm going to concentrate on my musical career. (NOT ~~When I will leave school, ...~~)
It'll be a miracle if she's passed the exam.
(NOT ... ~~if she will have passed the exam.~~)*

Other conjunctions which introduce subordinate clauses: *after, as soon as, before, once, the moment, the minute, unless, until.*

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REFLECTION

Do the quiz.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Does English have a future tense? 2 What are the three most common ways of expressing future meaning in English? 3 Which two structures can be used to make predictions? 4 Which structure is typically used to talk about timetables and schedules in the future? 5 Which of the following factors determine the choice of future form? (You can choose more than one.) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a the speaker's purpose, e.g. making a prediction, talking about arrangements, etc. b the speaker's assessment of the certainty of the future situation c the extent that the future situation is seen to be connected to the present d the speaker's assessment of how soon the future situation is e the degree of informality |
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Quiz