

# Talking about the future

## The present tenses used for the future

We use *the present simple* with a future meaning

- ◆ talk about things that are due to happen as part of a schedule (definite future arrangement):  
*The next train to Maribor leaves in half an hour . The boys start school on Monday.*
- ◆ after certain word and phrases:  
*when, as soon as, by the time, the moment, provided, assuming, (if)...*  
*I 'll give Jason his present as soon as he arrives.*

The *simple* present is more impersonal than continuous. *I'm leaving tonight* would probably imply that I have decided to leave, but *I leave tonight* could mean that this is part of plan not necessarily made by me. The *simple* present can also sound more formal than continuous.

We use *the present continuous* with future meaning to talk about:

- ◆ arrangements that we have made for the future, usually with other people:  
*I can't go out tomorrow night. I am having a dinner with my grandparents.*

Note that the time must be mentioned, as otherwise there may be confusion between present and future.

# The be going to form

The be going to form expresses the subject's intention to perform a certain future action. This intention is always premeditated and there is usually also the idea that some preparation for the action has already been made. Actions expressed by going to form are therefore usually considered very likely to be performed (not the same as present continuous).

- ◆ can be used for the near future with time expression  
*I am meeting Tom at the station at six.* (present continuous-arrangement with Tom)  
*I am going to meet Tom at the station at six.* (going to be from-Tom may get surprise)
- ◆ With time clauses to emphasize the subject's intention  
*He is going to be a dentist when he grows up.*

The going to form always implies a premeditated intention, and often an intention + plan. While simple future (will) implies intention alone. If therefore, preparations for the action have been made, we must use be going to form. Be going to form, as already stated, usually refers to the fairly immediate future (more probable and immediate). Will can refer to the immediate or to the more remote future.

- ◆ For predictions- to express the speaker's feeling of certainty.  
*Look at those clouds! It is going to rain.*      *Listen to the wind.*  
*We are going to have a rough crossing*

Be going to implies that there are signs that something will happen, will future implies that the speaker thinks/believes that it will happen.

# The future simple

The future simple is used to express the speaker's opinions, assumptions, speculations about the near future (*assume, be afraid, believe, doubt, expect, hope, know, suppose, wonder*) The future simple can be used with or without a time expression.

- ◆ To make impersonal, factual statements about the future:  
*Work on the new stadium will begin next week.*
- ◆ to make predictions based on your own beliefs:  
*I am sure you will enjoy the play.*
- ◆ when you make instant decision about what to do next:  
*That soup smells delicious. I will try some.*

- ◆ to talk about the future events that are depended on other events:  
*If we leave now, we will be home before nightfall.*
- ◆ to make promises and offers:  
*Don't worry, I won't tell anyone your secret.*
- ◆ to add a question tag to an imperative or make a tag reply:  
*Don't tell anyone, will you?*  
*Don't forget your passport. I won't.*

# The future continuous

We use the future continuous :

- ◆ to talk about an action that will be in progress at a specific point in the future:  
*At midday tomorrow, I'll be taking my exam.*
- ◆ to talk about planned events. Used like this, it is similar to the present continuous or arrangements:  
*Next year, I will be spending most of the summer abroad.*
- ◆ as polite and less direct questions about somebody's plans:  
*Will you be staying at the hotel for two nights or three?*

# The future perfect simple and continuous

- ◆ We use the future perfect simple to talk about completed action or event in the future.  
  
*By the time they get home, **I will have travelled** more than 10,000 km.  
We'd wait till 14 December for the party. David will have had his exam then, so will be able to enjoy himself.  
I save \$50 a month and I started in January. So by the end of the year I will have saved \$600.*
- ◆ The future perfect continuous is used to say how long an action or event will have been in progress at a specific point in the future:  
  
*By the time he takes part in the Olympics, **he will have been training** for four years.  
By the end of the month he will have been living here for ten years.*