

# English grammar: Future simple and continuous tense

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## Future simple - will

### Form

Positive statement: *I will learn (I'll learn), He will learn (He'll learn)*

Negative statement: *I will not learn (I won't learn), He will not learn (He won't learn)*

Question: *Will you learn?*

Neg. question: *Will you not learn? (Won't you learn?)*

We can also use *shall* in the first person singular and plural (I, we). But this form is quite formal in modern English and is not very common.

I shall do it for you.

We shall come soon.

### Use

1. **Will** is used as a modal auxiliary verb to show a general intention.

He will change his job.

We'll travel abroad. (short form of will)

I will not need it.

They won't change the telephone number. (short form of will not)

Will you take the exam?

2. **Will** is used for predictions or opinions.

It will snow in winter.

The horse will not win.

We can use following verbs or adverbs to express that we assume something, but we are not sure: think, be sure, hope, believe, suppose, perhaps, possibly, probably, surely.

They'll probably study art.

I don't think she'll accept it.

3. **Will** is used to express a decision or offer made at the moment of speaking.

Can I walk you home? - No, thank you. I'll take a taxi.

Please, tell Peter about it. - O.K. I'll call him.

But:

I am going to call Peter. Do you want me to say hello to him?

(**Going to** expresses our decision made before the moment of speaking.)

## Future continuous

### Form

Positive statement: *I will be sitting (I'll be sitting)*

Negative statement: *I will not be sitting (I won't be sitting)*

Question: *Will you be sitting?*

Neg. question: *Will you not be sitting? (Won't you be sitting?)*

### Use

1. This tense is used for an action that will be in progress at a point of time in the future. It will start before that point of time and will continue after it. The point in time can be given by a time expression or by another action in the future simple (will). This usage is very similar to the past continuous in this aspect.

At 8 o'clock I will be travelling to Dorset.

This time tomorrow we'll be lying on the beach.

(In these two sentences the point of time that we refer to is given by a time expression.)

The shop will be closed. Will you be working?

I'll be sleeping when you come back.

(In these two sentences the point of time that we refer to is given by another activity.)

2. The future continuous describes the idea that something will happen in the normal course of events. It refers to a routine activity, not an intention, decision or plan.

I'll be writing to you again. (I always write to you, so I'll do it again, as usual.)

They'll be leaving on Friday. You can join them. (They normally leave on Fridays.)

Everybody will be working on a computer sooner or later. (If nothing special happens.)

### **Future continuous vs present continuous**

We are going to the cinema next weekend.

(The present tense means that we have already arranged it. We know the time and place and probably have the tickets.)

We'll be going to the cinema next weekend.

(The future continuous only tells us how we will spend the weekend. But we have not arranged anything and, probably, we do not even know which film we want to see.)

I am seeing Susan tomorrow.

(I have some reason. Susan and I have arranged the time and place.)

I'll be seeing Susan tomorrow.

(Susan is my classmate and because I will go to school tomorrow, I will see her as usual.)

### **Future simple vs continuous**

Bill won't play football tomorrow.

(The fact is that Bill cannot play or does not want to play for some reason.)

Bill won't be playing football tomorrow.

(Bill will not play, because it will be Friday and he never plays on Fridays.)

I'll call Mimi tonight. I'll ask her.

(I will do it because I need to talk to her.)

I'll be calling Mimi tonight. I can ask her.

(I call her every night, that is why I will call her tonight too.)

In these examples the future simple shows intentions, while in the continuous there is no intention, it expresses routine actions.

### **Notes**

In some cases we can use several forms for future events. But every form will have a slightly different meaning.

I'll be meeting Jim next week.

(I meet Jim every week and it will be the same next week.)

I'll meet Jim next week.

(I intend to meet Jim next week or I suppose that I will meet him.)

I'm going to meet Jim next week.

(I decided to meet Jim some time ago and now I am expressing my intention.)

I'm meeting Jim next week.

(We have arranged the time and place because we have some reason to meet.)

It will rain, I'm afraid.

(I assume it will rain, it is my opinion. But who knows!)

It's going to rain.

(I am sure it will rain because I can see the dark clouds in the sky. My opinion is based on clear evidence.)

The present tense (I am meeting) is more definite than be going to (I am going to meet) and will is the least definite (I will meet).