

Lecture Eight
English Language - Upper intermediate

Unit 5

Future Forms

Will or going to

There is no one future tense in English. Instead, there are several verb forms that can refer to future time. Sometimes, several forms are possible to express a similar meaning, but not always.

Will for prediction

- The most common use of will is as an auxiliary verb to show future time. It expresses a future fact or prediction — at some time in the future this event will happen. This use is uncolored by ideas such as intention, decision, arrangement, willingness, etc.

I'll be thirty in a few days' time.

It will be cold and wet tomorrow, I'm afraid.

Who do you think will win the match?

You'll feel better if you take this medicine. I'll see you later.

This is the nearest English has to a neutral, pure future tense.

- Will for a prediction can be based more on an opinion than a fact or evidence. It is often found with expressions such as I think I, hope, and I'm sure.

I think Labour will win the next election.

I hope you'll come and visit me.

I'm sure you'll pass your exams.

- Will is common in the main clause when there is a subordinate clause with if, when, before, etc. Note that we don't use will in the subordinate clause.

You'll break the glass if you aren't careful.

When you're ready, we'll start the meeting.

I won't go until you arrive.

As soon as Peter comes, we'll have lunch.

Going to for prediction

Going to can express a prediction based on a present fact. There is evidence now that something is sure to happen. We can see the future from the present.

Careful! That glass is going to fall over. Too late!

Look at that blue sky! It's going to be a lovely day.

Notes

- Sometimes there is little or no difference between will and going to. We'll run out of money if we aren't careful. We're going to

- We use going to when we have physical evidence to support our prediction.

She's going to have a baby. (Look at her bump.)

Liverpool are going to win. (It's 4-09 and there are only five minutes left.)

That glass is going to fall. (It's rolling to the edge of the table.)

We can use will when there is no such outside evidence. Our prediction is based on our own personal opinion. It can be more theoretical and abstract.

I'm sure you'll have a good time at the party. (This is my opinion.)

I reckon Liverpool will win. (Said the day before the match.)

The glass will break if it falls. (This is what happens to glasses that fall.)

- Compare the sentences.

I bet John will be late home. The traffic is always bad at this time.
(It's my opinion)

John's going to be late home. He left a message on the answerphone.
(a fact)

Note: solving the exercises in the workbook from page 31 to page 34