

## SEMINAR 9 – EXPRESSING THE FUTURE

As mentioned before, English does not have any inflectional future tense, but there are several possibilities for expressing future time.

### I. WILL / SHALL + INFINITIVE

- the most common way of expressing future time
- ‘will’ is used in all persons, ‘shall’ with a first person subject (i.e. I or we) especially in questions and in formal BrE, not in AmE!
- short forms: ‘ll, ‘ll not, won’t, shan’t (very rare), ‘shall’ has no short form

### Uses of will / shall future

- a) to **predict events**, what we think will happen or invite prediction – we are simply giving information about the future

e.g. Tottenham will win on Sunday.

It will rain tomorrow.

Will house prices rise again next year?

I don’t know if I will see you next week.

He will be here in half an hour.

Will you need any help?

!the prediction can also refer to **the present**:

e.g. Don’t phone him now – he’ll be busy.

There’s somebody at the door. – That’ll be the postman.

!predicative will is common in clauses superordinate to conditional and temporal cl.:

e.g. You’ll feel better if you take this medicine.

I’ll tell him when I see him.

- b) ‘will’ is used to point to future time – we are not predicting anything:

- promise – I’ll buy you a bicycle for your birthday.
- request – Will you hold the door open for me?
- offer – Shall I get your coat for you?
- suggestion – Shall we go for a swim tomorrow?

- threat – Just wait – you *will regret* this.
- announcement of decision – I *ll phone* you tonight.

c) **‘will’ is preferred to ‘going to’ in formal style** – when a formal style is required, particularly in written language

e.g. The wedding *will take place* at St Andrew’s on June 27<sup>th</sup>.

The reception *will be* at the Anchor Hotel.

d) ‘will’ is used after certain verbs and phrases, usu. to express hopes or expectations – after *assume, be afraid, be sure, believe, doubt, expect, hope, suppose, think*

e.g. I hope she *ll get* the job she’s applied for. (*also* she gets)

+ when there is lack of certainty – with adverbs like *perhaps, possibly, probably, surely*

e.g. Ask him again. Perhaps he *ll change* his mind.

e) when we express **volition**, ‘will’ is used esp. with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person to express intention, agreement, promise, threat

e.g. How soon will you announce your decision?

## II. FUTURE PROGRESSIVE – will be +ing

a) **st will be in progress at a particular future time**

e.g. This time tomorrow I *will be lying* on the beach.

At ten tomorrow I *ll be leaving* for London.

Good luck with the exam. I *ll be thinking* of you.

b) sometimes the future progressive is used **to describe futurity only**, it has a ‘softening effect’ in comparison with ‘will’ (which may imply deliberate intention)

e.g. I *will work* on this tomorrow. (=intention, possibly a promise)

I *will be working* on this tomorrow. (=futurity)

c) sometimes the future progressive sounds **more polite than will**, esp. in questions

e.g. When *will you finish* these letters? (boss to assistant)

When *will you be seeing* Mr. White? (assistant to boss)

!Sometimes, there really is a difference:

e.g. *Will you join* us for dinner? (invitation)

*Will you be joining* us for dinner? (futura)

Mary *won't pay* this bill. (she refuses to)

Mary *won't be paying* this bill. (futura)

- d) future progressive can be used like the present progressive to express **planned events**, particularly in connection with travel, st is fixed and decided or expected to happen in the normal course of events

e.g. *We'll be spending* the winter in Australia (= *we are spending*)

Professor Craig *will be giving* a lecture on Etruscan poetry tomorrow. (= *is giving*)

### III. FUTURE PERFECT – will have done

- an action will already be completed by a certain time in the future

e.g. *I will have retired* by 2020. (= before or in 2020 my retirement will already be in the past).

I expect you *will have changed* your mind by tomorrow.

*We will have been married* a year on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

By next Christmas I *will have been* here for 8 years.

It's no use phoning – he *will have left* by now.

By this time next week I *will have been working* for this company for 5 years.

*I'll have been teaching* for 20 years this summer.

### IV. GOING TO future

- a) we talk about **plans, intentions; we have already decided to do st**

e.g. *I'm going to study* at the weekend.

*We're going to buy* a new car.

What *are you going to do* in summer?

*We're going to get married.*

But! When we decide to do st at the moment of speaking, we use 'will'

e.g. We're really lost. *I'll stop* and ask someone the way.

- b) we are referring to the **immediate future, the speaker sees signs of st that is about to happen** (there is some outside evidence) – the things are usually out of people's control – st is probable to happen

e.g. Look out, *we're going to crash*.

*She's going to have a baby.*

Look at the clouds. *It's going to rain.* (includes the present)

**x** *It will rain.* (pure future)

Look. That man *is going to fall* into the hole. (= not his intention – there is a hole, but he can't see it, so if noone tells him, he will fall into it)

## V. PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

- the action is not only **planned or decided**, but also **arranged**, agreed with someone else, time and place have already been decided

e.g. *I'm taking* the children to the ZOO next Saturday.

*I'm having* dinner with Jane tomorrow.

What *are we having* for dinner?

What *are you doing* this evening?

- may also express **emphatic refusal**:

e.g. *I'm sorry, you're not taking* my car.

*I'm certainly not washing* your socks.

- often we avoid using verbs 'go' and 'come' with 'going to', the present progressive is preferred for reasons of style

e.g. *We're going* (to go) on holiday to Australia.

*I'm going to come...* = *I'm coming home* early this evening.

### Going to

v.

### Present progressive

- emphasizes the **idea of intention**  
or **previous decision**

- emphasizes the idea of **fixed arrangement**

*Are you going to do* anything this weekend? v.

*Are you doing* anything this weekend?

(what has been decided)

(what has been arranged)

*I'm going to clean* the windows today.

v.

*I'm seeing* the doctor today.

*I'm going to get* a new job. (=I've decided to) v.

*I'm getting* a new job. (=already arranged)

## VI. PRESENT SIMPLE

- is used in main clauses with time-position adverbials to suggest that a future event is certain to take place, the **event is fixed in advance**  
e.g. The train *arrives* at 15.20.  
The festival *takes place* from June 11<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>.  
Tomorrow *is* Tuesday.  
School *finishes* on 28<sup>th</sup> June.
- **in subordinate clauses – conditional and temporal**  
e.g. Phone me when you *have* time.  
What will you say if I *marry* the boss?
- **in temporal clauses** (after “when, after, until, as soon as”) we can also use **the present perfect** – st will be finished before st else happens:  
e.g. Can I borrow the book when you *'ve finished?* (or finish)  
I'll come as soon as *I've finished.* (or finish)  
You'll feel better after you *'ve had* something to eat. (or have)  
When *I've phoned* Kate, we can have dinner. (=after)  
**But!** When I *phone* Kate this evening, I'll invite her to the party. (at the same time)!!

## VI. Structure ‘be to’ (‘be about to’)

- refers to a future arrangement, plan, intention, schedules  
e.g. Their daughter *is to be married* soon.  
There *'s to be* an official enquiry.  
You *'re to be* back by 10 o'clock.  
You *'re not to tell* anybody about this.
- ‘be about to’ expressed **near** future, the event is close:  
e.g. The train *is about to leave.*  
*I'm about to read* your essay.  
She *'s not about to complain.* (=she does not intend to)

### VIII. Future in the past

- we say that st was still in the future as a certain past time  
e.g. I knew she *would* arrive.

Something *was going to happen* that *was* to change the world.

#### Further notes:

- often there is very little difference – it depends on what the speaker wants to emphasize:  
intention – What *are you going to do* next year?  
certainty - What *are you doing* next year?  
no certainty – What *will you do*?
- **stressed ‘will’** – expresses a strong intention:  
e.g. I will stop smoking. I really will.
- **won’t** – is also used to refuse or talk about refusals  
e.g. The car *won’t start*.
- **If + will in polite requests:**  
e.g. *If you will come* this way, I’ll take you to the manager’s office. (‘would’ is even more polite)
- **If + will in object clauses:**  
e.g. I don’t know **if** he **will come**. = an object clause, if = whether  
I will tell him **if** he **comes**. = a conditional clause